







# Vietnam



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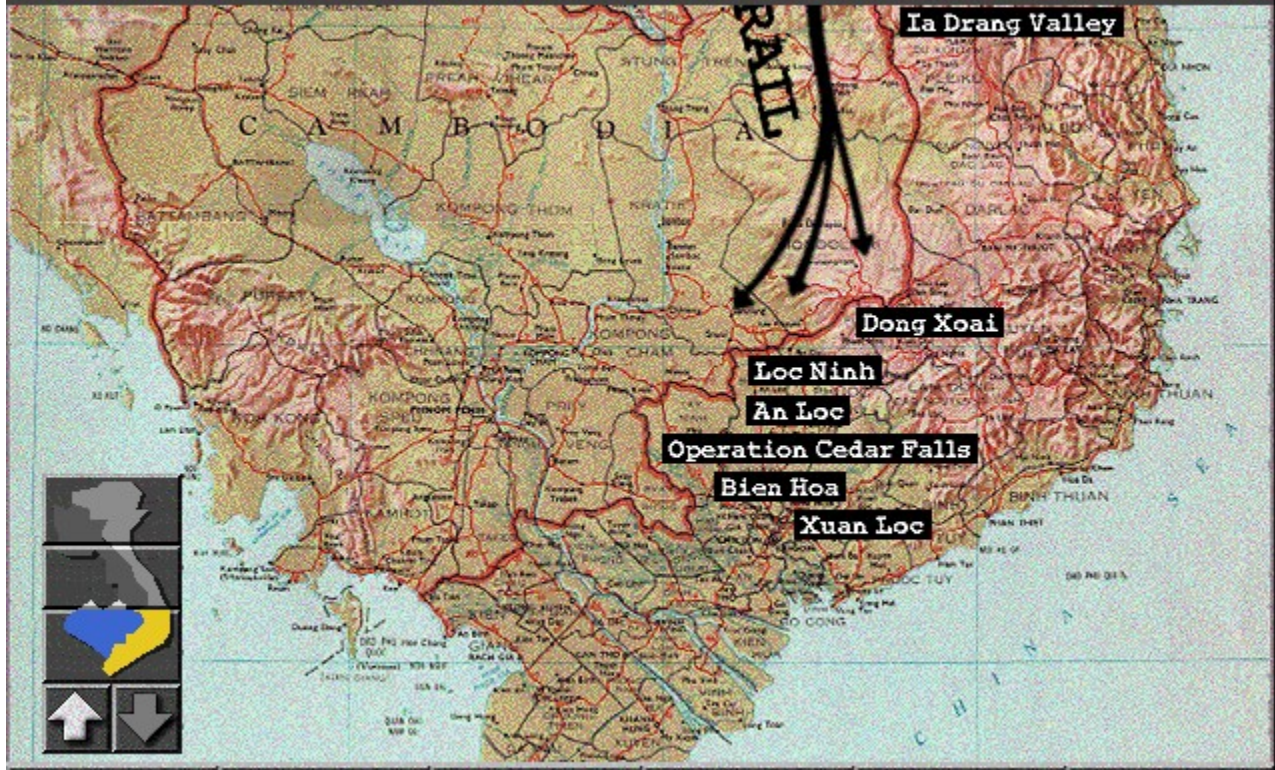






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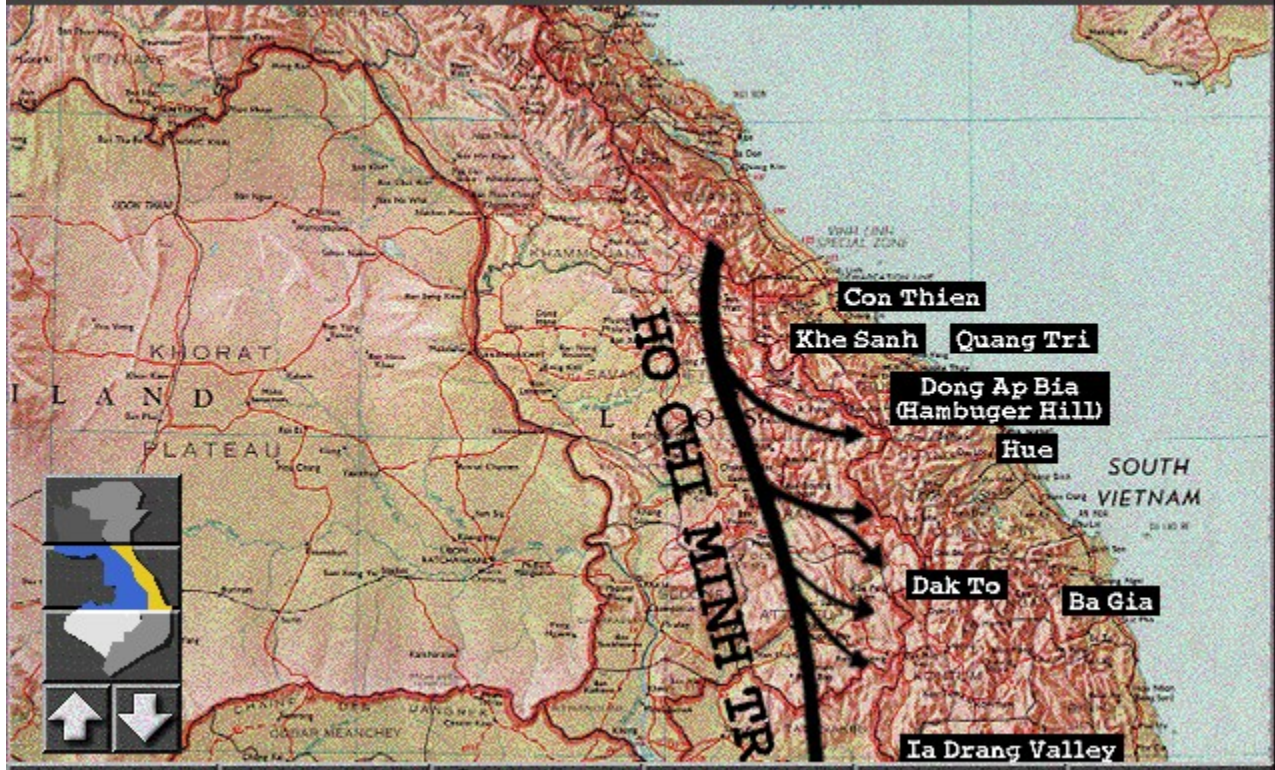
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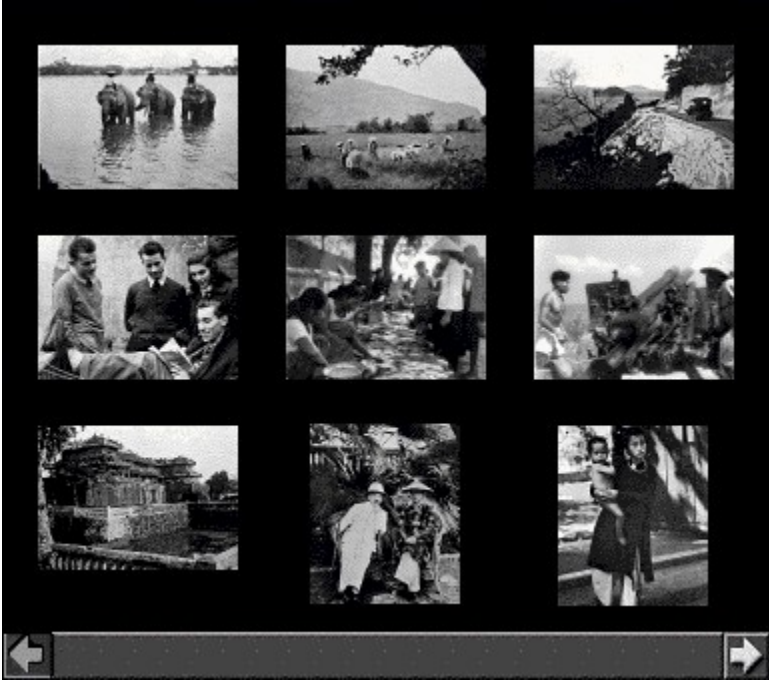












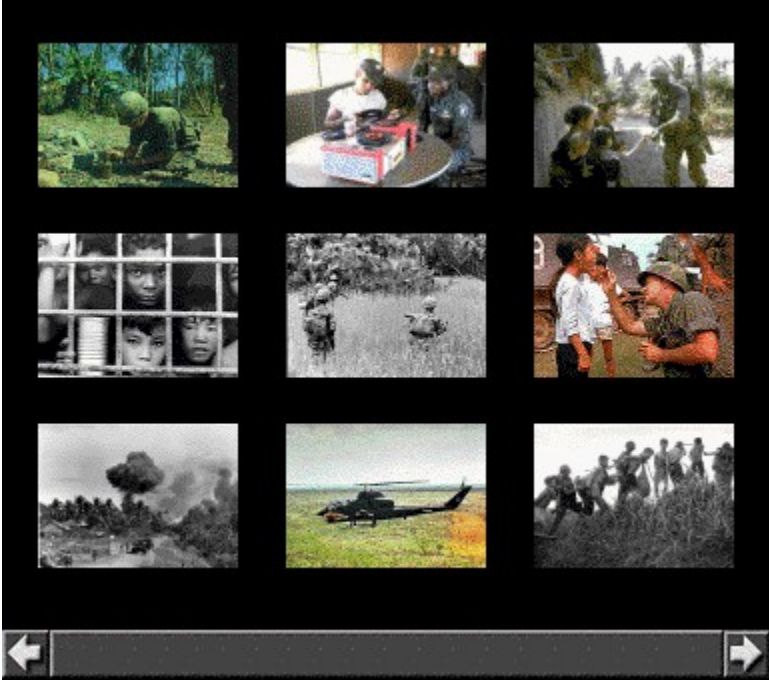






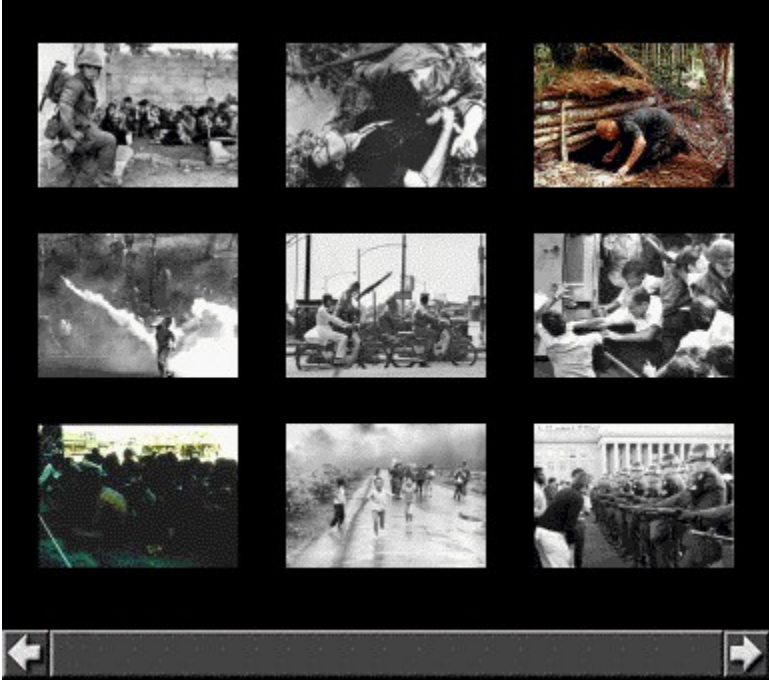




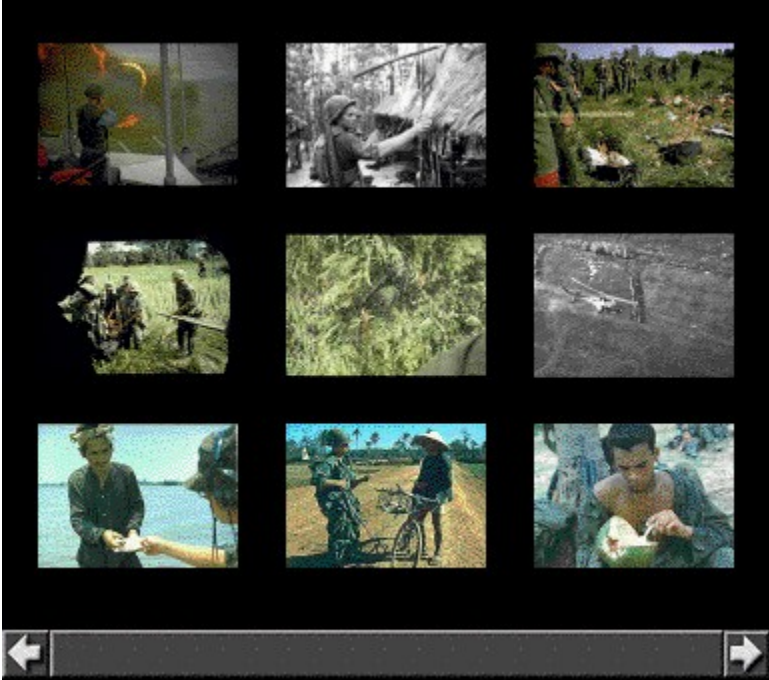




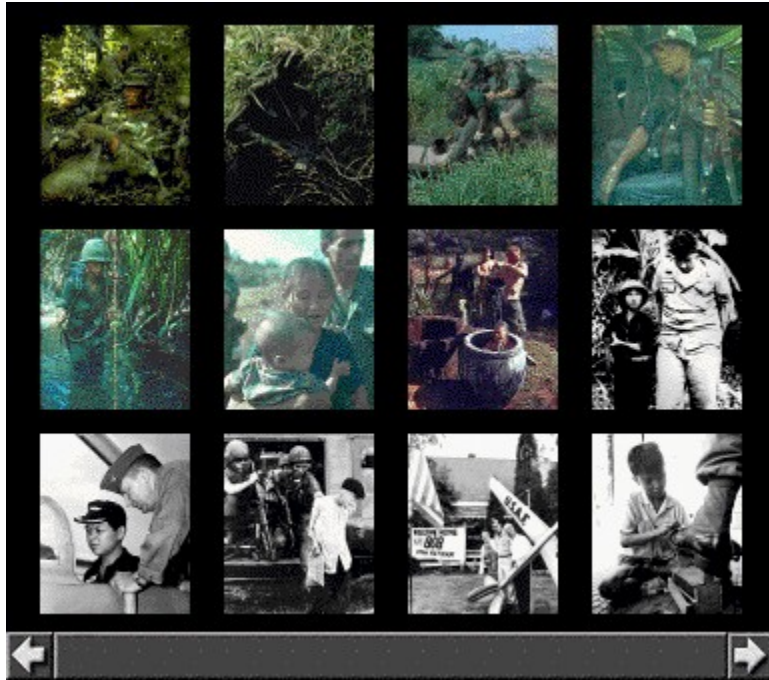














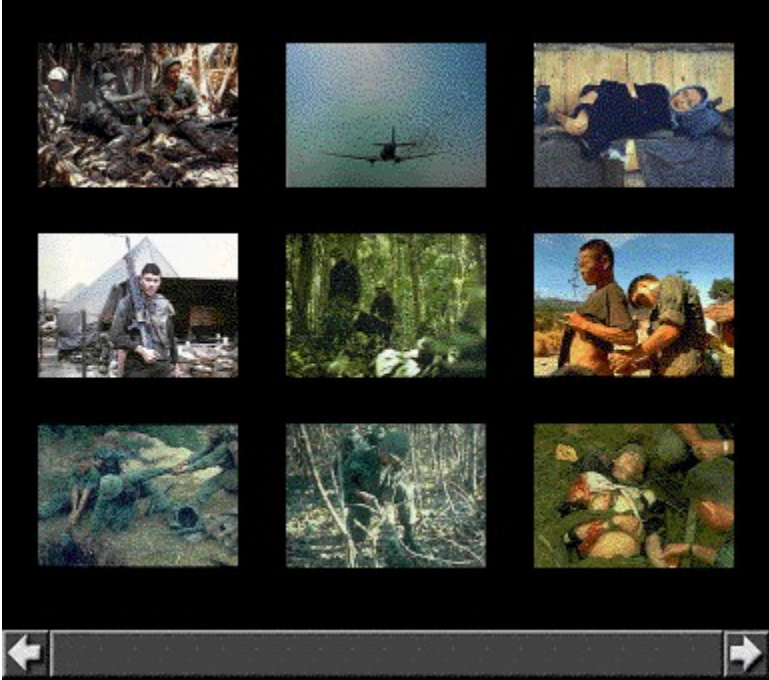


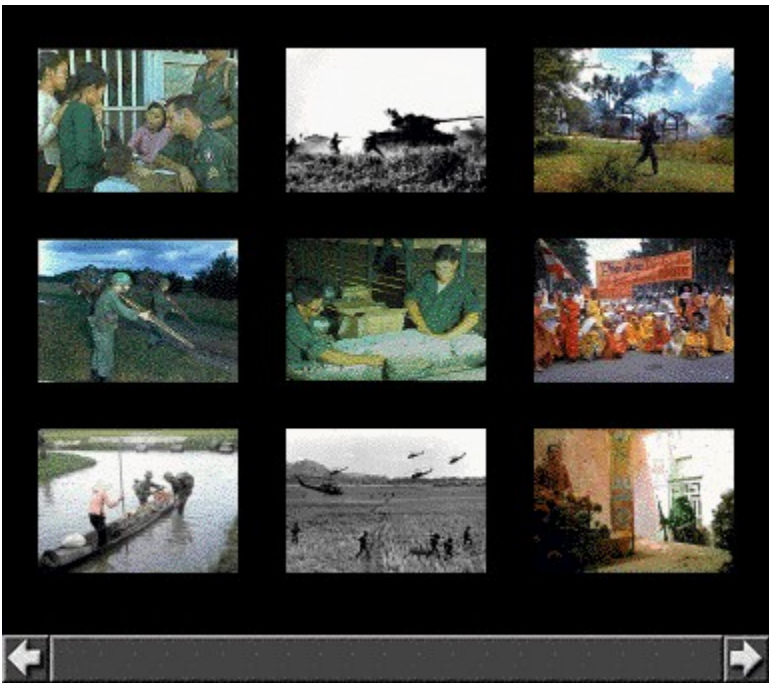


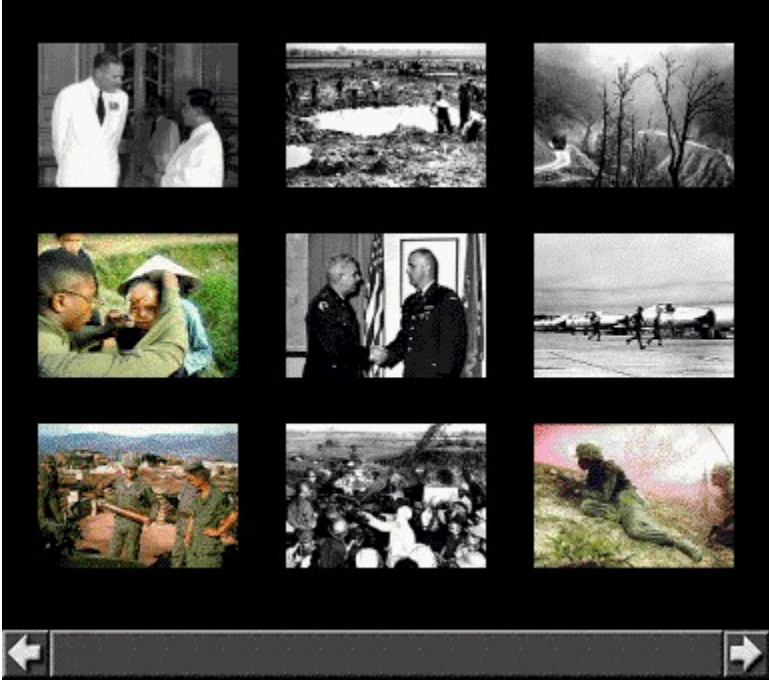




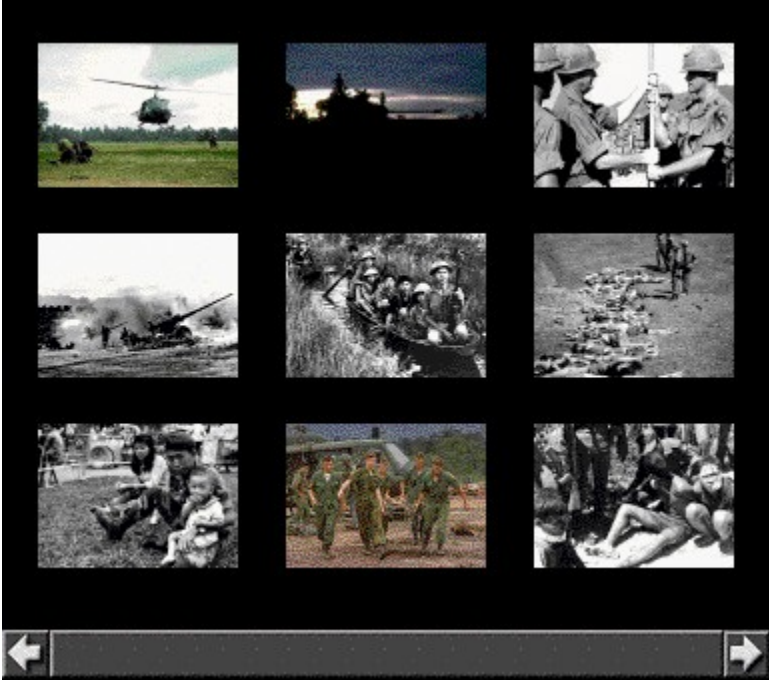
















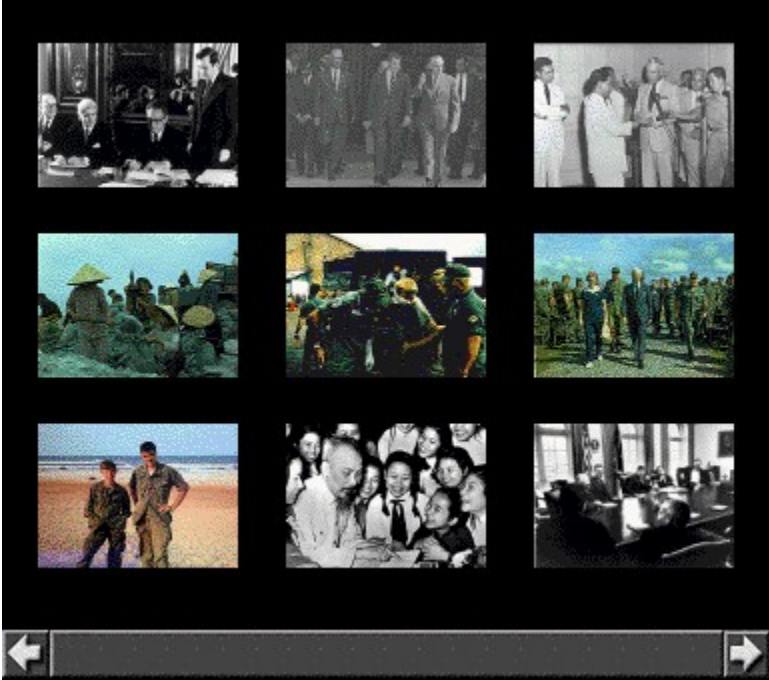




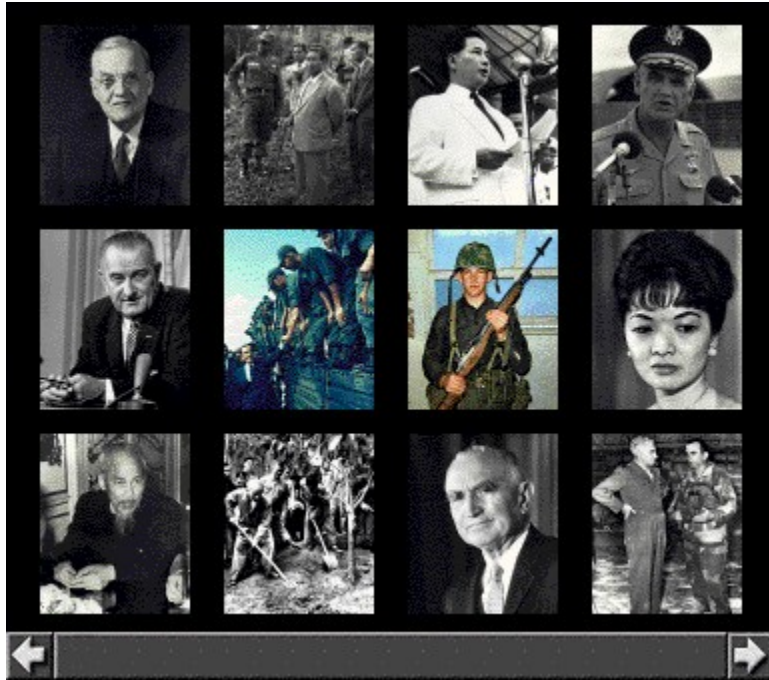




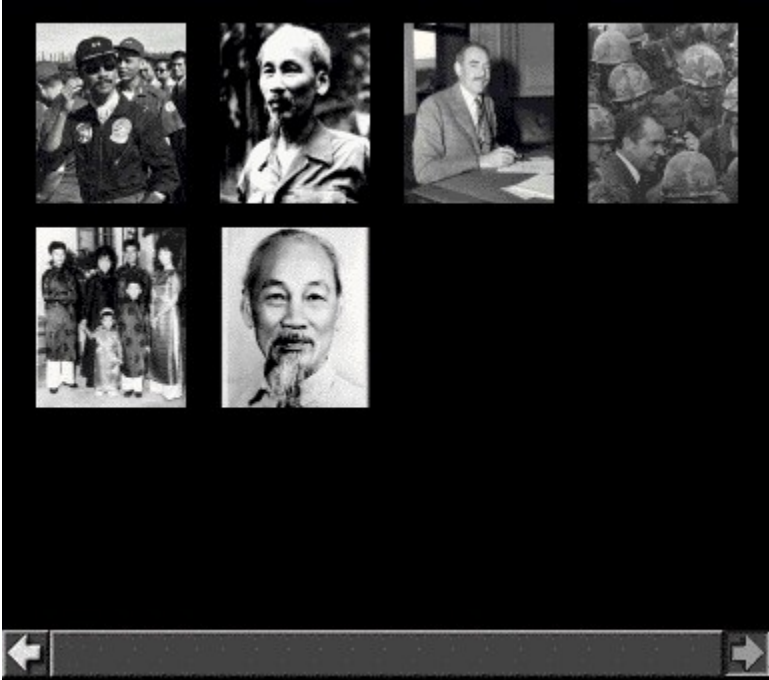


























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### **Drew Pearson**



***About the Author:*** Drew Pearson first went to Saigon in 1963 for NBC News. Over the next ten years, he spent five in Vietnam. He is now a television documentary producer and lives in Kittery Point, Maine with his wife and three children. Drew extends special thanks to John Beitzel, Ambassador Bui Diem, William Colby, David Connolly, Bill Ehrhart, Vernon Gillespie, Dr. Sanford Gottlieb, Stanley Karnow, Don Luce, Dr. Ngo Vinh Long, Ron Serrizzi, and Linda Van Devanter for their cooperation with the project.

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#### **Text:**

Americas Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975

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By George C. Herring

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The Dictionary of the Vietnam War

Edited by James S. Olson

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Vietnam Documents: American and Vietnamese Views of the War

Edited by George Katsiaficas

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Excerpts from the Pentagon papers

U.S. Department of Defense

## **Film:**

Experiences and Opinions Interviews  
By Drew Pearson

ABC News Footage  
Sherman Grinberg Film Libraries  
New York, New York

## **Photos:**

The Bettman Archive  
New York, New York

1. Dean Gooderham Acheson, advisor to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and a member of the informal policy group known as "The Wise Men"
2. Bao Dai reviews his troops.
3. Vietnam War Memorial, Washington, D.C.
4. Vietnam War Memorial, Washington, D.C.
5. Veterans for Peace demonstrate. Washington, D.C., 1971.
6. An American official punching Vietnamese trying to get on an overcrowded evacuation plan.
7. A Viet Minh soldier and sentry died in an attack outpost. North Vietnam, 1950.
8. William Calley, Jr. during his court martial for the My Lai massacre.
9. A peace march on the Pentagon, October 23, 1967.
10. Students at Kent State throw tear gas canisters back at National Guard troops who opened fire, killing four students.
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17. Women and children from a village on the Central Coast near Qui Nhon escape bombing in their village.
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36. President John F. Kennedy meeting with Henry Cabot Lodge, about to leave for Saigon to take up the post of Ambassador.
37. President Dwight D. Eisenhower meeting with Ngo Dinh Nhu at the White House. 1961.
38. Special Presidential Envoy Gen. Alexander Haig, Jr. meets Cambodian President Lon Nol, Phnom Penh. 1973.
39. President John F. Kennedy with his Cabinet at the White House. 1961.
40. General Earle Wheeler reporting to President Johnson on the need for more troops in Vietnam. 1968.
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54. A politician who opposed colonialism in Asia.
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68. Vice President Hubert Humphrey, General Creighton W. Adams, President Johnson and General Earle Wheeler
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### Archive Film and Photos

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7. Ho Chi Minh and admirers.
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9. Chi Minh became the undisputed leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party in its fight against French colonialism.
10. Ho Chi Minh inspects an anti-aircraft gun.
11. Ho Chi Minh plants trees.
12. Chi Minh became the undisputed leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party in its fight against French colonialism and later, the American attempt to establish a non-Communist South Vietnam.
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44. artillery position being resupplied by a Chinook helicopter.

Additional photos courtesy personal collections and the National Archives.

### **Special Thanks**

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## **A**

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ATROCITIES

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## A SHAU VALLEY

The A Shau Valley is located in Thua Thien Province of [I Corps](#) near the Laotian border. Actually several valleys and mountains, the A Shau Valley was one of the principal entry points to [South Vietnam](#) of the [Ho Chi Minh](#) Trail. It was an area that was critical to the North Vietnamese since it was the conduit for supplies, additional troops, and communications for units of the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) and [Vietcong](#) (VC) operating in I Corps. Because of its importance to the NVA and VC, it was the target of repeated major operations by allied forces, especially the U.S. [101st Airborne Division](#). Likewise, it was defended vigorously by the NVA and VC. Consequently, the A Shau Valley was the scene of much fighting throughout the war, and it acquired a fearsome reputation for soldiers on both sides. Being a veteran of A Shau Valley operations became a mark of distinction among combat veterans. Although each American effort to staunch the shipment of men and materiel through the A Shau Valley was successful for a brief period of time, the net effect was a series of transitory decreases in the flow followed by increases until the next American operation. Since the U.S. strategy for fighting the enemy did not include occupying remote and sparsely populated areas, the enemy often lost military battles but subsequently was able to reinfiltate an area when the Americans left the battlefield. The most famous battle of the A Shau Valley was [Operation Apache Snow](#), also known as [Hamburger Hill](#).

Sources: Samuel Lipsman, *Fighting for Time*, 1983; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

Stafford T. Thomas

## A-1 SKYRAIDER

During the Vietnam War, [fighter-bombers](#) (see [Fighters](#)) played a critical role in providing close air support to American and South Vietnamese soldiers. The propeller-driven A-1 Skyraider was frequently the battlefield choice of commanders who needed fighter-bomber support. Nicknamed the "Spad," the A-1 had been operational since 1946, and could deliver up to 8,000 pounds of explosives, including [napalm](#), phosphorus, and [cluster bomb](#) units. The A-1 could fire rockets and carry four 20mm cannons that together could fire over 2,000 rounds a minute. Although its maximum air speed was only 318 mph, the A-1 could remain [airborne](#) over targets much longer than jet aircraft, and it was also highly accurate delivering its bomb loads. During the Korean War the A-1 had been widely used on naval [aircraft carriers](#), but by the early 1960s the [navy](#) was replacing the A-1 with the [A-4 Skyhawk](#) jet. The A-1s were transferred to the United States Air Force and the [Vietnamese Air Force](#), where they were first employed in [Operation Farmgate](#). By 1968 the A-1 Skyraider was the backbone of close air support operations in the Vietnamese Air Force.

Source: Steve Birdsall, *The A-1 Skyraider*, 1970.

## **A-4 SKYHAWK**

The A-4 Skyhawk flew more missions in Vietnam than any other naval aircraft. Developed in the mid-1950s by Douglas, the A-4 could carry a maximum payload of 8,200 pounds and a functional payload of 5,000 pounds. Its maximum speed was 685 mph and it had a range of 700 miles. Its built-in armament consisted of two 20mm cannons. The A-4 Skyhawk was propelled by either a 7,700-pound thrust Wright J65 engine or a 8,500-pound thrust Pratt and Whitney J52 engine.

Source: Ray Wagner, *American Combat Planes*, 1982.

## **A-6 INTRUDER**

Manufactured by Grumman, the A-6 Intruder was equipped with two 9,300-pound Pratt and Whitney J52 turbojets and had a maximum speed of 640 mph. The A-6 could carry up to 15,000 pounds of ordnance and had a range of 1,077 miles (3,100 miles when equipped with external fuel tanks). Its advanced navigation system, known as DIANE (Digital Integrated Attack Navigation Equipment), had a terrain avoidance radar capability and allowed the A-6 to fly long distances at low altitudes, regardless of weather conditions. Its forte was pinpoint attacks at night or in poor weather conditions.

Sources: John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience. Thunder from Above: Air War 1941-1968*, 1985; Ray Wagner, *American Combat Planes*, 1982.

## **A-7 CORSAIR II**

The Vought A-7 Corsair II first deployed to Vietnam aboard the USS *Ranger* in December 1967. It was powered by an 11,350-pound thrust TF30 turbofan and had a maximum speed of 679 mph, a range of 700 miles, and an ordnance capacity of 20,000 pounds. A later version, the A-7E, which entered combat in 1970, had a 15,000-pound thrust Allison TF41 engine and a 20mm M61 Vulcan rapid-fire cannon. Its weapons delivery system was highly accurate, and the A-7 was especially useful in attacking the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) and making night assaults on [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong.

Sources: Ray Wagner, *American Combat Planes*, 1982; Anthony Robinson, "Air Forces in Vietnam," in John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985.

## ABRAMS, CREIGHTON

Creighton Abrams was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, on September 16, 1914. Described as "tough," "crusty," and "gruff," Abrams graduated from West Point in 1936. Considered one of the great combat officers of World War II, Abrams served in General George Patton's Third Army and took part in the relief of Bastogne. Upon assuming command of [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) in July 1968, when [General William Westmoreland](#) left, Abrams shifted American tactics in the direction of small-unit operations in an attempt to keep pressure on [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) forces while avoiding the heavy American [casualties](#) that often resulted from Westmoreland's large-scale "search and destroy" sweeps. Also, in the latter half of 1968, Abrams launched the [Accelerated Pacification Campaign](#), in which the United States and [South Vietnam](#) committed a major share of their military resources to controlling the Vietnamese countryside. The campaign enjoyed only short-term success.

As MACV commander, Abrams was responsible for implementing the [Vietnamization](#) program, which had originated in the Johnson administration and which was announced with much public fanfare in 1969 by [President Richard M. Nixon](#). Abrams viewed the Cambodian incursion of 1970 (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) as a means of keeping Vietcong and NVA pressure off the gradual American [withdrawal](#) mandated by Vietnamization. Although Abrams privately doubted the ability of the South Vietnamese army to replace U.S. troops effectively, he was successful in carrying out the American troop withdrawal called for by Vietnamization. During his tenure as MACV commander, Abrams saw American strength reach its peak (543,482) in April 1969, and also witnessed the departure of the last United States Army combat unit (3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry) from Vietnam in August 1972. Abrams was promoted to chief of staff of the United States Army in 1972, a post he held until his death on September 4, 1974.

Sources: R. E. Dupuy, *The Compact History of the U.S. Army*, 1973; [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; *New York Times*, September 5, 1974.

Sean A. Kelleher

## **AC-130 GUNSHIP**

The AC-130s were fixed-wing [gunships](#) introduced to the Vietnam War in 1968. They were [C-130](#) transport ships converted to AC-130s by equipping them with two multibarreled machine guns, four 20mm Vulcan multibarreled guns and 40mm Bofors cannon, along with infrared sensors, radar, low-light television, and laser target designators. The AC-130s were used both to provide ground support and to interdict supplies being shipped along the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#).

Sources: Jack Ballard, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia: Development and Employment of Fixed-Wing Gunships, 1962-1972*, 1982; William W. Momyer, *Airpower in Three Wars*, 1978.

Robert S. Browning III

## AC-47 GUNSHIP

Technological developments have always been the result of war. The era of American involvement in Vietnam was no exception. One of the most exciting was the development of fixed-wing [gunships](#). The theory behind the development of gunships was simple; it involved the placement of rapid-fire weapons on one side of a large aircraft to fire at ground targets as the firing platform circled an area at a constant altitude and speed. The development of this idea in Vietnam stemmed directly from unique battlefield situations in the theater of operations and eventually evolved into an effective and impressive weapon system.

The selection of the C-47 as the first gunship during the early years of the Vietnam War married the new 7.62mm minigun to one of the air force's oldest operational aircraft. The first [flight](#) of a Douglas DC-3, the civilian version of the C-47, took place on December 18, 1935, but the aircraft earned a reputation as a versatile performer during World War II when the armed forces had nearly 10,000 in service. Although most of the C-47s had been retired by 1960, air force personnel realized that it was the ideal platform for the mounting of weapons with which to attack ground targets.

The formation of the first AC-47 gunship [squadron](#) began in May 1965 when Headquarters United States Air Force (USAF) directed the Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC) to prepare a feasibility study on installation of 7.62mm guns on twenty C-47s. This study demonstrated the practicality of such a modification and during the summer of 1965 the Warner-Robins Air Materiel Area, Robins Air Force Base (AFB), Georgia, undertook the work, adding not only three miniguns to the port side but also attaching flare launchers to make the aircraft capable of night operations.

Even as these modifications were underway at Robins AFB, crews for these aircraft were being trained at Forbes AFB, Kansas, by the Tactical Air Command (TAC). Early in November 1965 the USAF activated the 4th Air Commando Squadron as the operational unit for these crews and aircraft and began deployment to Vietnam. During the remainder of 1965 this squadron flew 1,441 hours and 277 combat missions. It expended 137,136 rounds of ammunition and 2,548 flares and received credit for 105 [Vietcong](#) killed. Most of its operations were conducted during the hours of darkness in support of fort and village defense.

These operations demonstrated the effectiveness of the AC-47 gunship not only as a powerful destructive force but also as an instrument of terror. Its capability to strike quickly in far-flung parts of Southeast Asia and the tremendous firepower it possessed was thought by American commanders a valuable tool in deterring Vietcong activity. It could be used both for air defense and air interdiction. The AC-47 gunship also flew reconnaissance and forward air control missions at night. So successful were combat operations that the USAF increased the number of AC-47s operated by the 4th Air Commando Squadron to twenty-two, and on October 25, 1967, it activated the 14th Air Commando Squadron with a complement of sixteen additional AC-47s. Later a third squadron operating AC-47 aircraft was activated, and the three units were redesignated Special Operations Squadrons.

During 1969 the AC-47 gunships flew their last operational missions in Vietnam. They were being replaced by [AC-130](#) gunships and [helicopter gunships](#) that were more versatile, speedy, and less aged. For four years the AC-47 had been an integral part of the Vietnam War, recognized as both an offensive and defensive weapon. A total of fifty-three AC-47s had been built at a cost of about \$6.7 million, many of which had been in operation for three or more years. As the gunship pioneer, the AC-47 was the progenitor of a second generation of improved gunships and tactics that followed between 1970 and 1973.

Source: Jack S. Ballard, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia: Development and Employment of Fixed-Wing Gunships, 1962-1972*, 1982.





## ACCELERATED PACIFICATION CAMPAIGN

After the [Tet Offensive](#) of February 1968, the United States renewed its commitment to a stronger military and political position in the [Republic of Vietnam](#), and that became especially important later in the year when [Vietcong](#) representatives at the [Paris peace talks](#) began hinting at their willingness to accept a "cease-fire in place." If that really was a possibility, it was important for the United States to gain control of the countryside through more aggressive pacification programs. On November 1, 1968, the United States launched the Accelerated Pacification Campaign, with an objective of expanding government control over 1,200 villages currently controlled by the Vietcong. The Accelerated Pacification Campaign was put under the control of [William Colby](#), and he was given a ninety-day time frame for the program. The United States had high hopes for the program because the Vietcong had been badly drained by the Tet Offensive and had essentially adopted a defensive strategy. The [Phoenix Program](#) was launched simultaneously.

The Accelerated Pacification Campaign was basically a "clear and hold" strategy using [Regional Forces](#) (RF) and [Popular Forces](#) (PF). Operating in or near their home villages, the RF and PF were familiar with the countryside as well as the people, knew how to differentiate between Vietcong and nonpolitical families, and built some confidence because villagers knew they would remain in the area. After destroying or at least expelling the Vietcong infrastructure, Accelerated Pacification then turned its attention to economic development, and included clearing roads, repairing bridges, building schools, and increasing farm production. The Americans also tried to train villagers in free elections and then trained elected officials in village administration. Finally, Accelerated Pacification tried to bring about [land reform](#) by distributing land to peasant farmers.

The results of Accelerated Pacification were mixed at best. By March 1970 more than one million hectares of land had been redistributed, and the number of RF and PF engaged in pacification had increased to 500,000 men. They were armed with [M-16](#) rifles and had received improved training. But destruction of the Vietcong infrastructure was never achieved, nor did Accelerated Pacification really change the way most South Vietnamese looked upon the government of [Nguyen Van Thieu](#). Nor could Accelerated Pacification really survive the [withdrawal](#) of American troops which [President Richard Nixon](#) began implementing in the summer of 1969. As the U.S. military presence declined, the South Vietnamese were unable to fill the vacuum.

Sources: Robert W. Komer, "Pacification: A Look Back," *Army* (June 1970), 20-29; James Walker Trullinger, *Village at War: An Account of Revolution in Vietnam*, 1980; Samuel L. Popkin, "Pacification: Politics and the Village," *Asian Survey* (August 1970).

## ACHESON, DEAN GOODERHAM

Dean Acheson was born on April 11, 1893, in Middletown, Connecticut. Coming from a prosperous New England family, he graduated from Yale in 1915 and the Harvard Law School in 1918. Acheson served as private secretary to Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis until 1921, practiced law privately in Washington, D.C., until 1933, and then joined the New Deal as under [secretary of state](#). Acheson resigned that post in opposition to the gold buying program of 1933, practiced law again, but then returned to the [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) administration in 1941 as an assistant secretary of state. He became under secretary of state in August 1946 and secretary of state under [Harry S. Truman](#) in July 1949. Acheson left the State Department in 1953 and returned to his law practice. During the 1960s he advised both the [Kennedy](#) and Johnson administrations on foreign policy, and became part of the informal policy group known as the "[Wise Men](#)" in 1965. By 1966 Acheson began expressing serious reservations about the American presence in [South Vietnam](#), and by 1967 he was urging [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) to de-escalate the conflict. Acheson was present at the March 1968 meeting in which the Wise Old Men told Johnson that the war was lost. Dean Acheson died on October 12, 1971.

Sources: Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 1969; *New York Times*, October 13, 1971; Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, 1986.

## AD HOC TASK FORCE ON VIETNAM

The [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968 dealt a deathblow to the American war effort in Vietnam by undermining the political atmosphere at home. Doubtful congress men began evaluating their positions while the military was requesting greater investment of resources in the conflict. Late in February 1968, [General William C. Westmoreland](#) asked [President Lyndon B. Johnson](#) for the deployment of 200,000 more troops to Southeast Asia, and the president convened the Ad Hoc Task Force on Vietnam to evaluate Westmoreland's request. The debate was also taking place in the midst of the presidential primary campaign of 1968, where Lyndon Johnson was facing considerable pressure from Senators [Eugene McCarthy](#) of Minnesota and [Robert F. Kennedy](#) of New York. [Clark Clifford](#), the new [secretary of defense](#), chaired the group. The debate was wide-ranging, dealing with the Vietnam War in particular and American commitments abroad in general. General [Maxwell Taylor](#) and Walt W. Rostow, both presidential advisers, supported the commitment, as did General [Earle Wheeler](#), chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)), but the escalation was opposed by other prominent people, including Paul Nitze, deputy under secretary of defense, and [Paul Warnke](#), assistant secretary of defense. Although Clifford took no formal position in the debate, his own doubts about the nature of the war were confirmed. Those opposing the escalation prevailed, and Westmoreland received only 25,000 of the 200,000 troops he requested. Later in March, President Lyndon Johnson announced his decision not to run for reelection and to de-escalate the war effort.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Clark M. Clifford, "A Viet Nam Reappraisal," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1969), 601-22; Clark Dougan and Steven Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: Nineteen Sixty-Eight*, 1983.

## ADAMS-WESTMORELAND CONTROVERSY

In 1965 Sam Adams was an intelligence officer with the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA) working on Vietnam. Using captured enemy documents and interrogations of enemy personnel, Adams found support for Pentagon estimates of enemy killed, wounded, captured, and deserted, figures that the news media believed were inflated. Adams also found support for a far higher estimate of the number of enemy in [South Vietnam](#), for the [infiltration](#) rate of regular troops from North Vietnam to the South, and a higher capability for supplying those larger numbers than the U.S. Army intelligence estimates coming out of [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) headquarters in [Saigon](#).

Adams gradually became the center of a growing controversy. He was unable to gain upper-level support within the CIA for his revisions of the size of the enemy; meetings between intelligence officials of the CIA and various military commands could not reach a compromise figure. [General William Westmoreland](#) was unwilling to change enemy totals, although he was willing to reallocate figures within various categories. With the [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968, Adams felt the battle weakened the enemy less than army officers claimed, since he believed the enemy was originally stronger.

In 1975 Adams made his charges public in *Harper's* magazine, and in January 1982 in a CBS News documentary. The documentary charged General Westmoreland with a conspiracy to report low figures for the enemy. After Westmoreland sued, the resulting court trial in 1985 seemingly found support for Adam's original contention and vindication for his lonely vigil. Westmoreland and CBS settled their suit out of court.

Source: Bob Brewin and Sydney Shaw, *Vietnam on Trial: Westmoreland vs. CBS*, 1986.

## AGENT ORANGE

To counter the natural advantage that dense jungles offered Vietnamese guerrillas, the U.S. Defense Department developed a strategy of using herbicides (see [Operation Ranch Hand](#)) to defoliate the countryside and disrupt the food supply of the [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#). Herbicides were used on a wide scale and had a devastating ecological impact. The most common chemicals used in South Vietnam were Agent Orange, Agent White (see [defoliation](#)) and Agent Blue (see [defoliation](#)), the color designations coinciding with the markings on shipping containers. Agents Orange and White were used to defoliate forestlands, while Agent Blue was used primarily for crop destruction. The defoliation campaign lasted from 1962 until the first half of 1969 in Vietnam, and in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) until 1971. More than 46 percent of South Vietnam's forest area was sprayed at least once, and 500,000 of the more than 5 million acres sprayed were cropland.

Although the effect of defoliation on controlling guerrilla forces has been hotly debated, the North Vietnamese began claiming in April 1966 that herbicides were causing permanent ocular lesions, chromosome alterations, and congenital deformities in infants, as well as long-term damage to crops, trees and entire ecosystems. The Defense Department denied those claims, but crop destruction was disastrous for civilians, since mobile military groups were able to find other sources of supply. One result of defoliation was that the United States had to supply food for the Vietnamese people. Tens of thousands of tons of wheat and rice and soybean seeds were shipped to South Vietnam. With the destruction of rice crops, the United States had to import billions of tons of the grain to keep prices stabilized and prevent the economic base from collapsing. A study of the health effects of phenoxy herbicides by Bionetics Research Laboratories completed in 1969 indicated that the tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin in Agent Orange caused birth defects. Also, Agent Orange contained dioxin, which is extremely hazardous to health and maintains its toxicity levels up to thirty years. Some symptoms connected with Agent Orange are frequent mood changes, nervousness, severe headaches, chloracne (a chronic rash), loss of sex drive, ringing in the ears, chest pains, miscarriages, stillbirths, cancer, and severe birth defects. In 1970, pending review, [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) stopped the spraying of Agent Orange. Crop destruction and defoliation were finally terminated in 1971.

Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange began complaining of health problems in the mid-1970s, and they filed a class-action suit in 1979 against the Veterans Administration, the Department of Defense, and several manufacturers of the chemical. In response the Pentagon argued that Agent Orange did not cause those symptoms and that it might actually have helped the Vietnamese economy by giving the lumber industry easier access routes to haul wood and small farmers by giving them new space to plant gardens near roads, which provided them with new markets. In an out-of-court settlement, the chemical companies involved established a \$180 million fund to compensate veterans with "legitimate" claims. The fund was administered by a federal court; veterans with total disabilities and the families of veterans who died from Agent Orange exposure have access to the fund for damages.

Sources: J. B. Neilands, *Harvest of Death: Chemical Warfare in Vietnam and Cambodia*, 1972; Carol Van Strum, *A Bitter Fog: Herbicides and Human Rights*, 1983; Clifford Linedecker, *Kerry: Agent Orange and an American Family*, 1982; Fred A. Wilcox, *Waiting for an Army to Die: Tragedy of Agent Orange*, 1983.

John E. Wilson and Kim Younghaus

## AGNEW, SPIRO THEODORE

Spiro Agnew was born on November 9, 1918, in Baltimore, Maryland. Before World War II he attended Johns Hopkins University and the Baltimore Law School, and after serving in an army armor unit during the war, he graduated from the Baltimore Law School in 1947. Agnew began practicing law and working in local Republican politics, and in 1957 he was appointed to the Baltimore County Zoning Board of Appeals. He won election to the position of county executive in 1962, and in 1966 he won the governorship of Maryland, defeating a segregationist Democrat and earning liberal credentials. During his two terms as governor Agnew became increasingly conservative and strident in his rhetoric. In 1968 he supported [Richard Nixon](#)'s candidacy for president, and Nixon rewarded him with the spot of running mate. They won the election over Democrat [Hubert Humphrey](#), and Agnew became vice president of the United States in 1969.

As vice president, Agnew carried the battle to the opponents and critics of the Nixon administration. Critics of the Vietnam War, whether in Congress or on campus, were the special targets of Agnew's alliterative verbal assaults. The baiting and buzzwords of the 1950s were dusted off for reuse, together with many new ones of Agnew's invention. But while Agnew carried the cudgels for the administration, his excesses often inflamed an already overheated national debate, and Agnew himself was severely criticized for exacerbating the situation.

Thus, when Agnew's past caught up with him, those who had been the victims of his denunciation could hardly conceal their delight. Faced with the threat of prosecution and impeachment for violation of bribery, conspiracy, and tax laws, on October 10, 1973, Agnew entered into a plea bargaining agreement, pleading no contest (*nolo contendere*) to one count of income tax invasion, and resigned from the vice presidency.

Sources: *Current Biography*, 1968, pp. 9-12; *Facts on File*, October 7-13, 1973, pp. 840-50.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## AGRICULTURAL REFORM TRIBUNALS

By 1954, after the defeat of the French at the Battle of [Dien Bien Phu](#), [Ho Chi Minh](#) was firmly in control of Vietnam, especially in the north. Although he faced no real political problems, the economy was in a state of disaster, which he proceeded to make worse through the imposition of awkward ideological controls. Determined to wipe out "landlord" elements as a symbol of his devout Marxism, Ho unleashed cadre teams to search out the landlord class, which he estimated at 2 percent of the rural population. It was a preposterous assumption, since few Vietnamese peasants in the north had more than three to four acres. Nevertheless, by 1955 the cadres had established Agricultural Reform Tribunals in each village to identify the landlords. Accusations, lies, informants, and a vicious neighbor-against-neighbor mentality filled rural villages. Thousands of so-called landlords were killed and thousands more were sent to labor camps. The rural economy was disrupted. The tribunals had quotas of landlords to find and kill, and their justice was quick and capricious. Concerned about the random killings and economic disruption, Ho Chi Minh repudiated the campaigns in August 1956.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh: A Political Biography*, 1968; Charles Fenn, *Ho Chi Minh: A Biographical Introduction*, 1973.



## AGROVILLE PROGRAM

Because of increasing instability and [Vietcong](#) insurgency in rural areas, President [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) launched the Agrovillage Program in 1959. Its stated purpose was to protect Vietnamese peasants from Vietcong terrorism by relocating them to secure areas controlled by the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN). The government of [South Vietnam](#) built several new communities as part of the Agrovillage Program, complete with schools, medical clinics, and electricity, but financial incentives for peasants were meager and peasants had no desire to leave ancestral homelands. In many instances ARVN had to forcibly remove peasants to the new agrovillage communities, and the program inspired bitter resentment against the Diem regime. The Agrovillage Program was abandoned in 1961 when the government committed its resources to the [Strategic Hamlet](#) Program.

Sources: Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian*, 1963; Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The [Counterinsurgency](#) Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance 1950 to Present*, 1977; William A. Nighswonger, *Rural Pacification in Vietnam*, 1966.

## **AH-1G HELICOPTER**

The AH-1G helicopter, also known as the ``Cobra," was first delivered to [South Vietnam](#) in 1967 but not deployed in large numbers until 1968. The AH-1G had a length of 52 feet, 11 inches; a weight of 5,783 pounds; and a payload of 1,993 pounds. Its primary purpose was escort reconnaissance and direct fire support. The AH-1G was an attack vehicle firing grenades, machine guns, and rockets in support of American and South Vietnamese infantry.

Sources: John J. Tolson, *Airmobility, 1961-1971*, 1973; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## AIKEN, GEORGE DAVID

George D. Aiken was born at Dummerston, Vermont, on August 20, 1892. In keeping with family tradition, he was a farmer and a politician. Running as a Republican, Aiken was elected to the Vermont legislature in 1930, lieutenant governor in 1935, and governor in 1937. During two terms in the governor's mansion, Aiken established a record as a progressive maverick, and in 1940 he was elected to the U.S. Senate and became one of the country's most prominent liberal Republicans. In 1954, Aiken gave up thirteen years of seniority on the Labor and Public Welfare Committee to take a seat on the [Foreign Relations Committee](#). Had he not exercised his option to do so, the seat would have gone to Senator [Joseph McCarthy](#) of Wisconsin, whom Aiken thoroughly disliked. During the next twenty years Aiken became one of the most respected members of the committee.

In the 1960s, when President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) escalated the Vietnam conflict, Aiken at first supported him. But by 1966, he joined the ranks of the doves. In that year, he gave some widely quoted advice to Johnson. He said that the president should pull American troops out of the fighting, and to save face simply "declare the United States the winner and begin de-escalation." Aiken would later point out that President Nixon had essentially followed that course in extricating American ground forces from Vietnam. In 1975 Aiken retired from the Senate and returned to his beloved farm in Vermont. He died on November 19, 1984.

Sources: George G. Aiken, *The Aiken Senate Diary*, 1976; *New York Times*, November 20, 1984.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## AIR AMERICA

One of the many civilian airlines operating in Southeast Asia, Air America was a [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA) "proprietary." A proprietary is an entity that appears to be a normal, legitimate enterprise but actually is operated and controlled by the CIA. To maintain its appearance as an independent business, Air America engaged in activities common to air carriers, especially cargo transportation. In Southeast Asia, even during the war, businesses continued to operate normally, and so civilian air transport was a necessary and lucrative venture. Approximately 75 percent of Air America's flights were not related to the war or to the CIA's involvement in the war, so Air America employees may even have been unaware of its connection to the agency. However, the company primarily was used by the CIA for its numerous war-related activities.

The pilots and crews that were involved in the clandestine activities of Air America were often military veterans, many of whom had served previous tours of duty in Southeast Asia. While some of the CIA-related Air America flights were undramatic, such as commonplace transportation of personnel, materiel, and payrolls, often the flights were extremely dangerous. They frequently involved trips to remote areas dominated by the enemy, and for security reasons, they were usually flown at night and/or under cover of clouds or fog. Also, they were not confined to Vietnam, since the CIA operated extensively in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) and especially [Laos](#) throughout the war. Most of the flights did not involve combat action by the Air America planes, although the aircraft available to Air America did include combat-capable types.

Sources: John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience. Rain of Fire; Air War 1969-1973*, 1984; Christopher Robbins, *Air America*, 1979.

Stafford T. Thomas

## AIR BASE DEFENSE

In the early morning of November 1, 1964, Communist Vietnamese forces attacked [Bien Hoa](#) Air Base, outside of [Saigon](#). Positioning six 81 mm [mortars](#) about 400 meters north of the base, these forces fired some eighty rounds onto parked aircraft and troop billets. These forces then withdrew undetected and unmolested, after killing four American military advisers, wounding thirty others, and hitting twenty B-57 bombers. Of these, five aircraft were completely destroyed. Increasingly after this time American aerial defense forces became attractive targets for Communist forces. Through 1973 there were 475 enemy attacks on American air bases in Vietnam, resulting in 898 American aircraft damaged and 155 service personnel killed in action. An additional 305 aircraft and 154 personnel assigned to the [Republic of Vietnam](#) armed forces were also lost in these attacks.

To counter these attacks the U.S. military directed that forces be deployed to Vietnam to secure these airfields. The first force, the [9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade](#), landed at [Da Nang](#) in March 1965. United States Army and Air Force air base defense units followed soon thereafter. These units combated several threats present to aircraft in Vietnam: sabotage, sapper [infiltration](#), ground attack, and shelling by standoff weapons. Sabotage was little used. Ground attacks by [battalion](#)-sized forces took place on only two occasions. Sapper raids posed a more serious threat, but in terms of numbers and damage, standoff rocket and mortar fire presented the greatest hazard. The air base defense forces were partially successful in countering these threats. From 1969 on attacks decreased every year until the American [withdrawal](#). The [casualties](#) and aircraft losses registered similar declines. At the same time, the U.S. air bases in Vietnam were always vulnerable to Communist attack.

Source: Roger P. Fox, *Air Base Defense in the Republic of Vietnam, 1961-1973*, 1979.

Roger D. Launius

## AIR CAVALRY

During the nineteenth century American cavalry units were horse-mounted troops designed to survey enemy positions and provide screens for incoming infantry units. The horse-mounted cavalry gave way during the twentieth century to [armored personnel carriers](#) and tanks. A major innovation of the Vietnam War was the use of air cavalry units where troops are moved into battlefield positions by helicopters. The [1st Cavalry Division](#) was one of the main air cavalry units in Southeast Asia.

Sources: John J. Tolson, *Airmobility, 1961-1971*, 1973; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.

## AIR DEFENSE, NORTH VIETNAM

The North Vietnamese constructed the most elaborate air defense system in the world during the 1960s and 1970s. Beginning in 1965 [North Vietnam](#) began installing Soviet SA-2 surface-to-air missiles, or [SAM](#). They also employed MiG-17s and MiG-21s to attack American bombers. Finally, North Vietnam used a variety of anti-aircraft weapons against American planes: 37mm guns which fired eighty 1.6-pound shells a minute to an altitude of 9,000 feet; 57mm S-60s which fired seventy 6-pound shells a minute to 15,000 feet; 8mm M1944s which fired twenty 20-pound shells a minute to 30,000 feet; 100mm guns which fired fifteen 35-pound shells a minute to 45,000 feet; and 130mm guns which fired twelve 74-pound shells a minute to 45,000 feet.

Sources: Paul Burbage, et al., *The Battle for the Skies Over North Vietnam, 1964-1972*, 1976; Anthony Robinson, "Air Forces in Vietnam," in John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985.

## **AIR FORCE, UNITED STATES**

The United States Air Force played a major role in the American military effort during the Vietnam War, providing close air support, [tactical airlift](#), and high-altitude bombing strikes by [B-52](#) bombers. The [Seventh Air Force](#) directed all close air support, tactical air-lift, and the Military Air Command, while the Strategic Air Command directed the B-52 strikes. During the war the air force had 1,737 personnel killed-in-action, nearly 3,500 wounded, and lost 2,257 aircraft.

Sources: Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973*, 1977; John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience: Thunder from Above*, 1985, and *The Vietnam Experience: Rain of Fire*, 1984; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.



## AIR POWER

Throughout the more than a decade of American involvement in Vietnam, one critical factor allowed the United States to maintain a military superiority: air power. Air power is a concept, a philosophy developed over several generations by thoughtful flyers and seemingly validated by the conduct of World War II. At its fundamental level it is the ability of an air force to take and maintain control of the skies over its armies; to strike at enemy resources such as combat forces, transportation facilities, and industrial complexes; and to support ground units through the projection of force over long distances.

A certain tension between United States Air Force resources allocated to the tactical mission of ground support and air interdiction of enemy forces behind the battle lines and those allocated to the strategic bombing of enemy industrial and transportation resources has been present since the 1930s. The ideal of strategic bombing, developed between the wars and validated during World War II, became the dominant air force goal thereafter. The primacy of strategic thinking was reflected in the first postwar division of the nation's air resources into three commands in the late 1940s: Strategic Air Command, Air Defense Command, and Tactical Air Command. The first was given more than 100,000 people, the second 26,000, and the third 7,000.

The use of air power in Southeast Asia followed patterns established early in American strategic thinking. Believing that air power alone might succeed in containing the insurgents in [South Vietnam](#), early in the 1960s the United States Air Force and Navy adopted a contingency plan which called for a holding action in South Vietnam using air strike squadrons positioned around the periphery of [China](#). By relying on technology rather than manpower, planners contended, this approach would avoid getting the United States bogged down on the ground in Asia. But air power without ground commitment was insufficient, and in April 1965 President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) sent American ground forces to Vietnam. Other steps followed in rapid succession and before long the air force was fighting four air wars: [North Vietnam](#), South Vietnam, northern [Laos](#), and southern Laos. The bombing campaign against North Vietnam never succeeded as intended, in part because of political decisions to halt operations and in part because of fragmented control by service representatives. The second air war in Southeast Asia, the one fought in South Vietnam, was also less than effective because it was pursued simultaneously by at least six air forces. The tactical air force, the navy, the United States Marines and Army, the [Vietnamese Air Force](#), and the Strategic Air Force of fifty or so [B-52s](#) each pursued a fragmented strategy of operations. The two air wars in Laos were attempts to interrupt the flow of men and supplies coming out of North Vietnam, westward toward the Plain of Jars, and along the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) toward South Vietnam. Once again, politics at both the international and interservice levels hampered effective operations. Indeed, air power in the Vietnam War suffered from the traditional drawbacks of coalition warfare.

Sources: John Schlight, "The Impact of the Orient on Air Power," in Joe C. Dixon, ed., *The American Military and the Far East: Proceedings of the Ninth Military History Symposium USAF Academy, 1980*, 1980; Robert Frank Futrell, *Aces and Aerial Victories: The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1965-1973*, 1976.

Roger D. Launius

## AIR-CUSHION VEHICLES

Because of the extensive marshlands of [South Vietnam](#), and the frequent difficulty of moving propeller-driven craft through water thick with grass, the United States and South Vietnam had to develop a river craft giving its own troops the mobility enjoyed by [Vietcong](#) using sampans. What they turned to was the air-cushion vehicle, a modified Bell Aerosystem craft which moved on a base of air about four feet thick. Its speed was up to 75 knots. United States Navy and Army [Special Forces](#) personnel used air-cushion vehicles to patrol extensive areas of the [Mekong Delta](#). Generally, the air-cushion vehicles were plagued with problems, including heavy fuel consumption, noise, and frequent breakdowns.

Sources: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984; Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 1985; Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984.

## AIRBORNE FORCES

The term "airborne" refers to soldiers who parachute into battle. During the Vietnam War, several airborne units, the [101st Airborne Division](#), the Third Brigade of the [82nd Airborne Division](#), and the [173rd Airborne Brigade](#), were deployed to Southeast Asia, but they were used as infantry helicoptered into battle. Except for isolated exceptions, airborne tactics did not play a significant role in the Vietnam War.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

Between 1964 and 1975, the [Seventh Fleet](#)'s Task Force 77 operated off the coast of Vietnam in the South China Sea. Until the summer of 1966, there were usually two to three carriers in Task Force 77, but beginning in mid-1966 three to four carriers were usually deployed there. Each carrier [wing](#) consisted of between 65 and 100 aircraft, [A-4 Skyhawks](#), [A-1 Skyraiders](#), [A-7 Corsairs IIs](#), [A-6 Intruders](#), [F-4 Phantom II](#)'s and F-8 Crusaders. The aircraft were used over [North Vietnam](#), [South Vietnam](#), [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) to disrupt enemy supply lines and for close air support of American and South Vietnamese ground operations. Nineteen aircraft carriers served separate missions off the coast of Vietnam between 1964 and 1975: the *America*, *Constellation*, *Ticonderoga*, *Yorktown*, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, *Enterprise*, *Bon Homme Richard*, *Coral Sea*, *Forrestal*, *Hancock*, *Hornet*, *Intrepid*, *Kitty Hawk*, *Midway*, *Oriskany*, *Ranger*, *Saratoga*, and *Shangri-La*.

Sources: Peter Mersky and Norman Polmar, *The Naval Air War in Vietnam: 1965-1975*, 1981; Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

## AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS

Airmobile operations involved the use of helicopters to transport troops into battle and to provide fire support at battle sites. Instead of transporting troops into battle while [artillery](#) barrages prepared the way, airmobile operations had transport helicopters move troops simultaneously with artillery and gunship fire, keeping the enemy off guard. During the Vietnam War, airmobile operations were used extensively by the United States Army and [Marine Corps](#), but the major airmobile unit was the [101st Airborne Division](#). Since airmobile operations had not even been tested until the 1950s when reliable helicopters were functioning, Vietnam became the combat breakthrough for airmobile tactics. They proved to be the major tactical innovation of the Vietnam War.

Sources: John J. Tolson, *Airmobility, 1961-1971*, 1973; John H. Hay, Jr., *Tactical and Materiel Innovations*, 1975.

## AIRMUNITIONS SUPPLY

Beginning in 1965 the United States Air Force in Southeast Asia began extensive combat operations, requiring the acquisition and shipment to the theater of a vast quantity of conventional bombs, rockets, ammunition, and associated ordnance. The Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC), charged with support of operational weapons used by the air force, procured these airmunitions, while the Military Air Transport Service, later renamed the [Military Airlift Command](#), and the [Navy's](#) Military Sealift Transport System transported the necessary materiel to Southeast Asia. As operations increased in the combat theater during the latter 1960s, these organizations created a pipeline for airmunition movement from American bases to theater dispersal sites. Based on a requirement to maintain a 30-day supply at the forward Southeast Asian bases and a 120-day supply in the [Philippines](#), the AFLC was forced to plan for airmunitions resupply seven to eight months ahead of estimated operational usage.

To reduce these excessively long lead times in 1965 and 1966, the Department of Defense approved a plan for dedicated transport of munitions to Southeast Asia. The navy made available five cargo ships with a combined capacity of 35,300 tons, and the air force developed the Southeast Asia Airlift system, designated by the acronym SEAIR, to move all types of munitions used in Vietnam. In all, more than one million tons of airmunitions were moved to Southeast Asia between 1965 and 1973. The system worked effectively from 1966 on as bombs, airmunitions, flares, rockets, missiles, and assorted ordnance were moved to combat areas on a timely basis.

Source: Bernard J. Termena, "Logistics in War and Peace," in *Logistics: An Illustrated History of AFLC and Its Antecedents, 1921-1981* (Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio: AFLC Office of History, n.d.)

Roger D. Launius

## AK-47

The AK-47 was the basic infantry weapon of the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) and the [Vietcong](#) (VC). Originally manufactured by the [Soviet Union](#), most of these "assault rifles" used in the war were made in the People's Republic of [China](#), which was the major supplier of armaments to NVA and VC forces. Also known as the Kalashnikov, after its Russian inventor, this weapon was sturdy, reliable, compact, and relatively lightweight. It fired a 7.62mm bullet in a fully automatic mode (continuous firing, like a machine gun, as long as the trigger was squeezed). The high muzzle velocity (speed of the bullet after firing) and the tumbling action of the bullet at the point of impact contributed to its effectiveness since the results were large entry and exit wounds, severe tissue damage, and extensive trauma in body areas near the wound. The combination of these effects plus its rapid-fire capability meant that accuracy was not a major requirement, thus reducing the training time before a soldier could be sent into combat.

Most armaments analysts judge the AK-47, which normally holds thirty bullets, to be superior to the U.S. [M-16](#), which became the standard weapon of American, Korean, and South Vietnamese troops. It was more durable and less adversely affected by the climate and conditions of Vietnam. There are a number of accounts of cases in which American troops preferred to use the AK-47 and in fact did use it when combat conditions permitted. The continuing popularity of this weapon is illustrated by its use in many military hostilities since the Vietnam War.

Sources: Ray Bonds, ed., *The Vietnam War*, 1983; Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984; Edward Clinton Ezell, *The Great Rifle Controversy*, 1984.

Stafford T. Thomas

## ALI, MUHAMMAD

Muhammad Ali was born as Cassius Clay on January 18, 1942, in Louisville, Kentucky. He began boxing at the age of twelve, won two Golden Gloves championships, and in 1960 took the gold medal at the Olympic Games in Rome. Patterning himself after the wrestler Gorgeous George, he developed into a showman, and in 1964 he won the heavyweight championship by defeating Sonny Liston. Immediately after becoming champion he joined the Black Muslims and took the name Muhammad Ali. Two years later his [draft](#) board revoked his 1-Y deferment, which he had received for failing the IQ test, and reclassified him 1-A. Ali appealed for deferment as a conscientious objector on religious principles. "I ain't got no quarrel with those [Vietcong](#), anyway," he said. "They never called me nigger." His appeal was denied and he was drafted on April 18, 1967. Ali refused to go, the World Boxing Association stripped him of the championship, and in June 1967 he was convicted of violating the Selective Service Act, fined \$10,000, and sentenced to five years in prison. Ali became a hero of the [antiwar movement](#), as well as for poor people and blacks. In June 1970 the Supreme Court reversed his conviction, and in October 1974 Ali regained the heavyweight championship. He retired from the ring in 1980. Later that year President Jimmy Carter appointed him a special envoy to Africa to urge an African boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympic games.

Source: Muhammad Ali, *The Greatest*, 1975.

John Ricks



### **ALVAREZ, EVERETT, JR.**

A native of San Jose, California, Lieutenant Everett Alvarez, Jr., was stationed on the USS *Constellation* in the South China Sea at the time of the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) in 1964. Piloting an [A-4 Skyhawk](#), Alvarez was shot down over [North Vietnam](#) on August 5, 1964. He was transferred to the ``[Hanoi Hilton](#)'' prison and spent the next eight years as a prisoner of war. Alvarez was the first American pilot taken prisoner by the North Vietnamese.

Source: Terrence Maitland and Steven Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: Raising the Stakes*, 1982.

## AMERICAN FRIENDS OF VIETNAM

Formed in the fall of 1955, the American Friends of Vietnam (also known as the Vietnam Lobby) had its origins in 1950 after a meeting between Wesley Fishel of [Michigan State University](#) and [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), then living in self-imposed exile. At Fishel's urging, Diem came to the United States where he met Cardinal Spellman, Senators [Mike Mansfield](#) and [John Kennedy](#), and Supreme Court Justice William Douglas, all of whom became Lobby supporters. Friends of Vietnam was an odd aggregation of former leftist intellectuals, conservative generals, and liberal politicians. Their search for a "third way" or "independent nationalist alternative" to "communist totalitarianism" grew out of the Cold War and McCarthyism as many liberals fought to prove their anti-communism rather than attack red-baiting witch-hunts. To prove his Americanism, Senator Kennedy gave a major speech in April 1954 in which he opposed any negotiated settlement allowing [Ho Chi Minh](#) participation in Vietnamese governance.

Lobby members convinced officials in the [Eisenhower](#) administration that Diem, an anti-Communist untainted by French or Japanese association, was right for premier. Eisenhower, however, was never really sold on Diem. In 1955 Diem's regime tottered, but he successfully confronted the [Binh Xuyen](#) and the [Hoa Hao](#) and [Cao Dai](#) religious sects, enabling the Friends of Vietnam to use their political power and press contacts to maneuver Eisenhower into reaffirming and increasing support for "Free Vietnam" against Communist aggression. This required selling Diem to Americans as an Asian democrat, no easy job given Diem's often antidemocratic remarks. The Vietnam Lobby eventually created a number of myths to bolster American support for Diem: (1) the "miracle myth" of political stability, economic development, [land reform](#), and refugee resettlement; (2) the "democratic myth" justifying refusal to hold reunification elections mandated by the Geneva Accords because Communists would win by subverting the election process; (3) the myth that [refugees](#) moving south were portrayed as peasants "voting with their feet" against "Communist oppression"; and (4) the myth that North Vietnamese aggression necessitated Diem's totalitarian measures and substantial increases in American military assistance.

While possessing grains of truth, these myths created false images. "Stability" resulted from brutal oppression. The local economy was disintegrating, thanks partially to American aid. Land reform was a failure, and Diem's favoritism toward northern refugees created animosity among native southerners. Ho Chi Minh was a hero even in the south and would have defeated Diem in both northern and southern Vietnam in a fair election. Rather than common peasants, northern refugees were almost exclusively Catholics having served either in the French colonial government or the [French Union Forces](#) and were urged to migrate by U.S. General Edward Lansdale's propaganda campaign. The [Vietcong](#) organized resistance to Diem over the North Vietnamese government's opposition at first. The Lobby's fealty to Diem was short-lived. After his murder, the Lobby sent a congratulatory telegram to the generals.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Robert Sheer and Warren Hinckle, "The Vietnam Lobby," *Ramparts*, January 25, 1969, pp. 31-36; Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian*, 1963; Hillaire Du Berrier, *Background to Betrayal: The Tragedy of Vietnam*, 1965.

Samuel Freeman

## AMPHIBIOUS FORCES

Task Force 76 of the [Seventh Fleet](#) was responsible for amphibious action during the Vietnam War. Using transport and cargo ships, helicopters, tank landing ships, and dock landing ships, Task Force 76 carried out large numbers of amphibious assaults, especially in [I Corps](#) where the [Marine Amphibious Force](#) was operating. Amphibious forces, including Task Force 76 and Task Force 76.8, assisted in the removal of [refugees](#) from [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) and South Vietnam, as well as American personnel, during the evacuations of 1975.

Sources: Peter L. Hilgartner, *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1974; Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asia Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## **AN LOC, BATTLE OF (1972)**

Between April 13 and July 11, 1972, the siege of An Loc was a major part of the North Vietnamese [Eastertide Offensive](#). An Loc was the capital of Binh Long Province, an area approximately 65 miles north of [Saigon](#). Combined [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) forces left their Cambodian bases and captured Loc Ninh, a town 15 miles north of An Loc. The [ARVN](#) 5th Division (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) went up to defend An Loc, and the NVA then surrounded the town and cut off reinforcements. Through more than three months of intense fighting, the South Vietnamese held their ground, enjoying massive support from American [B-52](#) bombing [sorties](#). On July 11, 1972, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong ended the battle and withdrew from Binh Long Province.

Sources: Tom Carhart, *Battles and Campaigns in Vietnam, 1954-1984*, 1984; Ngo Quang Truong, *The Easter Offensive of 1972*, 1980; G. H. Turley, *The Easter Offensive: Vietnam 1972*, 1985.

## ANNAM

Along with [Tonkin](#) and [Cochin China](#), Annam was the name applied by the French to one of the three major regions of [Vietnam](#). Annam was composed of nearly 57,000 square miles of land joining [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) and [Laos](#) on the west and the South China Sea on the east, north, and south of the seventeenth parallel (see Geneva Accords). Its former capital was [Hue](#) and other principal cities were Binh Dinh, [Da Nang](#), [Quang Tri](#), and Vinh. Anciently inhabited by the Cham people, Annam was conquered by the [Chinese](#) in the third century B.C. and remained a colony until the revolution of 986. The Chinese were expelled by invading Annamites, retook the area in 1407, and were expelled again in 1428, after which Annam remained an independent monarchy until 1802, when the French brought it under their control.

Annam was south of the Red River Delta and at several points was only 30 miles wide. Except for the Montagnard people in the highlands, most of the people of Annam lived along the coast and, in addition to rice cultivation, engaged in a vigorous coastal trade because of the abundance of sheltered bays along the coast.

Sources: Virginia Thompson, *French Indochina*, 1937; Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, 1958; Henry McAleavy, *Black Flags in Vietnam: The Story of the Chinese Intervention*, 1968.

## ANTICOLONIALISM

Anticolonialism is opposition to a nation's acquisition of colonies or holding of colonies or a particular colony. It may arise in the home country itself, as in American opposition to acquiring the [Philippines](#) in 1898-99 and in later American desire to grant the islands their independence. There was such anticolonialism in Europe as well, especially during the second half of the nineteenth century, the era of rapid colonization.

Anticolonialism also arose in Western nations' colonies, expressed by the National Congress in India, Sarekat Islam and the Indonesian Nationalist party in Indonesia, and Katipunan in the Philippines. Vietnamese anticolonialism first appeared in 1859 when the French captured [Saigon](#) and guerrillas operated in [Cochin China](#) thereafter. In the 1885 rebellion of young Emperor Han Nghi and his chief adviser, Ton That Thuyet, the two were defeated at [Hue](#) and fled to [Laos](#), where Thuyet organized a resistance movement. Various nationalists and groups existed early in the twentieth century, using Vietnamese reactions to having to recite in school "Our ancestors the Gauls formerly inhabited Gaul." From French schooling Vietnamese also learned of political and civil liberties and realized that they were denied these by colonialism.

Violence reappeared with the [Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang](#) (Vietnamese Nationalist party), organized by the [Chinese](#) Nationalists and never quite eradicated by the French. [Ho Chi Minh](#) created the Indochinese Communist party (see Lao Dong party) in 1929, in Hong Kong, and eventually it helped to create the Vietnam Independence League, the [Vietminh](#), which later defeated [France](#). Vietnamese anticolonialism, combined with guerrilla war, won victory in the First [Indochina](#) War (1946-54) and was crucial to American failure in the second war when the Saigon government was unable to rally its adherents.

The Communist government of unified Vietnam shares another form of anticolonialism with peoples in many former colonies. Expressed in what has come to be called "neutralism," it is the view that economic and cultural colonialism continued after independence and must also be overcome.

Sources: Selig S. Harrison, *The Widening Gulf: Asian Nationalism and American Policy*, 1978; David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 1971; William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 1975.

Robert W. Sellen

## ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

The United States has often experienced antiwar movements, but never did the opposition become as influential, divisive, and widespread as during the Vietnam War. From 1961 to 1963, American [troop](#) levels in [South Vietnam](#) increased from 685 to 16,000. At first, Americans paid scant attention to U.S. involvement. Beginning in 1965, troop levels increased rapidly, reaching a peak of 543,000 in 1969. The increase, with concomitant increases in [casualties](#), piqued public interest and became a formative factor in the development of the antiwar movement. As the war intensified, the antiwar movement, in reality many movements with diverse goals, emerged, and the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam became the most well-known group.

The antiwar movement owed much to the civil rights movement, borrowing heavily from its direct action techniques based on civil disobedience. College students became deeply involved, especially those who saw civil rights and the war in Vietnam as directly related. After the [Vietcong](#) attack on [Pleiku](#) in 1965, the United States responded with massive air strikes against [North Vietnam](#), and [teach-ins](#) occurred on many campuses. Protest marches, speeches, and congressional hearings followed.

Even though very small, the antiwar movement disagreed over methods and goals. Activists divided over whether to protest the war or the system producing it. Increasingly, a generation gap developed. Alienated young Americans developed a counterculture to demonstrate their anger, long hair, bizarre dress, communal living, and drug use. Older, more affluent Americans began to develop questions about the war when troop levels and casualties increased and [draft](#) calls began reaching their children. Some people believed the war was morally wrong, some thought it unwinnable, and some criticized it for diverting attention and resources from more important domestic problems. Some hoped to use the antiwar movement as a vehicle for altering America's economic and political system. Many divergent groups constituted the antiwar movement, students, the New Left, the Old Left, pacifists, Communists, church groups, liberals, conservatives, intellectuals, anarchists, utopians, and idealists. When protests failed to alter policies in 1967 and 1968, the movement increasingly split between those advocating militant, nonviolent civil disobedience and those calling for violent confrontation and the use of force. Groups like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference advocated nonviolence while others like the [Students for a Democratic Society](#) and the Weather Underground became increasingly militant and prone to violent protests. Militant demonstrators attempted to close Selective Service offices, burned or turned in draft cards, destroyed Selective Service files, boycotted and demonstrated against weapons manufacturers, held massive rallies, bombed ROTC buildings, and practiced self-immolation.

In 1968, the antiwar movement rallied behind the political campaigns of Senator [Robert Kennedy](#) of New York and Senator [Eugene McCarthy](#) of Minnesota. The [Tet Offensive](#) in February 1968 energized the antiwar movement, toppled [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)'s political hopes, and convinced increasingly large numbers of "middle-Americans" that the Vietnam War was a losing effort. After the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), in the spring of 1968, the antiwar movement temporarily lost some of its momentum, and its frustrations exploded with tempestuous demonstrations at the [Democratic National Convention](#) in Chicago.

After [Richard Nixon](#)'s election in 1968, the war and protests continued. Nixon began reducing U.S. troop levels but intensified the bombing of North Vietnam, [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). A nationwide moratorium, involving more than a million demonstrators, occurred in October 1969, and widespread protests followed the U.S. invasion of Cambodia and the [Kent State](#) University incident in 1970. By 1971 polls showed that 71 percent of Americans believed the war had been a mistake. The antiwar minority had become the majority. Because of Nixon's [Vietnamization](#) policy and the [Watergate](#) controversy, the war consumed less and less political energy in 1972 and 1973, and the antiwar movement gradually dissipated. Activists either devoted their time to other counterculture issues, joined the radical underground, or returned to mainstream society.

Sources: Thomas Powers, *Vietnam, The War at Home*, 1984; Clark Dougan and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience: A Nation Divided*, 1984; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975*, 1984.

James Hindman



## AP BAC, BATTLE OF (1963)

The Battle of Ap Bac began to develop in December 1962. Ap Bac was a village in the [Mekong Delta](#), approximately 40 miles southwest of [Saigon](#). Three [Vietcong](#) companies built defensive positions along a mile-long canal connecting Ap Bac with the village of Ap Tan Thoi. The Vietcong dug in behind trees, grass, and shrubs with clear view of the surrounding rice fields. The [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN) Seventh Division attacked the position, and although they outnumbered the Vietcong by ten to one, they were defeated. ARVN was characterized by incompetent officers and terrible morale. At the end of the battle on January 2, 1963, the ARVN had lost five helicopters and sixty dead, while the Vietcong suffered only three [casualties](#). Although American military advisers in South Vietnam tried to claim the battle a victory because the Vietcong abandoned their position, the engagement showed how difficult a guerrilla war would be and how much learning the United States would have to do about the nature of warfare in Southeast Asia.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## APOCALYPSE NOW

*Apocalypse Now*, a United Artists film directed by Francis Ford Coppola and starring Marlon Brando and Martin Sheen, was released in August 1979 after consuming more than \$30 million in four years of production. Based on Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*, the film focuses on a search by Captain Willard (Sheen) for Colonel Walter Kurtz (Brando), a mysterious and insane [Special Forces](#) soldier who has abandoned the war and established an "Angkor Wat-like" kingdom upriver in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). Along the way, Willard encounters absurdity after absurdity, from American go-go dancers and Playboy bunnies airlifted into the war zone to Lieutenant Colonel Kilgore (Robert Duvall), who slaughters Vietnamese to music and instructs his men in the art of surfing in the middle of battle. Despite defects in the narrative, *Apocalypse Now* is a powerful commentary on the "dementia" of the war and the explosive firepower of the American military machine.

Source: *Magill's Survey of Cinema. English Language Films*, 1981.

Terry Martin

## ARC LIGHT OPERATIONS

Code name for the devastating aerial raids of [B-52](#) Stratofortresses against enemy positions in Southeast Asia, the first B-52 Arc Light raid took place on June 18, 1965, on a suspected [Vietcong](#) base north of [Saigon](#). For this raid elements of the 2nd and 320th Bombardment Wings, of the Strategic Air Command, had deployed from the United States to Anderson Air Force Base, Guam. Shortly after this strike, the results of which were inconclusive, several Americans began to question the advisability of "swatting flies with sledgehammers." During the eight years of Arc Light operations, such criticism became increasingly common.

The B-52s assigned to the Arc Light mission were involved in several types of operations; air interdiction, strategic bombing, and raids on such important targets as [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong were only a few such episodes. For instance, in November 1965, B-52s directly supported American ground forces for the first time, and were used regularly for that purpose thereafter. Perhaps the most important such action involved support of incursions into [Cambodia](#) (see [Kampuchea; Operation Binh Tay](#)) and [Laos](#) (see [Lam Son 719](#)) in 1970 and 1971, operations designed to check flows of North Vietnamese personnel and assets from safe havens on [South Vietnam's](#) border into the country.

Between June 18, 1965, and August 18, 1973, the effective dates of Arc Light operations, the Strategic Air Command scheduled 126,663 combat [sorties](#) for B-52s, of which 126,615 were actually launched. Of this total, 125,479 sorties actually reached their target areas and 124,532 successfully released their bombs on target. Geographically, 27 percent of the missions were flown in Laos, 12 percent in Cambodia, and 6 percent in North Vietnam. The remainder attacked targets in South Vietnam. These missions expended more than 3.5 million tons of conventional ordnance. Altogether, the Air Force lost thirty-one B-52s during Arc Light operations, eighteen from hostile fire over North Vietnam and thirteen from other operational causes.

Source: Robert R. Kritt, "B-52 Arc Light Operations," in Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973, An Illustrated Account*, 1977.

Robert D. Launius

## ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS

Highly adaptable vehicles running on tanklike tracks, the armored personnel carriers, or APCs, proved to be the backbone of armored cavalry formations during the Vietnam War. The M113 was the most important APC, and it could be adapted for use as a carrier for [mortars](#), machine guns, flamethrowers, troops, and command posts. When properly armed and protected with heavy machine guns and hatch, they could also be used as assault vehicles. The M113 was lightly armored with aluminum and equipped with a .50 caliber Browning heavy machine gun on its roof. In addition to its driver, the M113 APC carried eleven infantry troops and a machine gunner. It had a speed of 40 mph on land and nearly 4 mph in water. By January 1968 there were more than 2,100 M113 APCs in Vietnam. By that time the APC had even evolved into an ACAV, armored cavalry assault vehicle. Armored cavalry units were reequipped with M113s upon arrival in Vietnam, and they modified the vehicle by building armored shields around the .50 caliber machine gun and adding two 7.62mm M60 machine guns.

Sources: Ian Vhoog, "Land Forces in Vietnam and Their Weapons," in John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984.

## ARMORED WARFARE

Although jungle fighting has traditionally not been a hospitable environment for armored battle, the Vietnam War provided an exception, with both sides using tanks and [armored personnel carriers](#) (APCs). Before 1965 the United States and the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN) had only some M113 APCs, M8 armored cars, and Gage V-100 Commando armored cars. But beginning in 1965 the United States Marines had a tank [battalion](#) of M48 A3 Patton tanks with each of its two [divisions](#). Early in 1966 the army's [1st Infantry Division](#) also brought a [squadron](#) of M48s to Vietnam. In 1969 the M551 Sheridan tanks were deployed to Vietnam, but they suffered from constant electronic, engine, and transmission problems in the wet South [Vietnamese climate](#). The M48 remained the backbone of American armor. The M113 APCs were important, especially after they were reequipped with new armored shields around the .50 caliber machine gun and new 7.62mm M60 machine guns. Eventually, the United States had three tank battalions in Vietnam, as well as ten battalions of APC mounted infantry, one armored [regiment](#), and five armored cavalry squadrons. By the end of the war ARVN had three tank battalions and eighteen armored cavalry units.

North Vietnam did not employ tanks until later in the conflict. Their tanks first appeared in 1968 with the use of Soviet PT-76 amphibious tanks to attack a [Special Forces](#) camp near [Khe Sanh](#). Eventually they added Soviet T-34, T-54, and T-59 tanks until their armor totaled 700 vehicles by 1975. Because of inferior training, the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) armored units were no match for either the U.S. or ARVN groups, but the NVA made effective use of 57mm recoilless rifles, RPG-2 and RPG-7 rocket grenades, and the Soviet ``Sagger" wire-guided missiles. In the Final Offensive (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)) of 1975, the 700 NVA tanks overran the 350 ARVN tanks.

Sources: Simon Dunstan, *Vietnam Tracks: Armor in Battle 1945-1975*, 1982; Donn A. Starry, *Mounted Combat in Vietnam*, 1979; Ian Vhoog, ``Land Forces in Vietnam," in John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985.

## ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

In December 1972, the Army of the [Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN) had a combat strength of nearly 500,000 troops, of which 108,000 were regular troops, 377,000 Regional and [Popular Forces](#), and 14,000 Border Rangers. Those troops were divided into eleven infantry [divisions](#) (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 18th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, and 25th), one [marine](#) division, and one parachutist division. Those divisions were divided into a total of 18 armored cavalry squadrons, 124 infantry [battalions](#), 9 marine battalions, 55 Ranger battalions, 68 [artillery](#) battalions, 40 engineer battalions, 16 signal battalions, and 12 military police battalions. By that time, ARVN had suffered more than 190,000 troops killed in action during the war.

ARVN had its beginnings as the [Vietnamese National Army](#), which the French created in 1950. By the end of 1951 it totaled 38,000 troops. After the fall of [Dien Bien Phu](#) and the rise to power of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in 1954 and 1955, the Vietnamese National Army became the nucleus of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. By the end of 1959, the ARVN had grown to 234,000 troops, and it remained that size until 1964, when a major buildup began in order to fight off the [Vietcong](#). At the end of 1964 ARVN totaled more than 500,000 troops, and that total increased to 720,000 at the end of 1966, 780,000 at the end of 1967, 800,000 at the end of 1968, 875,000 at the end of 1969, 940,000 at the end of 1970, and 1,000,000 at the end of 1972, of which half were considered combat strength.

Inside ARVN, there were a number of top-flight military units, the equal to any fighting in the war. Those included the [ARVN Airborne Division](#), the [1st Infantry Division](#), and the [ARVN Marines](#). Time and time again they distinguished themselves during the war. Nevertheless, many of the ARVN units suffered from serious problems. All too often, military officers had been selected for their political connections, not their tactical abilities, and many ARVN units suffered from severe leadership problems. Although the United States tried to work on military training, many of the ARVN units were also characterized by poor, inconsistent training. ARVN soldiers often suffered terrible morale problems because enlistments were involuntary and tours of duty indefinite, because they hesitated to fight long distances away from their home villages, because they too often witnessed corruption on the part of their officers, and because they frequently had little sense of esprit de corps or deep convictions about the purpose of the war. But the real problem behind ARVN was the political instability of the government of the Republic of Vietnam. Corruption, political assassination, fraudulent elections, and constant political infighting undermined the credibility of the civilian government and helped incapacitate the military. Still, it is important to remember that ARVN forces suffered 243,000 soldiers killed in action and another 507,000 seriously wounded during the war, and such figures contradict the conclusions of many that South Vietnamese soldiers were characterized by cowardice in face of the enemy.

Sources: Dong Van Khuyen, *The RVNAF*, 1980; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Ian Vhoog, "Land Forces in Vietnam and Their Weapons," in John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985.

## ARMY, UNITED STATES

Throughout the Vietnam War, the main burden of battle fell on the United States Army. More than 65 percent of the American personnel wounded or killed in action in Vietnam were serving in the army. Between 1961 and 1975, 30,868 army personnel died from hostile action in Vietnam, and 7,193 died nonhostile deaths. A total of 201,536 army personnel were wounded in action in Vietnam. The commander of the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) was an army general. Throughout the course of the war, the army deployed to Vietnam a total of 81 infantry [battalions](#), 3 tank battalions, 12 cavalry squadrons, 70 [artillery](#) and air defense artillery battalions, and 142 aviation companies and [air cavalry](#) troops.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.

## ARTILLERY

During the Vietnam War the United States Army deployed sixty-five artillery [battalions](#) and five air defense battalions to Vietnam. In addition, there were ten artillery battalions from the United States Marines and United States [naval bombardment](#) from the [Seventh Fleet](#) in the South China Sea. By the end of the war the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) had sixty-four artillery battalions. [South Korea](#) supplied six artillery battalions, [Thailand](#) three, and the [Philippines](#) and [Australia](#) one each. The primary artillery weapons employed in Vietnam included: (1) the M109, a 155mm self-propelled howitzer with a range of 14,600 meters; (2) the M107, a 175mm gun with a range of 32,600 meters; (3) the M110, an 8-inch self-propelled howitzer with a range of 16,800 meters; (4) the M114A1, a 155mm howitzer with a range of 14,600 meters; (5) the M102, a 105mm howitzer with a range of 11,500 meters; (6) the M108, a 105mm light howitzer with a range of 11,500 meters; and (7) the M101A1, an older 105mm howitzer with a range of 11,000 meters.

Sources: David Ewing Ott, *Field Artillery, 1954-1973*, 1975; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984. ARVN See Army of the Republic of Vietnam



## ARVN 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

The [1st Infantry Division](#) was second only to the [Airborne](#) Division as an elite [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) unit. Stationed in [I Corps](#), the 1st Division was responsible for protecting five northern provinces against [Vietcong](#) attack and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) [infiltration](#) from [Laos](#) and across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). It was a formidable task given the rugged terrain. The 1st Division was often assisted by other elite ARVN units, including the Airborne Division, Marines, and Rangers, as well as by U.S. units, particularly marines and the 101st Airborne Division. The 1st Division saw heavy combat during the war. I Corps was sparsely populated with only two major cities, [Hue](#) and [Da Nang](#). Given a strong Vietcong presence in I Corps, and resistance by ARVN troops to serving away from home, it was always difficult to maintain sufficient manpower. Elite ARVN units were used to being shifted around the country. Hue, the imperial capital and always resistive to Saigon's authority, was a center for [Buddhist](#) opposition to [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) and subsequent rulers of South Vietnam. Da Nang was an important port city often influenced by events in Hue. During the 1966 Buddhist crisis, the 1st Division sided with the Buddhist, and [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) sent the Airborne Division in to restore government authority. American advisers reacted with horror as ARVN's two best units prepared to battle each other. The disaster was averted when Ky promised elections.

The 1st Division participated in the ill-conceived 1971 Laotian invasion. It bore the brunt of the 1972 [Eastertide Offensive](#), as well as the "strategic raids" of 1974 which left it in a weakened condition as the Final Offensive approached (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)). With I Corps collapsing, [Nguyen Van Thieu](#)'s abrupt troop movements and indecisive orders made the situation impossible. The 1st Division was completely exposed and overwhelmed.

Sources: Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam*, 1984; Clark Dougan and David Fulghum, *The Vietnam Experience: The Fall of the South*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; [Cao Van Vien](#), *The Final Collapse*, 1983.

Samuel Freeman

## ARVN AIRBORNE DIVISION

The ARVN (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) Airborne Division was first organized into the [French Union Forces](#) as individual battalions. Four airborne battalions were committed to [Dien Bien Phu](#) and they distinguished themselves. After the Geneva Conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)) of 1954, Vietnamese units were integrated into the ARVN, with Vietnamese officers replacing the French. In the mid-1960s the airborne battalions were organized into independent brigades, and in 1968 into the Airborne Division. They made a number of parachute assaults between 1950 and 1975. The ARVN Airborne Division was widely considered the best unit in the South Vietnamese military and the equal of any military unit in Southeast Asia. In 1966 [General Nguyen Cao Ky](#) sent airborne units to subdue rebellious units in [I Corps](#) during the "Buddhist crisis." Against the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) and [Vietcong](#), the airborne troops were used as a "fire brigade." The ARVN Airborne Division was one of the few units to serve in all four tactical zones.

During the [Tet Offensive](#), the division fought extremely well, tenaciously holding key positions. At [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#), an airborne training battalion was deployed to close a breach in ARVN lines where NVA-Vietcong forces were entering the base. They closed the breach and decisively defeated the attacking forces. The battalion received numerous decorations. In 1969 the division was paired with the U.S. 1st Cavalry in joint operations along the Cambodian border (see Kampuchea), spearheading the 1970 Cambodian invasion (see Operation Binh Tay). In 1971 the division suffered heavy [casualties](#) in the ill-conceived Laotian invasion (Lam Son 719). During the 1972 [Eastertide Offensive](#), and again throughout 1974, the division saw heavy combat in I Corps. As the 1975 Final Offensive (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)) overran I Corps, the division was withdrawn to defend [Saigon](#), where they provided the last organized resistance against the NVA.

While other South Vietnamese units were ineffective, wilting under fire, the Airborne Division and a handful of other elite units fought well, even heroically. They were well-trained, well-equipped, and well-led. The French instilled the airborne esprit de corps which the division never lost. Division commanders gave troops the security of knowing that the unit took care of their families while they were away and if they were killed, and of them if they were disabled.

Sources: Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-Year War*, 1984; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Dong Van Khuyen, *The RVNAF*, 1980; [Cao Van Vien](#) and Dong Van Khuyen, *Reflections of the Vietnam War*, 1980.

Samuel Freeman

## ARVN MARINES

One of [ARVN's](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) three best units, the marines served in all four [Corps](#) Tactical Zones, and most extensively in [I Corps](#). Organized into six [battalions](#) with one battalion of [artillery](#), the marines were given additional artillery and upgraded to a [division](#) in October 1968. Marine units fought well during the [Tet Offensive](#) but were plagued with desertions, and 1969 was devoted to rebuilding. They did not participate in the 1970 Cambodian invasion (see Operation Binh Tay), but were involved in the 1971 Laotian invasion (see [Lam Son](#) 719), being assigned to secure the southern flank. Fighting on unfamiliar and extremely difficult terrain, against a superior enemy force, the marines took heavy [casualties](#). Although some units did not perform up to expectation and panic gripped some during the retreat, it is a testimony to the marines (as well as the [1st Infantry Division](#) and the [Airborne](#) Division) that they did not surrender and were not wiped out as the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) made every effort to encircle and annihilate ARVN's three best divisions.

During the 1972 [Eastertide Offensive](#), I Corps Marines delayed NVA forces, enabling [Saigon](#), which responded too slowly, to counterattack. While the 3rd Infantry Division disintegrated, one [regiment](#) surrendered without a fight, no marine unit surrendered or broke. One battalion of 300 was reduced in two days to 69 men. They fought, maneuvered, regrouped, and fought again, continuing to fight as a unit despite decimation. Although badly mauled marine units participated in the counterattack, they ultimately regained [Quang Tri](#) City and most of I Corps. In face of the NVA's 1975 Final Offensive (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)), I and [II Corps](#) collapsed. ARVN units evaporated. [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) interference and indecisive orders prevented any possibility of an effective defense. Marine units which were still operative were redeployed to [III Corps](#) for the futile defense of Saigon.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-year War*, 1984; G. H. Turley, *The Easter Offensive*, 1985; Clark Dougan and David Fulghum, *The Vietnam Experience: The Fall of the South*, 1985

Samuel Freeman

## ATROCITIES

Unlike earlier wars in the United States, the conflict in Vietnam brought home to most Americans the fact that their country, as well as the enemy, was capable of committing atrocities. The case of [William Calley](#) and the massacre at [My Lai](#) was the most intense example, but the press regularly circulated stories of civilian [casualties](#), torture and executions of [Vietcong](#) prisoners, throwing Vietcong [prisoners of war](#) out of helicopters, and cutting off the ears of Vietcong and North Vietnamese dead. As a guerrilla war without fronts, and fought in a distant land against a different ethnic group, the Vietnam War was ripe for atrocities. American soldiers, tired and frustrated about the environment and the nature of the conflict, angry about losing comrades and being unable to separate the Vietcong from civilians, came to look upon all Vietnamese as combatants. Approximately 10 percent of all American casualties were from [booby traps](#), and during lulls in formal military engagements that rate was even higher. American soldiers often developed feelings of deep hostility for the Vietnamese. Between 1965 and 1973, 278 army and [marine](#) soldiers were convicted of serious offenses, murder, rape, and negligent homicide, against Vietnamese civilians, but civilian casualties in the field, from accident and atrocities, were far higher. The press, which was more active in the Vietnam War than in any earlier conflict in American history, was also more able than ever to carry the story of the war back home.

But Americans were not alone in committing atrocities. Terrorism was a major weapon used by the Vietcong in promoting their cause. More than 25,000 people were part of the Vietcong Security Service, and between 1957 and 1972 they were responsible for nearly 37,000 assassinations and nearly 60,000 kidnappings, usually government officials, religious leaders, civil servants, teachers, and prospective draftees. Vietcong terrorism was also used to guarantee a lack of cooperation among peasants and villagers for the pacification programs of the United States (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) and South Vietnam (see [Accelerated Pacification Campaign](#)).

Finally, civilian atrocities commonly resulted from indiscriminate bombing or shelling of major cities. The Vietcong and North Vietnamese killed large numbers of civilians in their [artillery](#) barrages against [Saigon](#), [Hue](#), and [Da Nang](#), and the United States killed large numbers of civilians in its bombing raids against [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong. Even conservative estimates of civilian deaths in Vietnam total more than 250,000 people during the war. The magnitude of the atrocities, on both sides, during the war in Vietnam helped reinforce in the mind of the American public that the conflict in Southeast Asia was a futile, brutalizing effort from which the United States ought to withdraw.

Sources: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War*, 1977; Peter D. Trooboff, ed., *Law and Responsibility in Warfare: The Vietnam Experience*, 1975.

## AUSTRALIA

Because of its charter membership in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, Australia found herself drawn into the American sphere of influence in the Pacific. And it was a role she did not resent. After the French defeat at [Dien Bien Phu](#) in 1954, the Australians steadily warned the United States that the fall of [South Vietnam](#) would threaten democracies throughout Asia. Australian officials believed the [domino theory](#). As early as 1962, Australia had sent thirty military advisers to work with the [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) on jungle and guerrilla tactics. After the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) in 1964, Australia increased its [troop](#) contingent in South Vietnam to 1,300 people, with a large combat [battalion](#) at [Bien Hoa](#). Under pressure from Washington in 1965 and 1966, Australia increased that commitment, eventually to more than 8,000 troops at its peak in October 1967. Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt consistently offered his support to [Lyndon Johnson](#), politically as well as militarily, even to the point of using a conscription system to supply its troop commitment. Next to the South Koreans, Australia provided the most military support to the United States in the conflict.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Peter King, *Australia's Vietnam*, 1983; Stanley Robert Larsen and James Lawton Collins, Jr., *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 1975.



## **B**

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``BUST CAPS"

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BUI DIEM

BUI PHAT

BUI TIN

BUNDY, McGEORGE

BUNDY, WILLIAM

BUNKER, ELLSWORTH

THE BAMBOO BED

THE BIG V

THE BOYS OF COMPANY C





## ``BOAT PEOPLE``

The term ``boat people" became a euphemism for Vietnamese [refugees](#) fleeing Vietnam after the fall of [Saigon](#) in 1975. Although some of the refugees made their way to freedom overland through [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) into [Thailand](#), most of them left in small boats hoping to make it to Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, or the [Philippines](#). Demographers now estimate that more than a million people fled Vietnam by boat, earning the title of ``boat people." Their voyages were beset with danger. Pirates in the South China Sea regularly victimized them, and Indonesia and Malaysia frequently rejected them even when they did make landfall. Tens of thousands drowned at sea. Although exact statistics are difficult to obtain, perhaps 250,000 Vietnamese ``boat people" died on the South China Sea from various causes.

Sources: ``No More Room for Refugees," *Time*, May 10, 1982; Muriel Stanek, *We Came from Vietnam*, 1985; Darrel Montero, *Vietnamese Americans: Patterns of Resettlement and Socioeconomic Adjustment in the United States*, 1979; Bruce Grant, *The Boat People*, 1979.

## **``BUST CAPS''**

``Busts caps" was a slang term meaning to fire a rifle. Used predominantly by U.S. Marines, the term refers to the unique sound of the [M-16](#) rifle, which was the standard weapon used by American, South Vietnamese, and South Korean troops after 1964. Unlike the [AK-47](#), which was commonly used by Communist forces and had a bigger bullet, the relatively narrow bullet of the M-16 makes a higher-pitched noise when it is fired and sounds like a cap pistol. Thus, to ``bust caps" meant to fire the M-16 rifle, and through repeated usage the term came to mean firing any kind of rifle. The term also spawned a number of derivations, such as ``capping," which simply meant shooting.

Source: Mark Baker, *Nam*, 1981.

Stafford T. Thomas

## B-52 BOMBER

The B-52 is regarded by experts as the most successful military aircraft ever produced. It began entering service in the mid-1950s, and by 1959 had replaced the awesome but obsolete B-36 as the backbone of Strategic Air Command's (SAC) heavy bomber force. Its primary mission was nuclear deterrence through retaliation. The B-52 has been amazingly adaptable. It was initially designed to achieve very high-altitude penetration of enemy airspace. But when that concept was rendered obsolete by the development of accurate surface-to-air missiles (), the B-52 was redesigned and reconstructed for low-altitude penetration. It has undergone eight major design changes since first flown in 1952, from B-52A to B-52H. Literally, although much the same in appearance, the most recent version is a radically different aircraft, superior in every way to the first models.

When the Vietnam situation began to deteriorate in 1964, key SAC commanders began pressing for SAC to get involved in any U.S. action in Vietnam. But the first problem was one of mission. How could a heavy strategic bomber designed to carry nuclear bombs be used in Vietnam? The answer was to modify the B-52 again. Two B-52 units, the 320th Bomb [Wing](#) and the 2nd Bomb Wing, had their aircraft modified to carry "iron bombs," i.e., conventional high explosive bombs. After a second modification, each B-52 used in Vietnam could carry eighty-four 500-pound bombs internally and twenty-four 750-pound bombs on underwing racks, for a 3,000-mile nonstop range. The two bomb wings were deployed to operate from Guam as the 133rd Provisional Wing. Later, additional units were deployed to [Thailand](#) and Okinawa to reduce in-flight time, and thus warning time.

The first B-52 raids against a target in South Vietnam (and the first war action for the B-52) took place on June 18, 1965. The target was a [Vietcong](#) jungle sanctuary. The results were not encouraging. Two B-52s collided in flight to the target and were lost in the Pacific Ocean. The results of the bombing could not be evaluated because the area was controlled by the Vietcong. Although the press criticized the use of B-52s, ground commanders were much impressed with the potential of the B-52. Previous attempts to use tactical bombers and [fighter-bombers](#) (see fighters) to disrupt enemy [troop](#) concentrations and supply depots had not been successful. But the B-52 was a veritable flying boxcar, and the effect of a [squadron](#)-size attack was to create a virtual Armageddon on the ground.

Ironically, the most effective use of the B-52 in Vietnam was for tactical support of ground troops. B-52s were called in to disrupt enemy troop concentrations and supply areas with devastating effect. B-52 raids were also flown against targets in [North Vietnam](#), [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), and [Laos](#). [General William Westmoreland](#) considered the B-52s essential to U.S. efforts in Vietnam. From June 1965 until August 1973, when operations ceased, B-52s flew 124,532 [sorties](#) which successfully dropped their bomb loads on target. Thirty-one B-52s were lost, eighteen shot down by the enemy (all over North Vietnam), and thirteen lost to operational problems.

Sources: Carl Berger, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973*, 1984; Andrew W. Waters, *All the U.S. Air Force Airplanes, 1907-1983*, 1983; R. Bruce Harley, *A Short History of Strategic Bombardment*, 1971.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## **BA GIA, BATTLE OF (1965)**

On May 29, 1965, a contingent of more than one thousand [Vietcong](#) attacked three battalions of South Vietnamese troops at the hamlet of Ba Gia near Quang Ngai. The [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) troops panicked and fled the battlefield, leaving behind their weapons and uniforms. The Vietcong were driven out of Ba Gia by concentrated rocket and [napalm](#) fire from U.S. F-100 Super Sabres and [A-1 Skyraiders](#). South Vietnamese troops reoccupied Ba Gia early in June, but on July 4, after only ninety minutes of battle, the Vietcong had driven them out again. Even though his own troops were standing by at the Quang Ngai airfield, [General Nguyen Chanh Thi](#) requested the assistance of United States Marines, who attacked and dislodged the Vietcong. Along with several other engagements in the late spring of 1965, Ba Gia convinced U.S. policymakers that South Vietnamese forces would need massive American military assistance if they were to stave off a Vietcong takeover.

Source: Terrence Maitland and Peter McInerney, *A Contagion of War*, 1983.

## BAEZ, JOAN

Joan Baez was born in Staten Island, New York, on January 9, 1941. She excelled in music, and after her father began teaching physics at Harvard in the late 1950s, she turned to folk music, singing in local coffeehouses. Baez received several recording contracts after the [Newport](#) Folk Festival. Her liberal politics and belief in peace and disarmament made her a natural antiwar leader when the Vietnam conflict escalated in the 1960s. Baez refused to pay her income taxes in 1966 to protest the war and was arrested in Oakland, California, in 1967 for picketing in front of the Northern California [Draft](#) Induction Center. Baez married draft resister David Harris, and together they led a number of protest movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1973 Baez culminated her antiwar activities with a visit to [Hanoi](#), and after the visit she reported that American air raids had caused widespread destruction of Hanoi as well as wiping out part of an American POW camp.

Sources: Charles Mortiz, ed., *Current Biography*, 1964; Stanley Millet, *South Vietnam-U.S. Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia*, 1973; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984.

Sally Smith

## BALL, GEORGE WILDMAN

George Ball was born in Des Moines, Iowa, on December 21, 1909. He took both his undergraduate and law degrees at Northwestern University in 1930 and 1933, and then joined the general counsel's office of the Department of the Treasury. Between 1935 and 1942 Ball practiced law in Chicago, and in 1942 he became associate general counsel with the Lend Lease Administration. In 1944 President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) named him director of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey in London. After the war Ball returned to private law practice in Washington, D.C., and in 1961 he became under [secretary of state](#) for economic affairs in the [Kennedy](#) administration. Later in the year Kennedy named him under secretary of state, and Ball became an influential figure in the American diplomatic establishment. Between 1961 and 1966, Ball was an opponent of American involvement in the Vietnam War. He opposed the [troop](#) buildup occurring during the Kennedy administration and repeatedly argued that the regime of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in [South Vietnam](#) was hopelessly corrupt, that a land war in [Indochina](#) was not in the strategic interests of the United States, and that the objective of creating a viable, democratic nation there was unreachable. After the [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#) in the summer of 1964, Ball opposed American bombing of [North Vietnam](#), and he maintained that position throughout 1965 and 1966. From his experience as head of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, Ball was convinced that American bombing would only make the North Vietnamese more committed to their political and military objectives. Frustrated about the drift of American policy, Ball resigned from the State Department in September 1966 and returned to his law practice. In 1968, after the [Tet Offensive](#), President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) appointed Ball a member of the Senior Advisory Group to evaluate American policy in Southeast Asia. Taking their cue from Ball's long-held position, the Senior Advisory Group urged disengagement from Vietnam. In 1969, Ball became a senior partner in the Lehman Brothers investment firm. He is the author of a number of books, including *The Discipline of Power* (1968), *Diplomacy in a Crowded World* (1976), and *The Past Has Another Pattern* (1982).

Sources: *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985; George W. Ball, *Diplomacy in a Crowded World*, 1976; [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; Herbert Schandler, *The Unmaking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam*, 1977.

## BAN ME THUOT

Ban Me Thuot is the capital city of Darlac Province and the largest urban concentration in the [Central Highlands](#). Its 1970 population was estimated at over 65,000 people. In 1975, Ban Me Thuot was the central objective in the NVA's (see [North Vietnamese Army](#)) attempt to seize the Central Highlands during the Final Offensive (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)). Known as Campaign 275, the assault on Ban Me Thuot was led by General [Van Tien Dung](#), commander of ten NVA [divisions](#). On March 10, 1975, Dung had the NVA 10th, 316th, and 320th Divisions move on Ban Me Thuot and the ARVN 23rd Division (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)). Intense fighting lasted for two days, but on March 12, 1975, the NVA were in control of the city. The fall of Ban Me Thuot had great strategic significance because there were no ARVN troops left between the NVA soldiers in Ban Me Thuot and the South China Sea. The North Vietnamese had an unprecedented opportunity to cut South Vietnam in half. Eventually, of course, they abandoned that strategy and concentrated on the April massive assault on [Saigon](#).

Sources: Alan Dawson, *55 Days: The Fall of South Vietnam*, 1977; Van Tien Dung, *Our Great Spring Victory*, 1977; Clark Dougan and David Fulghum, *The Vietnam Experience: The Fall of the South*, 1985.



## BAO DAI

Bao Dai, the last emperor of [Annam](#), was born Prince Nguyen Vinh Thuy on October 22, 1913, to the Emperor Khai Dinh. He became emperor in 1925 at the age of twelve, but did not actually assume the throne until 1932, after spending ten years in [France](#) receiving an education. The empire of Annam was essentially a powerless entity, however, because the French Treaty of Protectorate in 1884 had limited the powers of the emperor and the Convention of 1925 had stripped away all the rest. But on becoming emperor, Bao Dai hoped to create a modernized imperial government and induce France to establish a true protectorate, with limited independence, over Vietnam. He remained emperor until 1945. During the Japanese occupation of Vietnam, Bao Dai cooperated with the invaders and earned the ire of the anti-French, Communist [Vietminh](#).

When news of the Japanese surrender reached Vietnam in August 1945, peasants began attacking Japanese installations and food storage facilities, and Vietminh leaders began moving into positions of power. In [Hanoi](#) [Ho Chi Minh](#) formed the National Liberation Committee, named himself president, and hoped to greet the returning Allies from a position of power. Vietminh groups in the southern part of Vietnam battled with the [Cao Dai](#) and [Hoa Hao](#), and in Annam, at the imperial palace in [Hue](#), demanded the abdication of Bao Dai. Known as the August Revolution, the transfer of power from the Japanese to various Vietnamese groups toppled Bao Dai from the throne, leaving Ho Chi Minh's Vietminh followers in control.

Bao Dai lived in Paris between 1945 and 1949, but returned to Vietnam in 1949 after a provisional government in 1948 had reunited [Cochin China](#), Annam, and [Tonkin](#). But he was little more than a French puppet. After the Battle of [Dien Bien Phu](#) and expulsion of the French in 1954, Bao Dai lost his base of power, and a national referendum in 1955 stripped him of his office as chief of state and turned power over to [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). Bao was then exiled to France.

Sources: Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1940-1955*, 1966; Virginia Thompson, *French Indochina*, 1937; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, 2 vols., 1967.

Terry Martin

## BATTALION

A battalion is an organizational institution in the army and [marine corps](#). Commanded by a lieutenant colonel, an infantry battalion usually has around 900 people, and an [artillery](#) battalion about 500 people. During the Vietnam War, American battalions were usually much smaller than that.

Sources: Shelby Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## BATTERY

A battery in the army or [marine corps](#) is an [artillery](#) unit of approximately 100 people commanded by a captain. In the Vietnam War there were howitzer batteries, search light batteries, machine gun batteries, and target acquisition batteries.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## **BEEHIVE AMMUNITION**

``Beehive ammunition" was used by U.S. forces in Vietnam as ammunition for rockets, howitzers, and recoilless rifles. The rounds were filled with thousands of small metal flechettes which exploded in a 30-degree arc.

Source: Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984.

## **BEN HAI RIVER**

The Ben Hai River is the frontier boundary between [North](#) and [South Vietnam](#), dividing the two countries between July 22, 1954, and April 29, 1975, when South Vietnam fell. Generally paralleling the seventeenth parallel (see [Geneva Accords](#)), the Ben Hai River comes out of the Laotian highlands and runs into the South China Sea.

Source: *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, 1969.

## BEN SUC

Ben Suc was a village of perhaps 5,500 people located along the [Saigon](#) River in Binh Duong Province. About 30 miles northwest of Saigon, Ben Suc was in the heart of the [Iron Triangle](#) and a center of activity for the [Vietcong](#). [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) soldiers had kept an outpost at Ben Suc between 1955 and 1964 until Vietcong troops ousted them. After that, the Vietcong received the active cooperation of the village inhabitants. Between 1965 and 1967, ARVN troops, assisted by massive American air strikes, phosphorus bombs, [napalm](#), and [B-52](#) assaults, tried unsuccessfully to retake Ben Suc. Late in 1966, American officials launched [Operation Cedar Falls](#) to wipe out Vietcong resistance in the Iron Triangle. Although Ben Suc lay just beyond the northwestern tip of the Iron Triangle, it was an important objective for American troops in Operation Cedar Falls. In the end the village of Ben Suc became a notorious example of the futility of American military policy in [South Vietnam](#).

On January 8, 1967, sixty troop-carrying helicopters took off from the Dau Tieng airstrip and deposited 420 soldiers right in the middle of Ben Suc. Since Ben Suc was reputedly the headquarters for Vietcong control of the Iron Triangle, the American soldiers expected intense resistance. Instead, they encountered only sporadic small arms fire. The villagers were evacuated from the village and taken to a new refugee camp at Phy Loi near Phu Cuong. The 1st Engineer Battalion of the [1st Infantry Division](#), then moved into Ben Suc with Rome plows, tankdozers, and M-48 antimine tanks and leveled the village, destroying every home and building and bulldozing all the mango, jackfruit, and grapefruit fields. Miles of tunnels used by the Vietcong were destroyed at the same time. Two days after the end of Operation Cedar Falls on January 26, Vietcong were back in the area. At home the American press reacted to the razing of Ben Suc with outrage. Less than 30 miles from Saigon, U.S. and ARVN troops, after destroying a village and turning nearly six thousand people into [refugees](#), had not been able to prevent Vietcong control of the area. Although Operation Cedar Falls was a blow to the Vietcong in the area of the Iron Triangle, it also raised serious doubts among the American press and American policymakers about the effectiveness of both pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) and the ["search and destroy"](#) strategy.

Sources: Jonathan Schell, *The Village of Ben Suc*, 1967; Bernard William Rogers, *Cedar Falls-Junction City: A Turning Point*, 1974.

## BEN TRE

Ben Tre was the capital city of the Kien Hoa Province in [IV Corps](#). South of [Saigon](#), Kien Hoa Province borders the Vietnamese coast along the South China Sea. Ben Tre became temporarily famous in 1968 when [Vietcong](#) forces captured the city during the [Tet Offensive](#). Overwhelming American and South Vietnamese forces, bolstered by massive air strikes, recaptured Ben Tre, but the [artillery](#) and air strikes all but destroyed the town, killing an estimated 550 people and wounding 1,200 more. The battle for Ben Tre was not much different from countless other struggles during the Vietnam War, except for the famous quote of an American major when asked by journalist Peter Arnett to justify the indiscriminate use of explosives. His remark, "It became necessary to destroy the town in order to save it," was widely quoted in the world press and became a symbol, to antiwar activists, of the bankruptcy of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia.

Sources: Clark Dougan and Stephen Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: Nineteen Sixty-Eight*, 1983; Max Hastings, *The Fire This Time: America's Year of Crisis*, 1969; Peter Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and [Television](#) Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington*, 1983.

## BERGER, SAMUEL DAVID

Born in New York City on December 6, 1911, Samuel Berger received the Ph.D. degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1934 and joined the State Department after several years in the field of statistics and labor economics. His first assignment at State was as a labor officer in 1945 at the U.S. embassy in London. After several diplomatic assignments to [Japan](#), [New Zealand](#), and Greece, Berger became ambassador to [South Korea](#) in 1961. He was named deputy ambassador to [South Vietnam](#) in 1968, and he remained in that post until 1972. Berger's role was liaison between [President Ngyuen Van Thieu](#), the United States, and the South Vietnamese military. Above all else, Berger wanted to maintain a stable civilian government in South Vietnam, with the military playing only a secondary political role. As such, Berger was a staunch supporter of Thieu and believed the U.S. military effort in Southeast Asia could lead to a permanent, anti-Communist government in [Saigon](#). Berger supported the invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) in 1970 and helped plan the disastrous [Lam Son](#) 719 [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) invasion of [Laos](#) in 1971. Berger left Saigon in 1972 and went to work for the Foreign Service Institute.

Sources: Department of State, *Biographic Register*, 1974; Clark Dougan and Steven Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: Nineteen Sixty-Eight*, 1983.



## BERRIGAN, DANIEL

Born in Virginia, Minnesota, on May 9, 1921, Father Daniel Berrigan was a prominent figure in the New Catholic Left of the 1960s and a leading opponent of the Vietnam War and Selective Service system. He entered training for the [Roman Catholic](#) priesthood in 1939 and was ordained on June 19, 1952, as a member of the Society of Jesus. A prolific writer and poet, Berrigan won the Lamont Prize for his first poetry collection, *Time Without Number*, in 1957. As a professor of New Testament studies at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, from 1957 to 1963, he encouraged students to become involved in work with the poor, civil rights, and pacifism. One of his students became the first person convicted for burning a [draft](#) card. With James H. Forest, Thomas C. Cornell, and Philip Berrigan, he founded the Catholic Peace Fellowship in 1964. A year later, he helped found the interdenominational [Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam](#). In February 1967, he went to [Hanoi](#), North Vietnam, with Howard Zinn of Boston University to help gain the release of three captured U.S. pilots. On the afternoon of May 17, 1968, Berrigan, his brother Philip, and seven others entered Selective Service Board 33 in Knights of Columbus hall in Catonsville, Maryland. There they removed several hundred 1-A draft records from filing cabinets, threw them into trash cans, burned them with homemade [napalm](#) in the parking lot outside, and then awaited arrest. The "Catonsville Nine" were found guilty of conspiracy and destruction of government property. Berrigan was sentenced to three years in prison. He received considerable notoriety, however, when he refused to surrender on April 9, 1970, to begin serving his sentence. He went underground and made periodic public appearances at religious services and antiwar rallies, and was even interviewed by NBC-TV news on June 4. He was finally apprehended by the FBI on Block Island on August 11, 1970, and sent to the federal prison at Danbury, Connecticut. On January 12, 1971, he was named as an unindicted coconspirator on charges of conspiring to kidnap [Henry Kissinger](#) and to blow up the heating systems of federal buildings in Washington, D.C. Berrigan was paroled on January 26, 1972, because of poor health. After the war, he largely receded from public view but remained supportive of causes associated with pacifism and the poor. He also distressed some followers by voicing opposition to abortion, along with war and capital punishment. On January 19, 1976, he began serving a sixty-day jail sentence rather than pay a fine for digging a hole in the White House lawn on November 26, 1975, in protest of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In 1980, he was one of the "Plowshares Eight" who were arrested and convicted for hammering on two nuclear warhead cones and pouring blood on desks and files at the General Electric Re-entry Division plant in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, on September 9. The convictions were upheld and prison sentences reinstated by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in November 1985. Further appeals were being pursued in 1986.

Sources: Daniel Berrigan, S.J., *No Bars to Manhood*, 1970; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984; Charles A. Meconis, *With Clumsy Grace: The American Catholic Left, 1961-1975*, 1979.

John Kincaid

## BERRIGAN, PHILIP (FRANCIS)

Born in Two Harbors, Minnesota, on October 5, 1923, Philip Berrigan was a leading member of the New Catholic Left and prominent opponent of the Vietnam War and Selective Service system. While attending St. Michael's College in Toronto, he was [drafted](#) in January 1943. He served with the U.S. Army [artillery](#) and infantry in World War II, and received a battlefield promotion to second lieutenant for service in some of the most savage battles on the European front. After earning a B.A. in English at the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts, he was ordained into the Society of Jesus in 1955. Assigned to New Orleans, he earned a B.S. in secondary education at Loyola University of the South and an M.S. at Xavier University. For six years, he taught at St. Augustine High School in New Orleans's black ghetto. After he became quite controversial locally for his activity in the black civil rights movement, his superiors transferred him to a seminary in Newburgh, New York. There, in 1964, he founded the Emergency Citizens' Group Concerned About Vietnam. He also helped to found the Catholic Peace Fellowship in 1964. Again, his superiors transferred him, this time to St. Peter Claver Church in the black ghetto of Baltimore, Maryland. He then founded the Baltimore Interfaith Peace Mission. On October 27, 1967, Berrigan and three other activists entered the Selective Service office at the Baltimore Customs House and, in front of startled workers, poured jars of duck blood onto draft files. Berrigan thus became the first [Roman Catholic](#) priest in the United States to be sentenced to prison for a political crime. While awaiting sentencing, however, he and eight others, including his brother Daniel, entered Selective Service Board 33 at a Knights of Columbus hall in Catonsville, Maryland, on the afternoon of May 17, 1968. They removed 1-A records from filing cabinets, carried them out onto the parking lot in wire waste-baskets, and burned the records with homemade [napalm](#). Berrigan was convicted of conspiracy and destruction of government property and sentenced to three and a half years in prison, to be served concurrently with a six-year sentence he had already begun to serve for his first protest action against the draft. He was granted bail but refused to surrender to authorities on April 9, 1970. FBI agents apprehended him on April 21. On January 12, 1971, he and six others were indicted by a federal grand jury for conspiring to blow up the heating systems of federal buildings in Washington, D.C., and to kidnap [Henry Kissinger](#). The trial jury found Berrigan guilty on one charge of having a letter smuggled out of prison to codefendant Sister Elizabeth McAlister. The jury deadlocked on the other charges, ten for acquittal and two for conviction. Berrigan was sentenced to two years in prison. The conspiracy charges were dismissed upon a motion for mistrial from the U.S. Department of Justice; the smuggling conviction was later overturned by a Circuit Court of Appeals. Berrigan was paroled from the Danbury federal prison on December 20, 1972. On May 30, 1973, he announced that he and Elizabeth McAlister had privately married themselves in 1969. McAlister gave birth to a daughter on April 1, 1974. On October 4, 1975, Berrigan and twenty-one others were arrested for pouring a red liquid on military aircraft being exhibited at Rentschler Airport in East Hartford, Connecticut. Charges were dropped, however, when Pratt & Whitney Aircraft said that the liquid had been cleaned off the aircraft with soap and water. Berrigan continued to protest U.S. nuclear policies. On November 26, 1975, he and eight others dug a hole in the White House lawn in protest of nuclear weapons proliferation. He served sixty days in jail rather than pay a fine for what he called this "act of conscience." Five years later, he was one of the "Plowshares Eight" who were arrested and convicted for hammering on two nuclear warhead cones and pouring blood on desks and files at the General Electric Re-entry Division plant in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, on September 9, 1980. The convictions were still on appeal in 1986.

Sources: William O'Rourke, *The Harrisburg 7 and the New Catholic Left*, 1972; Charles A. Meconis, *With Clumsy Grace: The American Catholic Left, 1961-1975*, 1979; Thomas E. Quigley, ed., *American Catholics and Vietnam*, 1968.

John Kincaid

## BETTER TIMES THAN THESE

*Better Times Than These* is the title of Winston Groom's 1978 novel about Vietnam. It centers on Bravo [Company](#), a group of soldiers sent to Vietnam in 1966. The book covers their training and long ocean voyage to Vietnam, as well as a month of brutal combat in the field. *Better Times Than These* comes out of the genre of World War II novels, even though it is an unrelenting tale of mutinous soldiers, incompetent officers, and ugly [atrocities](#).

Sources: Winston Groom, *Better Times Than These*, 1978; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## BIDAULT, GEORGES

Georges Bidault was born on October 5, 1899, in Moulins, [France](#). During World War II he was president of the National Council of Resistance, and after the war he rose through the conservative political ranks. Between 1949 and 1952 he served as president of the Mouvement Republicain Populaire. Bidault was premier of France between June and November 1946 and extracted from President [Harry Truman](#) a promise that the United States supported the return of the French to [Indochina](#). He returned as premier between October 1949 and June 1950. During his years of power Bidault was a strong advocate of the French Empire and took a conservative approach to imperial problems in Indochina and Algeria, insisting that France maintain her commitments there. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s he was a vigorous supporter of General Charles de Gaulle, but he lost favor after 1962 for demanding the maintenance of French Algeria. Georges Bidault died on January 27, 1983.

Sources: James J. Cooke, *France 1789-1962*, 1975; Georges Bidault, *Resistance: The Political Autobiography of Georges Bidault*, 1967; *New York Times*, January 28, 1983.

## BIEN HOA, BATTLE OF (1964)

Bien Hoa, the capital city of Bien Hoa Province, is located approximately 20 miles north of [Saigon](#) on the Dong Nai River. Early in the war, the United States constructed a large airfield and military headquarters just outside Bien Hoa, and on November 1, 1964, the [Vietcong](#) attacked the installation. Since the [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#) in August 1964 and the subsequent bombing of [North Vietnam](#), the Indochinese conflict had been consuming increasing amounts of time and resources in Washington, as well as in the public mind. Vietcong sappers attacked the base, destroying five aircraft and killing four American soldiers. Although the administration did not respond immediately to the attack, it was becoming more and more clear that if the United States was going to conduct an air war over North and [South Vietnam](#), with aircraft and personnel stationed in the south, regular ground troops would be required to defend those installations. Escalation of the conflict became one indirect consequence of the attack on Bien Hoa in 1964.

Sources: *New York Times*, November 2-4, 1964, p. 1; George W. Ball, "Top Secret: The Prophecy the President Rejected," *The Atlantic*, 230 (July 1972), 35-49.

## BINH XUYEN

With their stronghold in the [Cholon](#) section near [Saigon](#), the Binh Xuyen were drug smugglers who traditionally traded support for legal protection of their rackets, whether they were dealing with the French Empire or the [Vietminh](#) nationalists. Their trade was prostitution, gambling casinos, and opium dens. In post-World War II Vietnam, the Binh Xuyen became a powerful political faction under the leadership of [Bay Vien](#) (see Le Van Vien). In 1945 the Binh Xuyen provided terrorists to the Vietminh, who assassinated more than 150 French civilians, including women and children. Emperor [Bao Dai](#), in order to generate the funds necessary to sustain his government, readily accepted money from the Binh Xuyen, who received legal protection for their rackets in return. Bao Dai made Bay Vien a general in the Vietnamese army and gave him complete authority over the casinos, prostitution, opium traffic, gold smuggling, currency manipulation, and other rackets. The French accepted Bay Vien's authority and even used his private Binh Xuyen army to fight against the Vietminh. By the early 1950s, the Binh Xuyen army had reached more than 40,000 soldiers and it was a major political-military faction in southern Vietnam.

In the spring of 1955, after securing control of the new government of South Vietnam, [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) decided to crush the political and religious factions in the South, like the [Hoa Hao](#) and [Cao Dai](#), and one of the most powerful was the Binh Xuyen. On April 27, 1955, Diem ordered Bay Vien and the Binh Xuyen to remove its troops from Saigon, and when they refused, Diem attacked. The battle raged inside the city, killing more than 500 people and leaving 25,000 without homes. The French and Bao Dai tried to assist the Binh Xuyen, but Diem prevailed. By the end of May, Bay Vien had fled to Paris and the Binh Xuyen army had been driven into the [Mekong Delta](#), where many of them joined the [Vietcong](#) guerrillas.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian*, 1963; Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience: Passing the Torch*, 1981; Charles A. Joiner, *The Politics of Massacre: Political Processes in South Vietnam*, 1974.

## BLACK SOLDIERS

Because the Vietnam War coincided with the militant stage of the civil rights movement, the role played by blacks in the Indochinese conflict became a major controversy. Existing [draft](#) regulations in 1965 provided exemptions to young men attending college or working in certain critical occupations, both of which discriminated in favor of middle-class whites. Black leaders like [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), argued that young blacks were more likely to be drafted than whites, and, once drafted, more likely to get dangerous infantry assignments. They were correct. Although blacks constituted about 13 percent of the American population in 1966, they had sustained more than 20 percent of the combat deaths in Vietnam up to that time. Concerned about those percentages and about the diversion of assets away from domestic problems, King condemned Vietnam as a racist war in 1967. Even before that, heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali had startled the nation by saying "I ain't got nothing against them [Vietcong](#)" and later refusing to be drafted.

The criticisms did not fall on deaf ears. After 1967 both the United States Army and the [Marine Corps](#) made conscious efforts to reduce black battlefield [casualties](#), and by the end of the American combat effort in 1972, blacks had sustained approximately 5,700 of the 47,200 battlefield deaths of U.S. personnel, about 12 percent of the total.

Sources: Martin Binkin et al., *Blacks in the Military*, 1982; Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation*, 1978; Wallace Terry, *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*, 1984; Stanley Goff and Robert Sandfors, *Brothers: Black Soldiers in the Nam*, 1982.

## **BLUM, LEON**

Leon Blum was born April 9, 1872, and became one of the leading French socialists. He was elected a deputy in the national legislature in 1919. Blum was Jewish, and that created some political problems for him over the years, but his gentility and commitment to democracy and peaceful change enabled him to succeed politically despite the prevailing anti-Semitism. Blum became prime minister in 1936 and again in 1938, and he was responsible for a variety of left-wing, social welfare measures. Openly sympathetic with the Communists in the Spanish Civil War, Blum was arrested by the Vichy government in 1940 and deported to Germany, where he was imprisoned. After the war Blum served as president of the Council of Ministers from 1946 to 1947 and generally advocated independence for Vietnam. Leon Blum died on March 30, 1950.

Sources: James J. Cooke, *France 1789-1962*, 1975; Louise Dalby, *Leon Blum: Evolution of a Socialist*, 1963.



## BODY COUNT

*Body Count* is the title of William Huggett's 1973 novel about the Vietnam War. It focuses on Lt. Chris Hawkins, who takes over a [Marine platoon](#) as an inexperienced officer. The book deals with the violence, racial tensions, and morale problems of the war, but also shows how Hawkins grows as a leader. It concludes with a bloody assault on a hilltop [North Vietnamese Army](#) position in [I Corps](#), and the abandonment of the position one day after the victory.

Sources: William Turner Huggett, *Body Count*, 1973; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## BODY COUNT

Because the Vietnam War was a guerrilla conflict without front lines and territorial objectives, and with shifting defensive positions, it became impossible to use geography as a reliable index of progress. Instead, [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#) and [General William Westmoreland](#) came to rely on the [body count](#), the number of [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese soldiers killed, to evaluate the progress of the war. But a number of factors made the body count figures unreliable. Combat conditions often required estimates of enemy killed, often from aerial observation or memory. It was also very difficult to distinguish between Vietcong and civilian Vietnamese [casualties](#). Counts were often duplicated; and American officers, desperate for good efficiency reports, were known to exaggerate the body counts. Until 1968 American military officials accepted "probable kills" as the body count figure. By the time of the [Tet Offensive](#), however, Defense Department studies indicated that body count figures were probably 30 percent inflated. Civilian officials were also concerned because the Vietcong and North Vietnamese lost only one-sixth as many weapons as they did people, at least according to the body count figures. Such a discrepancy meant either that large numbers of civilians were killed along with the Vietcong, that the body count figures were seriously inflated, or both. At the end of the war, U.S. officials estimated that 666,000 Vietcong and North Vietnamese had died during combat in South Vietnam between 1965 and 1974, and that American air strikes had killed 65,000 people in North Vietnam. [Vo Nguyen Giap](#) estimated that by 1969 his Communist forces had lost 500,000 men killed in action.

Sources: Phil Caputo, *A Rumor of War*, 1977; Guenter Lewy, *American in Vietnam*, 1978; John E. Mueller, "The Search for the 'Breaking Point' in Vietnam: The Statistics of a Deadly Quarrel," *International Studies Quarterly* 24 (December 1980): 497-519.

## BOMBING OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

At the end of World War II, Vietnam was one of several nations which were artificially divided into sectors by the victorious allies. The United States was instrumental in the creation of the capitalistic [Republic of South Vietnam](#), while the [Soviet Union](#) established the leftist nation [North Vietnam](#). Each portion of Vietnam held differing political beliefs and sought to unify the nation under its rule. The United States developed a close relationship with South Vietnam during the 1950s, and as difficulties with leftist North Vietnam grew during the early 1960s, so did American commitments. Eventually, by the late 1960s, the United States had assumed the primary responsibilities of conducting the defense of South Vietnam.

The first clash between North Vietnamese and American forces occurred on August 2, 1964, when a North Vietnamese force attacked an American naval vessel patrolling the Gulf of Tonkin. Two nights later, American destroyers were attacked along the Vietnamese coast. With these attacks, [President Lyndon Baines Johnson](#) ordered a retaliatory bombing strike against a North Vietnamese supply depot on August 5. The president then requested and Congress approved the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) on August 7, 1964, granting President Johnson the authority to use all measures necessary to assist South Vietnam in defending its territory. These actions set the stage for extended bombing operations against enemy targets in North Vietnam.

From the very beginning of bombing operations against enemy targets, the United States Air Force (USAF) experienced difficulties. Bombardment campaigns in Vietnam were substantially different from those of World War I and II, and even materially different from those of [Korea](#). First, the president was intensely concerned with the complexities and necessities of fighting a limited war, limited both in size and scope, and maintained firm control over all phases of planning and execution. Coordination of all bombing operations involved not only military planners but also senior State Department, Defense Department, cabinet, and numerous other government officials. Second, air force bombing doctrine underwent a striking alteration during the war as the practical differences between air interdiction and strategic bombing against North Vietnam were muted. In this conflict, all types of bombers and [fighters](#) worked together to bomb transportation, supply, and industrial targets not just in North Vietnam but in the allied nation as well. Third, because of the limited nature of the war in Southeast Asia, any bombing activity could never be decisive.

The initial air strikes, code-named [Operation Rolling Thunder](#), were limited primarily to enemy radar and bridges below the twentieth parallel. As the effort expanded, however, President Johnson ordered the bombing of most metropolitan areas in North Vietnam. The first of these expanded attacks took place on May 22, 1965, when USAFF-105s bombed the North Vietnamese barracks at Quang Soui. While the first strikes were made by tactical aircraft, the most spectacular and destructive aircraft used in the air war were [B-52](#) strategic bombers. These aircraft operated essentially from six large airfields in [Thailand](#). The USAF bomber and support presence in Thailand grew from about 1,000 personnel and 83 aircraft in early 1965 to a peak of about 55,000 personnel and 600 aircraft by the time of the [Tet Offensive](#) in January and February 1968.

From the first handful of strikes into enemy territory in 1965 until the USAF and [Navy sorties](#) were halted by presidential decree on October 31, 1968, the aircraft struck at bridges, vehicles, rolling stock, military posts, assembly plants, supply depots, vessels, anti-aircraft and radar sites, railroads, and highways. During nearly four years of bombing, USAF, Navy, [Marine](#), and South Vietnamese aircraft had flown about 304,000 tactical and 2,380 B-52 sorties and dropped 643,000 tons of bombs on enemy targets.

Although the bombing halt was stopped for several months during the winter of 1968-1969, after President [Richard M. Nixon](#) assumed office, the bombing resumed. President Nixon was responsible for the most controversial bombing operation of the war, taking place in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) after spring 1969 (see [Operation Menu](#)). American military leaders had long complained that leftist forces were using Cambodian jungles near the Vietnamese border as safe havens from which to stage hit-and-run attacks against American and South Vietnamese forces.

President Nixon was convinced by military leaders that he could cripple North Vietnam by destroying its Cambodian [sanctuaries](#).

Accordingly, on March 18, 1969, operating under cover of special security and reporting procedures, a B-52 bombing campaign in Cambodia began. The sorties, all of which were flown at night, were directed by ground control units, ensuring that not even the aircrews were told to follow explicitly all directions for the bomb release from the ground control personnel. In all, between March 18, 1969, and May 26, 1970, the [B-52s](#) flew 4,308 sorties and dropped 120,578 tons of bombs on enemy base camps in Cambodia.

These bombings temporarily hampered North Vietnamese efforts in Cambodia, but they also expanded the war into Cambodia as the North Vietnamese retaliated. By April 26, 1970, for instance, North Vietnam had taken control of large areas of the country, and appeared on the verge of toppling the Cambodian government. This action prompted an American and South Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia to preserve the friendly government. During a three-month period, April 29 to June 30, 1970, these forces temporarily threw back the North Vietnamese, but with their [withdrawal](#) North Vietnam attacked Cambodia again. Throughout these operations, the USAF provided bombing support to the Cambodian Army in its defensive activity, but it was insufficient. Not long after the withdrawal of the United States from Southeast Asia, the Cambodian government fell and the puppet state of Kampuchea was created by North Vietnam.

As bombing in Cambodia, [Laos](#), and North Vietnam continued between 1969 and 1972, so did peace negotiations in Paris. On January 23, 1973, the Paris negotiators signed a nine-point cease-fire agreement. This agreement provided for a cease-fire of all combat operations, the return of all American and allied [prisoners of war](#), establishment of a commission to supervise the truce, and affirmation of the national rights of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The United States also tacitly recognized the presence of about 100,000 North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. During the period of the negotiation, the USAF had flown 51,000 tactical and 9,800 B-52 bombing sorties against North Vietnam, dropping 124,000 tons of bombs by tactical aircraft and 109,000 tons by B-52s. During the same period, these forces flew additional sorties against enemy positions in Laos and Cambodia. Cumulatively, between June 1965 and August 1973, the Strategic Air Command's B-52s flew 126,615 bombing sorties and the tactical forces flew more than 400,000 bombing sorties, in the process dropping 6,162,000 tons of munitions on enemy positions. By contrast, the total tonnage of explosives dropped in World War II had been 2,150,000 tons

Sources: David A. Anderton, *The History of the U.S. Air Force*, 1981; Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973: An Illustrated Account*, 1977; Walter Boyne, *Boeing B-52: A Documentary History*, 1981; idem, *The Development of the Strategic Air Command: A Chronological History*, 1982; James N. Eastman, Jr., et al., eds., *Aces and Aerial Victories: The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1965-1973*, 1976; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; James Clay Thompson, *Rolling Thunder: Understanding Policy and Program Failure*, 1980.

Roger D. Launius

## BOOBY TRAPS

Booby traps, ranging from [punji stakes](#) to a variety of grenades, mines, and explosive devices, were a common part of the Vietnam War, primarily because of the guerrilla nature of the conflict. More than one out of ten American battlefield [casualties](#) in Vietnam was the result of a booby trap of one kind or another. The most dangerous of the makeshift [Vietcong](#) weapons were the following: a bullet buried straight up with its firing pin on a bamboo stub, activated when someone stepped on the bullet's tip; hollowed-out coconuts filled with gunpowder and triggered by a trip wire; walk bridges with ropes almost cut away so they would collapse when someone tried to cross them; underground and hidden punji stakes; bamboo stakes connected to grenades and planted at helicopter landing sites; the "Malay whip" log, attached to two trees by a rope and triggered by a trip wire, which would sweep down on entire units; and boards studded with iron barbs and buried in streambeds and rice paddies. The common use of booby traps only further alienated American troops from civilian Vietnamese, whom they did not trust and could not distinguish from the Vietcong.

Sources: Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984; Peter Goldman and Tony Fuller, *Charlie Company: What Vietnam Did to Us*, 1983.

## **BOWLES, CHESTER BLISS**

Chester Bowles was born on April 5, 1901, in Springfield, Massachusetts, and graduated from Yale in 1924. He established a successful advertising firm in 1929 and worked there until 1942, when he joined the Office of Price Administration. Bowles was a member of the War Production Board from 1943 to 1946. Elected governor of Connecticut in 1949, Bowles served one term and became ambassador to India in 1951. He served one term in Congress between 1958 and 1960, and in 1961 he became under [secretary of state](#) in the [Kennedy](#) administration. He did not last there long. A strong advocate of a negotiated settlement, based on [neutrality](#) for [Vietnam](#), Bowles was identified as a "dove" by the Kennedy administration and fired as under secretary of state in November 1961. He was named an ambassador-at-large and traveled widely until 1963, when he replaced [John K. Galbraith](#) as ambassador to India. He remained there until his retirement from public life in 1969. Chester Bowles died on May 23, 1986.

Sources: Chester B. Bowles, *Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life, 1941-1969*, 1971; Lee H. Burke, *Ambassador at Large: Diplomat Extraordinary*, 1972; *New York Times*, May 24, 1986.

## BRIGADE

The term "brigade" is a basic military organizational institution. During the Vietnam War, a [division](#) was organized into three brigades, with each brigade commanded by a colonel. A division consists of approximately 20,000 people. There were also separate infantry brigades functioning in the Vietnam War. The 11th, 196th, and 198th Infantry Brigades fought in the war until 1967, when they were brought together to reconstitute the Americal Division, or the [23rd Infantry](#). The 199th Infantry Brigade and the [173rd Airborne Brigade](#) continued to fight as independent entities. A number of combat support brigades, designed to provide supplies, medical care, and maintenance, also functioned in [South Vietnam](#) during the 1960s and 1970s.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## BRINKS HOTEL (SAIGON)

The Brinks Hotel housed some American military officers in [Saigon](#). On the afternoon of Christmas Eve, 1964, two [Vietcong](#) agents put a bomb in the basement carpark. They had reconnoitered the target painstakingly, and they managed to park a car containing the bomb without being observed or suspected. At 5:45 P.M., while the Americans were eating dinner and planning the Christmas Eve party for later that evening, the bomb exploded while one of the agents, Nguyen Thanh Xuan, casually observed from a restaurant across the street. Two American officers were killed and fifty-eight were wounded. The Brinks Hotel episode is significant for several reasons. It demonstrated the ability of the Vietcong to operate anywhere in [South Vietnam](#), even in the capital of its enemy. It also demonstrated the inability of that enemy to protect its citizens and allies, a vital prerequisite to successful guerrilla or insurgency warfare. Coming soon after the American bombing of North Vietnam following the [Tonkin Gulf Incident](#), it demonstrated the form of escalation or response that any further bombing of North Vietnam would take. Finally, it presented policymakers in Washington with a basic question that would characterize the war throughout its history: would bombing the North reduce enemy hostilities in the South? [President Johnson](#) overruled his advisers in this instance, arguing that bombing retaliation for the Brinks Hotel attack would be politically unwise during Christmas and militarily unsound as a disproportionate response which might unnecessarily escalate the war.

The attack on the Brinks Hotel epitomized the situation for Americans in Vietnam in the mid-1960s. No place was completely safe from Vietcong acts of terrorism, and the result was uncertainty, confusion, and trepidation for allied forces. The audacity of the Vietcong attack contributed to the escalation of the war during a critical period in Washington's policy-making.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; *New York Times*, December 25-28, 1964.

Stafford T. Thomas



## **BROWN, GEORGE SCRATCHLEY**

George S. Brown was born in Montclair, New Jersey, on August 17, 1918. He graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1941, served with the Eighth Air Force in Europe during World War II, and was director of operations for the Fifth Air Force in [Korea](#). He became air force chief of staff in March 1973, after having served as commander of the [Seventh Air Force](#) in 1969 and 1970. In 1974 Brown became chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)). He was a controversial figure for a time in 1973 when, during Senate confirmation hearings, his role in the secret bombings of [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Menu](#)) and [Laos](#) (see [Lam Son 719](#)) was discussed. Brown died on December 5, 1978.

Sources: *New York Times*, December 6, 1978; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Lawrence J. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-Five Years*, 1976.

## **BROWN, SAMUEL WINFRED**

Samuel Brown was born on July 27, 1943, in Council Bluffs, Iowa. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Redlands in 1965, a master's degree in political science from Rutgers University in 1966, and spent some time at the Harvard Divinity School in 1967 and 1968. In 1968, Brown organized student volunteers for Senator Eugene McCarthy's presidential bid, and in 1969 he became founder and coordinator of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee. The committee sponsored antiwar demonstrations throughout the United States in October and November of 1969 (see [Moratorium Day](#) demonstrations). The committee disbanded in 1970. Brown was active in support of Senator [George McGovern](#)'s presidential campaign in 1972.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Eugene McCarthy, *The Year of the People*, 1969; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984.

## BUDDHISM

Buddhism, the dominant organized religion of Vietnam, was first introduced to [Indochina](#) in 111 B.C., when the [Chinese](#) conquered the Red River Delta. During the next thousand years, Buddhism fitted comfortably into the animist faith of common people and became the dominant popular religion. During the imperial dynasties of the middle ages, Buddhism acquired a strong political base as well, and a Buddhist hierarchy saw to it that it became a state religion, complete with tax support and positions of influence in the imperial court. By the fifteenth century Buddhism had lost some of its imperial influence to [Confucianism](#) and Taoism, but it retained its influence among common people. Not until the twentieth century did Vietnamese Buddhism enjoy a revival among intellectual elites and the upper class.

Buddhist doctrine revolved around the idea of successive lives for individuals. After suffering the challenges of life, individuals of merit would undergo successive lives through reincarnation. A cycle of birth, death, and rebirth governed individual life until one reached the state of nirvana, a condition of eternal peace. Only as an individual transcended worldly needs could he or she approach nirvana. In Vietnam, Mahayana Buddhism became the dominant religious strain. Its comfortable approach to saints and supernatural beings made it fit nicely into Vietnamese animism, and its ritual and imagery pleased the peasants. Mahayana Buddhism also viewed Gautama Buddha, founder of the religion, not as the one, single Buddha but one of a number of great teachers and leaders.

During the reign of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), [Roman Catholicism](#) assumed special prominence in Vietnamese affairs. Catholics filled key posts in the civil service, police, and military, and Roman Catholicism increased in size because of the mass influx of Catholic [refugees](#) from [North Vietnam](#) and increased conversion rates by South Vietnamese who saw the religion as an opportunity for economic advancement and political influence. The fact that Diem rigidly repressed all political opposition, including the disorganized Buddhist leaders, contributed to a powerful resurgence of Buddhist influence. In response to the pro-Catholic, anti-Buddhist posture of Diem, Buddhists began organizing in the 1950s. They formed the General Buddhist Association in 1955 in an attempt to provide some centralized direction to Buddhist political influence, and after the assassination of Diem in 1963 they filled a political vacuum in South Vietnam. The Buddhist Reunification Congress met at Xa Loi Pagoda in [Saigon](#) in December 1963, and the next month they organized the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam, which soon won the support of most Buddhist sects in [South Vietnam](#).

Buddhists in [Hue](#) and [Da Nang](#), led by [Thich Tri Quang](#), were generally quite militant in their opposition to the Saigon government, while Buddhists in Saigon, led by Thich Thien Khiet and Thich Tam Chau, were more circumspect and conservative. In South Vietnam, the Buddhists condemned communism as atheistic, denounced military governments in all forms, and rejected any political influence Roman Catholicism seemed to have. Their opposition to [General Nguyen Khanh](#) military government brought his downfall in August 1964, and they were similarly responsible for the collapse of [Tran Van Huong](#)'s government in January 1965. In April 1966 [General Nguyen Cao Ky](#) transferred power to an elected body primarily because of Buddhist influence. In May 1966, the Buddhists organized military demonstrations throughout the country, complete with marches and the widely publicized self-immolations, and General Nguyen Cao Ky sent soldiers out to crush the demonstrations. Buddhist political influence would never be the same again, primarily because American military power was firmly behind the government of [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) and Nguyen Cao Ky. Although Buddhists represented 80 percent of the South Vietnamese population, their political influence was all but eclipsed by the crushing defeat of 1966.

Sources: Harvey H. Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhism in East Asia*, 1966; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Edgar Wickberg, *Historical Interaction of China and Vietnam*, 1969; Pierro Gheddo, *The Cross and the Bo-Tree: Catholics and Buddhists in Vietnam*, 1970.



## BUI DIEM

Bui Diem was born on October 1, 1923, in Phu Ly, [North Vietnam](#). A cousin of South Vietnamese [President Nguyen Van Thieu](#), Diem fled to the south in 1954 after the [Geneva Accords](#). He worked as a journalist until 1964 when he became an adviser to South Vietnamese Prime Minister [Phan Huy Quat](#). Between 1966 and 1972 Diem was ambassador to the United States, but he returned home in 1972 to serve as an adviser to President Nguyen Van Thieu. By 1975 Diem was urging Thieu to either resign or launch a major offensive against the North Vietnamese, but Thieu was indecisive. After the fall of [South Vietnam](#) in April 1975, Bui Diem fled to the United States and opened a Jewish delicatessen in Washington, D.C.

Sources: *Who's Who in the World, 1974-1975*, 1975; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## BUI PHAT

As part of the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#) ending the war between the French and the [Vietminh](#) and establishing two Vietnams, a 300-day armistice period allowed Vietnamese to relocate from the north to the south or from the south to the north. During that period, with the assistance of the U.S. [Seventh Fleet](#), more than 900,000 people, most of them Roman Catholics from the dioceses at Phat Diem and Bui Chu in [North Vietnam](#), relocated to [South Vietnam](#). The [refugees](#) became the political base of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in South Vietnam. Although most of the refugees ended up in special camps, some of them settled in [Saigon](#) across the river from the French settlement. The name of the tin-roofed ghetto was Bui Phat, a composite title taken from the bishoprics of Phat Diem and Bui Chu. Because the economy of Bui Phat revolved around the money flowing from the American military presence in South Vietnam, the population tended to resist [Vietcong](#) and [Buddhist](#) political overtures. Any political movement threatening the American presence also threatened the livelihoods of the people of Bui Phat.

Source: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and Americans in Vietnam*, 1972.

## BUI TIN

Born in [Hue](#) in 1924, Bui Tin came from an aristocratic family but joined the [Vietminh](#) in 1945. He fought with them in the battles of the Red River Valley and at [Dien Bien Phu](#) in 1954. After the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#), Bui Tin became one of the leading Communists in [Hanoi](#), and in 1963 he went into [South Vietnam](#) to assist the [Vietcong](#) in their struggle against the government of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). Over the next ten years Tin became a colonel in the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) and deputy editor of *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, the NVA newspaper. When the NVA entered [Saigon](#) on April 30, 1975, Bui Tin was the ranking NVA officer who accepted the surrender of the South Vietnamese government.

Source: John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985.

## BUNDY, McGEORGE

McGeorge Bundy was born on March 30, 1919, in Boston, Massachusetts. He graduated from Yale in 1940 and joined the United States Army during World War II. His primary responsibilities were logistics and the planning for the invasions of Sicily and [France](#). Bundy came from an old New England family, and as a result enjoyed contacts with influential people in the American business and political establishment. That he was brilliant only ensured his success. Bundy left the army in 1946 and became a research assistant to former [secretary of state](#) Henry L. Stimson, and was coauthor with him of *On Active Service in Peace and War* in 1948. In 1948 Bundy served as a consultant to the Thomas Dewey presidential campaign, to the Marshall Plan implementation group in the State Department, and to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City. He began lecturing at Harvard in 1949, and in 1953 Bundy became dean of arts and sciences at Harvard. In January 1961 President [John F. Kennedy](#) named Bundy special assistant to the president for national security affairs. There he became a principal architect of the Vietnam escalation.

In 1965 Bundy traveled to [South Vietnam](#) for a personal assessment of the situation there, and he returned advocating large-scale bombing of [North Vietnam](#). His recommendation soon became [Operation Rolling Thunder](#). One of the "best and the brightest" of the Cold Warriors, Bundy was convinced that communism had to be stopped in Southeast Asia if the rest of Asia was going to remain free. In 1966 Bundy left the administration to become head of the Ford Foundation, but he continued to serve as a consultant to [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) as a member of the "Wise Old Men" group. As part of that group in 1968, Bundy helped Johnson realize that the combination of the [antiwar movement](#) at home and the difficult political and military situation in Vietnam made a negotiated settlement of the war inevitable.

Sources: [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*, 1979.



## BUNDY, WILLIAM

William Bundy was born on September 24, 1917, in Washington, D.C. He graduated from Yale in 1939, served with the United States Army during World War II, and took a law degree from Harvard in 1947. Between 1950 and 1960 Bundy worked for the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA). He became a member of President [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#)'s Commission on National Goals in 1960, and in 1961 President [John F. Kennedy](#) appointed him deputy assistant [secretary of defense](#) for international security affairs. Along with his brother [McGeorge Bundy](#), he played an influential role in the development of American policy toward Southeast Asia. Bundy was a strong supporter of the government of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in the early 1960s and an advocate of an escalating American presence in [South Vietnam](#). He was the chief author of what became the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) in 1964. Early in 1964 Bundy had become assistant [secretary of state](#) for Far Eastern affairs, and later in the year President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) asked him to head the [National Security Council](#) Working Group and make policy recommendations for the American future in Vietnam. Their recommendations eventually became [Operation Rolling Thunder](#), in which Bundy and his brother often personally selected the bombing targets in [North Vietnam](#). Bundy continued opposing negotiation and favoring increased bombing of North Vietnam until 1967, when he began to moderate his position. A leading ``hawk" for both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Bundy left the State Department in 1969 and returned to research and writing, serving for a time as editor of *Foreign Affairs*.

Sources: *Who's Who in America, 1967-68, 1968*; [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972.

## BUNKER, ELLSWORTH

Ellsworth Bunker was born May 11, 1894, in Yonkers, New York. He graduated from Yale in 1916, and between his graduation and 1951, he worked for the National Sugar Refining Company, serving as president from 1940 to 1948 and chairman of the board from 1948 to 1951. Bunker's diplomatic career began in 1951 when President [Harry S. Truman](#) appointed him ambassador to Argentina, where he worked diligently and successfully in implementing a rapprochement between the Peronistas and the United States. He was ambassador to Italy between 1952 and 1953, and in 1956 became ambassador to India and Nepal, a post he held until 1961. Bunker played a major role as a troubleshooter, negotiating settlements to the Netherlands-Indonesia controversy over West Irian in 1962 and the Panama crisis in 1964. He was the American representative to the Organization of American States from 1964 to 1966 and also helped calm the angry feelings in Latin America over the American intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965.

Bunker was appointed ambassador to [South Vietnam](#) in 1967, and he remained in that position until his resignation in 1973. Bunker was a strong supporter of the regime of [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), [Vietnamization](#), a negotiated settlement to the conflict, and the Cambodian invasion of 1970 (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)). Bunker became an ambassador-at-large late in 1973 and played a major role in the Panama Canal Treaties, which were signed on September 7, 1977. Ellsworth Bunker died on September 27, 1984.

Sources: Lee H. Burke, *Ambassador at Large: Diplomat Extraordinary*, 1972; *New York Times*, September 28, 1984.

## THE BAMBOO BED

*The Bamboo Bed* is the title of William Eastlake's surrealistic 1969 Vietnam War novel. Beginning the novel with the suicide of Madame Dieudonne after she hears of the death of her American Ranger lover Captain Clancy, Eastlake tries to describe the absurdity of the war with implausible fantasy images: peace-loving hippie flower children wandering aimlessly through the Indochinese jungles; helicopter pilots having sex with [medevac nurses](#) while airborne; American Rangers topped with Roman helmets and accompanied by drummer boys airlifted into French-Vietnamese villas. Although not altogether successful, the novel was an early literary effort to expose the contradictions inherent in the Vietnam War.

Sources: William Eastlake, *The Bamboo Bed*, 1969; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## **THE BIG V**

*The Big V* is the title of William Pelfry's 1972 Vietnam War novel. It is the account, written in diary form, of Henry Winstead, a young draftee serving in Vietnam. Written from an antiwar perspective, *The Big V* is conventional within that genre in its exposure of the violence and futility of the military effort in Vietnam.

Sources: William Pelfry, *The Big V*, 1972; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## THE BOYS OF COMPANY C

Released in 1978, *The Boys of Company C* was a film tracing the lives of five young men, played by actors Stan Shaw, Andrew Stevens, Craig Wasson, Michael Lembeck, and James Canning, from boot camp to combat in Vietnam. They come from all walks of American life, ghettos, farms, suburbs, and discover something about themselves in Vietnam. The film was taken directly from the antiwar genre of the 1970s, and the war in Vietnam is treated as a hopeless endeavor characterized by drug abuse, crime, [atrocities](#), political contradictions, and diplomatic absurdities. It ends in a climactic soccer match when [Vietcong](#) guerrillas attack and disrupt the game in the middle of [Saigon](#).

Source: *Magill's Survey of Cinema. English Language Films*, 1981.



## C

“CLEAR AND HOLD”

“CLUSTER BOMBS”

C-130 HERCULES

C-141 STARLIFTER

C-4

C-5 GALAXY

CAI TANG

CALLEY, WILLIAM LAWS, JR.

CAM RANH

CAM RANH BAY

CAN LAO NHAN VI CACH MANG DANG

CAN THO

CANADA

CAO DAI

CAO VAN VIEN

CAPITAL DIVISION

CARIBOU AIRCRAFT

CASE, CLIFFORD

CASUALTIES

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

CENTRAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

CH-21 WORK HORSE

CH-34 CHOCTAW

CH-37 MOJAVE

CH-47 CHINOOK

CH-53

CH-54 SKYCRANE

CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

CHAMPA

CHAMS

CHAPMAN, LEONARD FIELDING, JR.

CHARNER, LEONARD VICTOR JOSEPH

CHIANG KAI-SHEK

CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

CHIEF OF STAFF, U.S. AIR FORCE  
CHIEF OF STAFF, U.S. ARMY  
CHIEU HOI PROGRAM  
CHINESE  
CHOLON  
CHOMSKY, AVRAM NOAM  
CHURCH, FRANK FORRESTER  
CIVIL OPERATIONS AND REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT  
CIVILIAN IRREGULAR DEFENSE GROUP  
CLAYMORE  
CLERGY AND LAITY CONCERNED  
CLIFFORD, CLARK MCADAMS  
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COAST GUARD, UNITED STATES  
COASTAL SURVEILLANCE FORCE  
COCHIN CHINA  
COFFIN, WILLIAM SLOAN, JR.  
COLBY, WILLIAM EGAN  
COLLINS, JOSEPH LAWTON  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY DEMONSTRATIONS  
COMBINED ACTION PLATOONS  
COMING HOME  
COMMANDANT, U.S. MARINE CORPS  
COMMANDER IN CHIEF, PACIFIC COMMAND  
COMMANDER, MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM  
COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM  
COMPANY  
CON THIEN, BATTLE OF (1967-68)  
CONEIN, LUCIEN  
CONFUCIANISM  
CONGRESS, UNITED STATES  
CONTAINMENT POLICY  
COOPER, CHESTER  
COOPER, JOHN SHERMAN  
COOPER-CHURCH AMENDMENT  
CORPS



COUNTERINSURGENCY

COWARD

CREDIBILITY GAP

CRONKITE, WALTER LELAND

CUONG DE

CUSHMAN, ROBERT EVERTON, JR.

THE CHICAGO 8



## **``CLEAR AND HOLD''**

``Clear and hold" operations were part of the pacification program (see Rural Reconstruction) during the war in Vietnam. Most observers realized that the military sweep operations, temporary efforts to attack [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese installations, would not be successful in permanently eliminating the guerrilla structure in [South Vietnam](#). ``Clear and hold" operations involved military attacks on Vietcong strongholds and then permanent stationing of military units in the area after the initial engagements. Local populations would not cooperate with American or South Vietnamese soldiers if they knew they would be departing in a few days. The problem with ``clear and hold" operations, of course, was the personnel requirements. [General William Westmoreland](#) argued that ``clear and hold" strategies would have worked if he had had a larger contingent of U.S. troops at his disposal. As it was, Westmoreland generally used American troops for the military sweep operations and then relied on South Vietnamese soldiers, [Popular Forces](#), and [Regional Forces](#) to hold those areas. They generally proved, however, to be quite unreliable.

Sources: William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 1976; Hoang Ngoc Long, *Strategy and Tactics*, 1980; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, 1982.

## **``CLUSTER BOMBS''**

A major, and controversial, weapons development of the Vietnam War was the appearance of the ``cluster bomb," an explosive which had a broader impact than standard bombs and was primarily an antipersonnel weapon. The CBU-24 contained 600 golf-ball-sized bombs, each with 300 steel pellets. The CBU-46 had submunition systems with fins which allowed for wider dispersal before exploding. The most common antitank cluster bomb was the MK-20, which released 9-inch darts, each containing armor-penetrating warheads. A mine CBU was the WAAPM (wide area antipersonnel munition) which, when dropped from an aircraft, shot out dozens of fine wires upon impact. When touched, the wire triggered the explosion. Finally, the FAE, or fuel air explosive, was used in the end stages of the war. An FAE was a large canister filled with a gaseous explosive. When dropped from aircraft, the FAEs sprayed out fuel at a preset altitude, creating a huge gasoline cloud, which then ignited as it descended. The ``cluster bombs" generated a good deal of controversy among antiwar groups because of their major purpose: the killing and maiming of people.

Source: Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984.

## C-130 HERCULES

One of the principal tactical transport aircraft used in Vietnam, the C-130 Hercules proved remarkably adaptable for in-country tasks. Beginning in 1965 United States Air Force leaders made the decision to station C-130 units under the operational control of the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) offshore to provide much of the [airlift](#) necessary to support operations in Southeast Asia. These aircraft played a critical role in tactical operations in the theater until 1975, when they were used to assist in the evacuation of American nationals and certain South Vietnamese from [Saigon](#).

A key aspect of this airlift force's role in Southeast Asia was support of ground forces. For instance, during Operation New Life, beginning November 21, 1965, the [173d Airborne Brigade](#) of the [101st Airborne Division](#) made a helicopter assault on a dirt airstrip 40 miles east of [Bien Hoa](#) Air Base. To support this operation, within an hour of the initial attack, the first C-130s landed to deliver troops and cargo. In all, some seventy C-130 [sorties](#) brought in critical support resources during the first thirty-six hours of the operation. A second aspect of this type of support involved the aerial resupply of [Khe Sanh](#) during the first four months of 1968. This support was indispensable to the success of the garrison's defense from an enemy siege. Seen by North Vietnam as a second [Dien Bien Phu](#), the 1954 siege of a northern city where the French were soundly defeated, Communist forces pressed to crush the 6,000-man [marine](#) garrison at Khe Sanh as part of the 1968 [Tet Offensive](#). To hold out, C-130s flew daily airdrops and low-altitude parachute extraction (LAPE) deliveries of some 12,400 tons of supplies to the garrison. Between January 21 and April 8, 1968, C-130s flew 496 airdrop, 67 extraction, and 273 landing missions. Without this [tactical airlift](#) support provided by C-130s, the Khe Sanh garrison would have been forced to surrender.

Between 1965 and 1973 Air Force C-130s moved more than five million tons of passengers and cargo in Southeast Asia. It lost fifty-three C-130s during these operations, more than half of these losses coming in the North Vietnamese offensives of 1967 and 1968.

Source: Ray L. Bowers, *The U.S. Air Force in Southeast Asia: Tactical Airlift*, 1983.

Roger D. Launius

## C-141 STARLIFTER

The C-141 Starlifter has been the "workhorse" of the [Military Airlift Command strategic airlift](#) fleet since the mid-1960s, and was a major contributor to the successful resupply of American military forces during the Southeast Asian conflict. It was the first jet aircraft specifically designed, engineered, and built to meet military standards as a strategic [troop](#) and cargo carrier. It succeeded admirably in fulfilling the great spectrum of intertheater airlift requirements that arose because of the Vietnam experience. Used to lift combat forces over long distances, inject those forces either by airland or airdrop activities, resupply those employed forces, and extract the sick and wounded from the hostile area to far-removed medical facilities, the C-141, along with its larger [C-5](#) aircraft, ensured the capability of the United States to resupply forces in Vietnam on a timely basis.

Indeed, it was a milestone in the modernization of the strategic airlift fleet in April 1965 when the C-141 Starlifter became operational and began flying to Southeast Asia. By 1967, the C-141 fleet had grown to more than 100 aircraft, and in 1968 the 28th and last C-141 was produced. The Starlifter could carry 67,620 pounds of cargo 4,000 miles or 20,000 pounds nonstop from California to [Japan](#) at speeds of 440 knots. By comparison, the C-124, the principal transport aircraft of the U.S. Air Force prior to 1965, could carry only 50,000 pounds over a range of 1,000 miles or 25,000 pounds for about 2,300 miles at speeds of only 200 knots.

In responding to the urgent Southeast Asia requirements that arose with the escalation of American commitment in [South Vietnam](#), the air force quickly found that traffic to the Pacific grew from a monthly average of 33,779 passengers and 9,123 tons of cargo in fiscal year 1965 to 65,350 passengers and 42,296 tons of cargo in fiscal year 1967. In flying about 210,000,000 miles during 1967, the Military Airlift Command flew the equivalent of 8,750 aircraft around the world and carried sufficient troops to fill every manpower space in eighty-five army infantry [divisions](#). The C-141 airlift fleet was the major method of supporting these increases.

On several occasions during the war, the air force was called on to undertake the deployment of major army units under special conditions. The first of these, designated Operation Blue Light, came in response to the need to rush the 3rd Brigade, [25th Infantry Division](#) from Hawaii to [Pleiku](#), Vietnam, to offset a buildup of Communist forces late in 1965 that threatened the area. The Military Airlift Command's C-141 fleet carried the brunt of this activity, flying with C-133 aircraft 231 [sorties](#) over a 26-day period and moving 3,000 troops and 4,700 tons of equipment some 6,000 miles to Pleiku by January 23, 1966. At the height of the airlift, a C-141 or C-133 took off from Hickam every three hours.

In mid-1969 emphasis shifted to the return of units to the United States in accordance with the president's policy of gradual American [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam, beginning with 25,000 troops before August 31. The Military Airlift Command's C-141s carried out the first redeployments through a series of operations called Keystone. In the first of these, C-141s airlifted 15,446 of the 25,000 troops plus 47.5 tons of material from Vietnam to the United States. As the president directed other incremental withdrawals over the next several years, the C-141 force responded accordingly.

Source: Kenneth W. Patchin, "Strategic Airlift," in Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973, An Illustrated Account*, 1977.

Roger D. Launius

## C-4

C-4 was a plastic explosive popular among soldiers in Vietnam because of its various properties. It was easy to carry because of its lightweight, stable nature. It had a potent explosive power, and malleable with a texture similar to play dough, it could be formed into a shaped charge of infinite configuration. The availability of C-4 reduced the necessity of carrying a variety of explosive charges. C-4 would not explode without use of detonation devices, even when dropped, beaten, shot, or burned. It was not destabilized by water, an important consideration given the [Vietnamese climate](#). Because it could be safely burned, C-4 was popular with GIs, who would break off a small piece of it for heating water or C-rations. Sometimes they used it in foxholes to warm hands and feet on chilly nights. C-4 replaced sterno as the heating fuel of choice. Soldiers in the field could obtain C-4 on a resupply mission whereas sterno required a trip to the PX which, of course, was not necessarily possible.

Sources: Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984; Al Santoli, *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-three American Soldiers Who Fought It*, 1981.

Samuel Freeman

## C-5 GALAXY

The gigantic C-5 Galaxy, with its tremendous payload capability, was developed during the 1960s in response to the unprecedented dimensions of inter-theater [airlift](#) in support of U.S. forces in Vietnam. Designed as the world's largest aircraft, the C-5 first became operational with the [Military Airlift Command](#) on December 17, 1969, and was assigned to the Transitional Training Unit at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma. The first operational Galaxies were delivered to the 437th Military Airlift [Wing](#), Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina, in June 1970, followed by delivery to the 60th Military Airlift Wing at Travis Air Force Base, California, in October 1970. The C-5s operated by the 60th Military Airlift Wing became an important force in ensuring the efficiency of the aerial supply pipeline between the United States and Southeast Asia during the latter years of the war in Vietnam.

The C-5 was especially important for Vietnam support because it could carry virtually all equipment in the United States Army's inventory at intercontinental ranges and jet speeds. It could, for instance, handle such bulky items as the 74-ton mobile scissors bridge. Additionally, in its test program the C-5 air-dropped four 40,000-pound units, a total of 160,000-pounds, in a single pass over a drop zone. It could also be loaded and unloaded simultaneously at the front and rear cargo openings, and had the capability to "kneel down" to facilitate loading directly from truck-bed levels. All these attributes made the C-5 a transport especially useful in Southeast Asia aerial resupply operations.

The task of moving essential supplies, personnel, and units between the United States and Vietnam was a staggering one, and after 1970 one in which the C-5 force figured prominently. For instance, the C-5s were instrumental in supporting the defense of [South Vietnam](#) after invasion from the north in April 1972. Teaming with [C-141](#) aircraft and commercial carriers, C-5s moved 3,195 personnel and 1,600 tons of cargo from the United States to Vietnam between May 6 and 15, 1972. Additionally, when the Communist offensive swept through the provincial capital of [Quang Tri](#) and moved southward, the United States Army turned to the Air Force to deliver more tanks and armored vehicles to the South Vietnamese. In response, and within twenty-four hours, the C-5 fleet airlifted twenty-six tanks, weighing about 1.6 million pounds, in ten flights directly to [Da Nang](#), including six which were delivered from a repair depot in the Pacific.

As the Vietnam War drew to a close and American participation in the war phased out, Military Airlift Command C-5s were necessary to support [troop](#) movements. Following the peace agreements in January 1973, for example, C-5 and other transport aircraft were heavily involved in the [withdrawal](#) of the remaining American military personnel and equipment from Vietnam. This task involved several thousand tons of equipment and more than 20,000 personnel.

Sources: Kenneth W. Patchin, "Strategic Airlift," in Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973, An Illustrated Account*, 1977.

Roger D. Launius



## CAI TANG

A Vietnamese custom widely misunderstood by American soldiers during the war, cai tang is a religious act of exhuming and reburying the bodies of dead relatives. The practice was likely to occur if the family could not afford a proper burial or if the body was buried in a hurry, a common occurrence in South Vietnam during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Usually several years after the individual's death, the family would locate the bones, wash them, and rebury them in a place more suitable as a resting place.

Sources: Ann Crawford, *Customs and Culture of Vietnam*, 1966; Gustave Dumoutier, *Annamese Religions*, 1955; Jacques Dournes, *God Loves The Pagans*, 1966.

## CALLEY, WILLIAM LAWS, JR.

Born on June 8, 1943, William Calley, Jr., spent an uneventful childhood in Miami, Florida. He graduated from high school and entered Palm Beach Junior College, but after flunking out he worked as a bellhop, dishwasher, and railroad switchman until 1966 when he enlisted in the army. He went to Officers Candidate School and after graduation was ordered to Hawaii to join Company C, First Battalion, 20th Infantry, under the command of Captain [Ernest L. Medina](#). Calley was placed in charge of the company's First [Platoon](#).

In December 1967, Company C arrived in [Vietnam](#) and was assigned to the 11th Infantry [Brigade](#) (see [23rd Infantry Division](#)). On March 16, 1968, Calley was instructed to lead a task force to Son My in Quang Ngai Province and destroy a suspected [Vietcong](#) stronghold in the hamlet of [My Lai](#). During the mission, no Vietcong were encountered, although helicopter pilots circling the area reported massive civilian [casualties](#). This information was relayed to the commanders of the 11th Infantry, Colonel Oran K. Henderson and Major General Samuel W. Foster, and after looking into the reports, they concurred that nothing unusual had taken place during the operation at My Lai.

In April 1969, a Vietnam veteran, Ronald L. Ridenhour, in a letter to President [Richard Nixon](#), urged an investigation into the events of March 16, 1968, at My Lai. The following November, an army board headed by Lt. General William R. Peers made an inquiry into the alleged events of that day. In the same month, William Calley was charged with the premeditated murder of 102 civilians at My Lai. Calley's defense rested upon the fact that he had received orders from Captain Medina at a briefing to destroy and kill every living being in the hamlet of My Lai because "they were all enemy." Medina denied having given the order. On March 29, 1971, William Calley was found guilty of the premeditated murder of at least twenty-two South Vietnamese civilians by an army court-martial jury. Two days later he was sentenced to life imprisonment at hard labor and dismissal from the army.

Calley's conviction immediately provoked dissension among the American people. There were public protests demanding his release because many felt he was being made a scapegoat for the army, taking the blame while his superiors escaped responsibility. Included among the protesters were Governors Jimmy Carter and George Wallace, as well as President [Nixon](#) who ordered him released from the stockade and returned to his apartment on the base while his convictions were under review. Nixon, shrewdly aware of public opinion, decided to review the case personally before the sentence could be carried out.

In August 1971, Calley's life sentence was reduced to twenty years. In April 1974, the sentence was further reduced to ten years. The following month, President Nixon decided that further action was neither necessary nor appropriate. Finally, in November 1975, William Calley was released on parole. Public reaction to his case reflected the contradictory nature of the Vietnam War. On the one hand, the actions at My Lai, publicized by photographs in *Life* magazine, were seen as [atrocities](#), unacceptable to an American public convinced that only other countries, autocratic governments, committed atrocities. Yet, on the other hand, because the incident was indicative of the true nature of the war, punishment of Calley or even his superiors would have constituted condemnation of the American government itself. Perhaps Lt. General William R. Peers summed up the affair when he said, "To think that out of all those men, only one, Lt. William Calley, was brought to justice. And now, he's practically a hero. It's a tragedy."

Sources: Joseph Goldstein, Burke Marshall, and Jack Schwartz, *The My Lai Massacre and Its Cover-Up: Beyond the Reach of Law?*, 1976; W. R. Peers, *The My Lai Inquiry*, 1979; Richard Hammer, *The Court-Martial of Lieutenant Calley*, 1971; John Sack, *Lieutenant Calley: His Own Story*, 1971.

## **CAM RANH**

Cam Ranh was an independent municipality located between Khanh Hoa and Ninh Thuan provinces in [South Vietnam](#). At the peak of the fighting during the Vietnam war, Cam Ranh had a population of nearly 105,000.

Sources: *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, 1984; Judith Banister, *The Population of Vietnam*, 1985.

## CAM RANH BAY

Cam Ranh Bay was the major port of entry for U.S. military supplies and personnel in [South Vietnam](#). Located about 200 miles northeast of [Saigon](#) on the southern bulge of Vietnam, it had been an important way station for navigators since the days of Marco Polo. In June 1965, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began improving the port with 70 miles of roads, warehouses, fuel tanks, and larger cargo-handling facilities. A new pier was shipped from South Carolina and assembled at Cam Ranh Bay, giving the facility the ability to handle six large vessels simultaneously. The port was considered so safe that [Lyndon Johnson](#) visited there twice, which made the shock of the [Vietcong](#) raid in 1969 even more severe. The Vietcong attack destroyed a water tower and chapel and damaged the hospital. Most patients were evacuated safely, but the United States lost two killed and ninety-eight wounded. The Vietcong escaped without a [casualty](#). Security was tightened, and Cam Ranh Bay continued to be the major supply port for Vietnam, even after the American [withdrawal](#) in 1975. It was abandoned without a fight in June 1975.

Sources: Harvey H. Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Carroll H. Dunn, *Base Development in South Vietnam, 1965-1970*, 1972.

Barbara Wiggins

## CAN LAO NHAN VI CACH MANG DANG

Translated as the Revolutionary Personalist Labor party, the Can Lao was founded in 1954 after [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) took the government of [South Vietnam](#). [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#), the brother of Ngo Dinh Diem, was a powerful person in his own right who advised his brother on all political matters. Nhu's political philosophy was known as Personalism, or Nhan Vi, a belief in the power of the state mixed with strong emphasis on the virtues of humility, submissiveness, and sacrifice. In 1954 Nhu created the Can Lao, or Personalist Labor party, from the ranks of Catholic [refugees](#). Eventually the party numbered more than 20,000 people, each of them occupying a position of influence in the bureaucracy and military. Nhu left direction of the Can Lao to [Dr. Tran Kim Tuyen](#), and they built a number of secret intelligence organizations in the Can Lao to keep Nhu informed of traitors, spies, plots, and military news. To finance the Can Lao, Nhu resorted to graft, extortion, currency racketeering, and vice throughout South Vietnam. The Can Lao went into decline after 1963, when Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated and his regime overthrown. Nhu was killed at the same time. In 1969, many members of the Can Lao came back to power when [President Nguyen Van Thieu](#) dismissed his cabinet and used old Can Lao members to staff his government. The Can Lao were frequently vulnerable to [Vietcong](#) assassination attempts, and those unable to get to the United States after 1975 were imprisoned and killed when [Saigon](#) and South Vietnam fell to the Communists.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian*, 1963; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## CAN THO

Can Tho, located on Highway 4 between [Saigon](#) and Ca Mau, is the capital city of Phong Dinh Province and the commercial center of the [Mekong Delta](#). Its population at the height of the Vietnam War was nearly 154,000. Can Tho became one of [South Vietnam](#) autonomous municipalities on September 30, 1970.

Sources: Danny J. Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976; *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, 1984.

## CANADA

Canada played several important roles in the Vietnam War. Despite some disagreement over figures, it is clear that large numbers of young Americans exercised the option of becoming expatriates in Canada, either temporarily or permanently, in order to avoid the Vietnam War. Canadian immigration officials suggest that approximately 30,000 Americans settled legally there between 1965 and 1972. The American exile organization AMEX argued the number was closer to 80,000, 50,000 illegally and 30,000 legally. Canada was clearly an alternative for men who chose not to aid the war effort, who could not secure deferments, or who found the possibility of jail intolerable.

Canada also served, after the 1954 Geneva Accords, as a longtime member of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam (the ICSC), created to monitor compliance with the agreement. Soon the Canadian role in the ICSC changed, especially after it became readily apparent that the [1954 Geneva Accords](#) would not be upheld. With access to North Vietnam, Canadian members also became conveyors of messages from the United States to [Hanoi](#), especially threats of escalation unless [North Vietnam](#) compromised its position. Critics of the war charged Canada with compliance, but Prime Minister Lester Pearson defended Canadian actions as attempts to bring the war to an end and keep lines of communication open.

Pearson also pointed out that cooperation with American requests helped Canada maintain access to the corridors of power in Washington, and thus enabled Canada to influence American policy. Although Canada steadfastly would not provide material aid to the war effort, she also would not condemn American actions. Harsh criticism would have alienated the Americans, while expressions of cautious support lent credibility to urgings of moderation. That Canadian voice, along with those of other NATO allies, may have prompted more restraint in American policies and hastened the eventual disengagement.

As the United States withdrew from Vietnam, the ICSC was reconstituted in 1972 as the [International Commission of Control and Supervision](#) (ICCS), and again Canada served as a member. It had the same weaknesses as its predecessor. Communist forces were uncooperative to the point of taking military action against ICCS helicopters and refusing to allow teams to make required inspections. When Poland and Hungary, also ICCS members, hindered objective reporting on the military situation in [South Vietnam](#), Canada resigned from the commission in 1973.

Sources: Douglas A. Ross, *In the Interests of Peace: Canada and Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1984; Daniel S. Papp, *Vietnam: The View from Moscow, Peking, Washington*, 1981; Charles Taylor, *Snow Job: Canada, the United States and Vietnam (1954-1973)*, 1974.

Gary M. Bell

## CAO DAI

Cao Dai is the popular name for the Dai Dao Tam Ky Pho Do religious sect, a group of approximately 1.5 million South Vietnamese. In 1902 a young Vietnamese civil servant, Ngo Van Chieu, became involved in spiritualism and felt the supreme power of the universe, the Cao Dai, had communicated with him. Cao Dai was organized as a formal religion in 1926. An eclectic faith drawing on Christianity, Vietnamese animism, [Buddhism](#), and [Confucianism](#), Cao Dai is centered in the city of Tay Ninh, about 60 miles northwest of [Saigon](#). The largest collection of Cao Dai adherents live in the [Mekong Delta](#) between the Mekong River and the Song Hau Giang River. Cao Dai believed that Buddha, Jesus, and Lao-tzu were all manifestations of one divine power and religious force in the universe, and they had a great pantheon of diverse saints, ranging from Buddha and Jesus to Charlie Chaplin and Joan of Arc.

The new religion grew rapidly in the Mekong Delta, so much so that the French prohibited its export to [Annam](#), [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), or [Tonkin](#). Although the sect was more interested in religious proselytizing than political activity, it did take on a general anti-French cast and became a home for many Vietnamese nationalists. Because many Cao Dai leaders had jobs in the French bureaucracy, peasants in [Cochin China](#) became loyal to the movement since it made it easier for them to deal with the empire. In 1938, the Cao Dai established its own private army to protect the property of members, and gradually the Cao Dai became a semiautonomous state in the Mekong Delta. Stocked with Japanese, French, and American weapons, they literally controlled a large area northwest of Saigon. Generally free of Communist influence, the Cao Dai were among the most stable elements of the South Vietnamese population. Not until 1955, under military pressure, did the Cao Dai yield their independence to President Ngo Diem of [South Vietnam](#). Pham Cong Tac, leader of the Cao Dai, fled to Cambodia in February 1956 and South Vietnamese forces seized control of Tay Ninh. Most Cao Dai leaders were then incorporated into the South Vietnamese bureaucracy and military.

Sources: Victor L. Oliver, *Cao Dai Spiritualism: A Study of Religion in Vietnamese Society*, 1976; Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian*, 1963; [Bernard Fall](#), "The Political Religious Sects of Vietnam," *Pacific Affairs*, 28 (1955), 235-53.



## **CAO VAN VIEN**

Born in [Laos](#) in 1921, Cao Van Vien was trained in the army as a paratrooper. Vien established close relations with [General Nguyen Cao Ky](#) and became his chief of staff in 1966. Vien fled to the United States in 1975.

Source: "Clean-Up Time," *Newsweek*, 69 (February 6, 1967), 44-45.

## CAPITAL DIVISION

The [Republic of Korea](#) (ROK) sent combat forces to [South Vietnam](#) in response to [President Johnson](#)'s desire to have "more flags" supporting the war. The ROK units in Vietnam included the Capital "[Tiger](#)" [Division](#), the 9th "[White Horse](#)" [Division](#), a marine [brigade](#), and a regimental combat team. The "Tiger" Division was deployed to Vietnam in October 1965 for combat operations in [II Corps](#), serving in country until March 1973. It consisted of one cavalry and two infantry regiments, three battalions of 105mm howitzers and one battalion of 155mm howitzers. The division participated in the Bong Son campaign early in 1966. For most of the war the Tiger and White Horse [divisions](#) had responsibility for protecting the II Corps coastal area and keeping roads open, primarily from Phan Rang north over 150 miles to [Qui Nhon](#).

ROK forces established themselves as well-trained, well-disciplined soldiers with high morale. They brooked no opposition and were ruthless with both enemy forces and the civilian population. They generally dealt harshly with prisoners and with civilians who were suspected of sympathizing with the [Vietcong](#) or who violated the laws or regulations established by ROK commanders. Thieves, for example, were hung from meathooks. Some Americans looked on ROK troops with admiration, but critics viewed their harsh methods not as truly pacifying an area, and surely not as "winning [hearts and minds](#)," but as creating new supporters for the Vietcong.

Sources: Shelby Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Stanley Robert Larsen and James Lawton Collins, Jr., *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 1975.

Samuel Freeman

## CARIBOU AIRCRAFT

Manufactured by the Haviland Aircraft Corporation in [Canada](#), the Caribou C-7 was first deployed to [South Vietnam](#) in 1964. It was a propeller-driven craft with a thirty-two passenger capacity and the ability to rapidly load and unload cargo. The United States Army had six companies of caribou aircraft in Vietnam before control of the C-7 was shifted to the U.S. Air Force early in 1967.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973*, 1977.

## CASE, CLIFFORD

Born in 1904 in Franklin Township, New Jersey, Clifford Case was a moderate-liberal congressman who, as the ranking Republican member of the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#), became a critic of the war in Vietnam. A graduate of Rutgers University (1925) and the Columbia Law School (1928), Case practiced corporate law until his election to the New Jersey Assembly in 1942. Two years later he was elected to the House of Representatives. Case resigned his congressional seat in 1953 to become president of the Fund for the Republic, and in 1954 he won election to the U.S. Senate by a margin of only 3,507 votes. He was reelected by wide margins in 1960, 1966, and 1972.

During his Senate career Case was a champion of social and civil rights programs, and in the early 1970s he was the only Republican to be given a zero rating by the conservative Americans for Constitutional Action. His committee assignments included Appropriations, Atomic Energy, Intelligence, and Foreign Relations. Case's questioning of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia began in 1967 following Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings. He based his criticism on three points: that the war was an unwarranted extension of executive power, that the creation of a viable South Vietnamese government was impossible as U.S. forces increasingly did what the South Vietnamese should have been doing, and that the war was not winnable without the "destruction of South Vietnam and much of American might itself." Case opposed the use of funds to subsidize foreign troops in [Laos](#) and proposed a cap on military and economic assistance to [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). He was especially critical of the military assistance program which had been used by Presidents [Johnson](#) and [Nixon](#) to extend overseas commitments without congressional concurrence.

In 1978 Case was defeated in the Republican party primary by conservative Jeffrey Bell who subsequently lost to Bill Bradley in the general election. Case remained in public life as chairman of Freedom House, a forty-year-old organization dedicated to promoting freedom in the United States and abroad. Clifford Case died on March 6, 1982.

Sources: *New York Times*, March 7 and 9, 1982; George Douth, *Leaders in Profile: The United States Senate*, 1975.

David Bernstein

## CASUALTIES

Because of the nature of the war in Vietnam, accurate estimates of civilian and military casualties are extremely difficult to achieve. Senator [Ted Kennedy](#) investigated the question of civilian casualties in [South Vietnam](#) between 1965 and 1974 and estimated that 1,005,000 people were wounded and 430,000 killed by American or [Vietcong](#)/North Vietnamese forces. Other historians with more conservative estimates calculated 800,000 wounded and approximately, 250,000 killed. Among American soldiers during the same period, 47,244 were killed in military action, while another 10,446 died from sickness or accidents. Nearly 304,000 were wounded. North Vietnamese and Vietcong military deaths totaled more than 660,000 between 1965 and 1974, while bombing deaths in [North Vietnam](#) were probably about 65,000. Among South Vietnamese military personnel, nearly 224,000 were killed in action and another 571,000 wounded. Among Allied troops, the South Koreans (see [Korea](#)) suffered 4,407 soldiers killed; the Thais, 351; and the [Australians](#) and [New Zealanders](#), 469.

Sources: Edward S. Herman, *Atrocities in Vietnam: Myths and Realities*, 1970; Telford Taylor, *Nuremberg and Vietnam: An American Tragedy*, 1971; Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

The Central Highlands, a strategically important region of [South Vietnam](#) throughout the 1960s and 1970s, is a plateau area at the southern edge of the Truong Son Mountains. Nearly one million people, primarily Montagnard tribesmen, lived in the 20,000 square miles of the Central Highlands in 1968. The region was economically known for its production of coffee, tea, and vegetables.

Source: Gerald Cannon Hickey, *Free in the Forest: An Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands, 1954-1976*, 1982.

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), an outgrowth of the World War II Office of Strategic Services (OSS), was established by Congress in 1947 to serve as a clearinghouse for all foreign intelligence operations. Subsequent legislation in 1949 allowed the CIA to use secret administrative procedures and even insulated it from the congressional budget process. The CIA's involvement in Vietnam began late in World War II when a special OSS team there allied itself with [Ho Chi Minh](#) in opposing the Japanese occupation forces. After the war, the CIA supported first the French and later, until the 1963 coup d'état, the regime of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). Until the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#), a CIA team led by Colonel Edward Lansdale, working out of [Saigon](#), had conducted [psychological operations](#) and paramilitary raids against the [Vietminh](#) and North Vietnamese. In 1961, the CIA launched its clandestine campaign in [Laos](#), recruiting nearly 10,000 [Hmong](#) tribesmen to attack the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) and sever the [infiltration](#) route. Throughout the 1960s the CIA worked to destroy the [Vietcong](#) infrastructure, particularly through the [Phoenix Program](#), which included military operations against the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)) as well as targeted assassinations of Vietcong leaders.

Early in the 1970s, the CIA came under tremendous pressure from political critics. First, revelations of CIA assassinations of Vietcong leaders raised eyebrows, as did its intervention in the internal affairs of Cuba, Chile, Iran, Laos, and a number of other countries. More severe, however, was the public reaction to President [Richard Nixon](#)'s 1967 launching of Operation CHAOS, a program of CIA surveillance of antiwar critics in the United States, a directive which violated the CIA charter. In 1974 Congress amended the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 to require that the CIA be used only for intelligence operations outside the United States. Both houses of Congress also established permanent oversight committees to monitor CIA activities.

Sources: [William E. Colby](#) and Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA*, 1978; Morton [Halperin](#) et al., *The Lawless State: The Crimes of the U.S. Intelligence Agencies*, 1976; Harry Howe Ransom, *The Intelligence Establishment*, 1970; John Prados, *Presidents's Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986; Peer da Silva, *Sub Rosa: The CIA and the Uses of Intelligence*, 1978.

## CENTRAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

The Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) was the headquarters for North Vietnamese command of [Vietcong](#) forces. Although COSVN was nominally located in Tay Ninh Province, it was highly mobile and quite different from what most American military officials thought of as a command headquarters. COSVN consisted of a small number of senior officers and staff assistants, but it was not a fixed installation resembling U.S. [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) headquarters. Throughout the war American officers talked longingly of ending the war by capturing COSV, crippling the Vietcong and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA). General Creighton Abrams in 1970 remarked that the "successful destruction of COSVN headquarters in a single blow would, I believe, have a very significant impact on enemy operations throughout South Vietnam." The desire to strike at COSVN became the rationale for the bombing of [Cambodia](#) in 1969 (see Operation Menu) and the invasion of Cambodia in 1970 (see Operation Binh Tay). Supposedly it had been located and was vulnerable to [B-52](#) strikes. Because Cambodia was a neutral nation, elaborate steps were taken to maintain secrecy, including falsification of military records. In the invasion of Cambodia, American and South Vietnamese soldiers captured large amounts of Vietcong supplies, but they never located COSVN. The primary results of the invasion were to push the Vietcong and NVA deeper into Cambodia, increase the flood of [refugees](#) into Phnom Penh, strengthen the [Khmer Rouge](#), hasten the collapse of the Cambodian military, and undermine the Cambodian government. The American pursuit of COSVN became a symbol of the difficulties of fighting a guerrilla war.

Sources: William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Malcom Caldwell and Tan Lek, *Cambodia in the Southeast Asian War*, 1973; Jonathan Grant et al., *The Widening War in Indochina*, 1971.

Samuel Freeman



## CH-21 WORK HORSE

Early versions of the Vertol CH-21 Work Horse saw action in the Korean War. During the early years of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the CH-21 lived up to the name "Work Horse," serving as the major component of U.S. helicopter assistance to the armed forces of the [Republic of Vietnam](#). By the time American combat troops began playing a major role in Vietnam in the mid-1960s, the CH-21 had largely disappeared from service with regular units of the U.S. armed forces. The aircraft continued to play a role in the war, however, with [Air America](#), the [Central Intelligence Agency](#)'s covert air arm. One joke going around among GIs in the late 1960s was that you could go clear across [Laos](#) without ever touching foreign soil, you could just jump from the wreck of one CH-21 to the next.

Powered by one 1,425 horsepower Wright R-1820-103 engine, the CH-21 could accommodate twelve stretchers or fourteen fully equipped troops in a passenger-cargo compartment 20 feet long and 5 feet 8 inches wide. Capable of carrying 4,700 pounds of cargo, either internally or slung beneath the fuselage, the CH-21 did yeoman service as the "work horse" of the early years of the Vietnam war.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; *Jane's All The World's Aircraft*, 1957.

Nolan J. Argyle

## CH-34 CHOCTAW

The first production model of the CH-34 Choctaw flew on September 20, 1954. The Choctaw was adopted by all branches of the armed forces, including the [Coast Guard](#). Powered by a Wright R-1820-84 radial air-cooled engine rated at 1525 horsepower, the CH-34 could carry twelve fully equipped combat troops. Equipped with a power winch and a cargo sling, the CH-34 was a versatile aircraft capable of performing a wide variety of missions. Throughout the 1960s, the Choctaw was used in Vietnam as a medium cargo carrier, troop transport, and medical evacuation (see [medevac](#)) aircraft. Relatively large in relation to its payload capabilities, and slow and unmaneuverable compared to later helicopters, the CH-34 proved vulnerable to enemy ground fire and was replaced as an assault aircraft by the [UH-1](#).

Source: *Jane's All the World's Aircraft, 1963-64*, 1964.

Nolan J. Argyle

## CH-37 MOJAVE

In late 1962 the U.S. Army introduced the CH-37 to Vietnam. One flight platoon of the 19th Transportation Company, stationed in [Korea](#), was brought to Vietnam to provide heavy helicopter support for forces of the [Republic of Vietnam](#). While very few aircraft were involved, the introduction of the CH-37 marked an escalation in American involvement in the war. The CH-37 was capable of airlifting heavy equipment, including the largest [artillery](#), into any part of the country in support of Vietnamese ground operations.

When it was introduced into service in 1956, the CH-37 Mojave was the largest, most powerful helicopter in the non-Communist world. With a cabin 30 feet 4 inches long and 7 feet 9 inches wide, the Mojave was comparable in size to the DC-3 transport. Fitted with hydraulically operated clamshell doors, the Mojave could carry three Jeeps or three quarter-ton trucks internally. Twenty-three fully equipped combat troops could be carried in the Mojave, or it could be set up to carry twenty-four litter patients and medical attendants. Large, bulky loads could be carried under the aircraft in a sling equipped with an automatic release to release its load upon touchdown.

Powered by two Pratt & Whitney R-2800 engines with 4,200 combined horsepower, the CH-37 could carry a five-ton payload at a cruising speed of 115 mph. This helicopter was one of the first ever built with retractable landing gear and night flying equipment. With its automatic stabilizing equipment, the Mojave was capable of flying under virtually any weather conditions.

Source: *Jane's All the World's Aircraft 1959-60*, 1960.

Nolan J. Argyle

## CH-47 CHINOOK

The Boeing-Vertol CH-47 Chinook entered service with the U.S. Army in the spring of 1963 at Fort Benning, Georgia. First assigned to the 11th Air Assault Division (Airmobile), the Chinook replaced the [CH-37](#) as the main cargo helicopter for the army. When the Chinook started service with the division, the 11th Air Assault Division was developing the strategies and techniques that were later to be tried in Vietnam. Redesignated the [1st Cavalry Division \(Airmobile\)](#), this unit was later to play a key role in the army's [helicopter war](#) in Vietnam. The CH-47 was a key component of that role.

The CH-47 was powered by two Lycoming T55-L-7 engines, each delivering 2,200 SHP, driving two three-bladed rotors. With a cabin 30 feet long, 7 feet 6 inches wide, and 6 feet 6 inches high, the CH-47 has a normal payload of three tons of freight, thirty-three troops, twenty-seven paratroopers, or twenty-four litters. The rear-loading ramp can be left open or removed to enable the Chinook to transport extra-long cargo or to be used for free-drop delivery of cargo or for paratroop drops. Capable of cruising at 150 mph, the Chinook served very successfully as the major cargo helicopter of the Vietnam War.

The CH-47 was also used as a gunship in Vietnam, with a 20mm Vulcan cannon mounted to fire from the side of the aircraft. The Chinook was less successful in this role, as the vibrations from the cannon placed too much stress on the airframe, greatly shortening the useful life of the aircraft.

Source: *Jane's All the World's Aircraft, 1963-64*, 1964.

Nolan J. Argyle

## CH-53

In 1962 the U.S. Navy selected the Sikorsky CH-53 as the new heavy assault transport helicopter for the [Marine Corps](#). The U.S. Air Force also selected the Sikorsky to serve a variety of roles, including transport, medical evacuation (see Medevac), and rescue. Deliveries of the CH-53 started in 1965, and the aircraft entered service in Vietnam in 1966.

The CH-53 has a passenger-cargo cabin 30 feet long, 7 feet 6 inches wide, and 6 feet 6 inches high, and is capable of carrying up to 18,000 pounds of freight (overload condition). A typical cargo load would be two Jeeps, two Hawk missiles, or a 105mm howitzer. The CH-53 can carry thirty-eight combat-ready troops or twenty-four stretchers.

Powered by two General Electric T64-GE-6 2,850 horsepower shaft-turbine engines, the CH-53 has a normal cruising speed of 172 mph and a normal radius (with a four-ton load) of 115 miles.

Source: *Jane's All the World's Aircraft*, 1964.

Nolan J. Argyle

## CH-54 SKYCRANE

The CH-54 Skycrane (Tarhe) was first delivered to Vietnam in 1966 and was used to carry heavy payloads. Capable of lifting up to 20,000 pounds, the CH-54 often moved heavy [artillery](#) pieces, aircraft, trucks, and army surgical center pods. During the course of the Vietnam War, the CH-54, with its two 4,500 SHP engines, retrieved more than 380 shot-down aircraft.

Sources: Richard O'Neill, ed., *An Illustrated Guide to the Modern US Army*, 1986; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

The Joint Chiefs of Staff was created by the National Defense Act of July 1947. Composed of the senior officer of each of the four branches of the armed services, the Joint Chiefs of Staff operates under the [secretary of defense](#) and the president of the United States. Between 1959 and 1975, six men served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Air Force General Nathan F. Twining (1957-60), Army General Lyman L. Lemnitzer (1960-61), Army General [Maxwell D. Taylor](#) (1961-64), Army General [Earle G. Wheeler](#) (1964-70), Admiral [Thomas H. Moorer](#) (1970-74), and Air Force General [George S. Brown](#) (1974-78).

Sources: Edward Luttwack, *The Pentagon and the Art of War*, 1985; Lawrence J. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-five Years*, 1976.

## CHAMPA

Champa was an Indianized-kingdom in Southeast Asia, located approximately in central Vietnam between the Red River Delta and [Mekong Delta](#). To the north were the Vietnamese people; to the south were the [Khmers](#), or Cambodians. During the Early Han Dynasty, Champa came to the attention of the [Chinese](#) and its recorded history begins; by the fifteenth century, the kingdom had succumbed to the relentless advance of the Vietnam kingdom down the peninsula.

Champa and Vietnam marked a dividing line of sorts between Indian and Chinese cultural and political influence in Southeast Asia. Champa was a decentralized kingdom, with each coastal fishing village having a measure of independence and power. Champa augmented income and power from fishing, there was virtually no farming land, with piracy against ships operating in the South China Sea and against Vietnamese landed communities.

For a thousand years Champa was able to withstand Vietnamese expansion. Until the collapse of the T'ang Dynasty in the early tenth century, Vietnam faced Chinese imperial power on again (during the Han Dynasty) and off again (during the interregnum) and could not devote its full strength to expansion. Champa paid tribute to Chinese dynasties and hence maintained a measure of independence and power.

The situation began to change after the fall of the T'ang. Vietnam became stronger, and soon began advancing slowly from the Red River Delta down the coastline, reaching approximately the seventeenth parallel by A.D. 1000, and the city of [Hue](#) by approximately A.D. 1400. Along with the advance of the Vietnamese, the Mongol rise to power sapped the vitality and strength of the Champa kingdom. Vietnam and Champa united temporarily to withstand the Mongols and their Chinese and Korean levies, but the centuries of constant warfare proved too great a strain. By 1471 Vietnam had conquered Champa, and the kingdom became a part of history.

Source: Michael G. Cotter, "Towards a Social History of the Vietnamese Southward Movement," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 9 (March 1968), 12-24.

Charles Dobbs



## CHAMS

Until the early 1400s the Chams were an Indianized people living along the coast of present-day Vietnam between the Red River Delta and [Mekong Delta](#). The Chams reflected the differences between Indian and [Chinese](#) cultural influences in Southeast Asia. They were a seafaring people, alternating fishing and piracy, and because of their relatively martial pursuits and despite their small numbers, they were able to withstand their neighbors, the Vietnamese and the Cambodians, and for a while even threaten the Vietnam capital in [Hanoi](#).

For more than a thousand years the Cham people survived along with their kingdom. The Vietnamese always faced Chinese pressure, sometimes Chinese armies, occasionally Chinese control, while the Cambodians were not particularly warlike. The Chams meanwhile benefited from fishing, piracy, and trade with the islands of present-day Indonesia.

Matters considerably worsened after the collapse of the T'ang Dynasty in [China](#). Until A.D. 900, the Vietnamese expended a considerable amount of their energy resisting the Chinese; after the T'ang collapse, the Vietnamese would have their independence secure, and would begin a thousand-year drive to control all of [Indochina](#). The Chams were the first barrier, and hence the first target. Vietnamese pressure crushed the Chams; the slow, inexorable march of Vietnamese farmers down the coast overwhelmed the seafaring Chams whose hold on their land was weak. By A.D. 1000, the Vietnamese had secured perhaps a third of old [Champa](#); by the 1400s, Champa disappeared.

In the 1950s and 1960s a vestige of the old Cham people remained in Vietnam. Around [Hue](#), the old Champa kingdom capital, there were up to 20,000 people who made their living from the sea and were descendants of the old Chams. Along with the expulsion of Chinese-ethnic Vietnamese (see [Chinese](#)) after North Vietnam's May 1975 conquest of the South, presumably the old Chams have been expelled too.

Sources: John Frank Cady, *Southeast Asia: Its Historical Development*, 1958; John F. Embree, *Ethnic Groups of Northern Southeast Asia*, 1950.

Charles Dobbs

## CHAPMAN, LEONARD FIELDING, JR.

Chapman's tour as commandant of the [Marine Corps](#) (1968-72) coincided with the [withdrawal](#) of U.S. forces under [President Nixon's Vietnamization](#) policy. Born in Florida in 1913, he graduated from the University of Florida with a reserve army commission which he resigned in favor of a Marine Corps commission in 1935. Chapman served in the Pacific Fleet before the war but instructed [artillery](#) classes at Quantico until 1944 when orders sent him to the staff of the 11th Artillery and combat on Peleliu.

Chapman's postwar assignments included staff duty and regimental and barracks commands in [Japan](#) and North Carolina. In Washington in the early 1960s, his staff work earned the annual merit award of the Armed Forces Management Association (1966) and the attention of [President Johnson](#), who promoted Chapman to commandant over the more celebrated [Victor Krulak](#) and [Lewis Walt](#) in 1968.

The first artillery officer to rise to the marines' top billet and a product of [McNamara's](#) industrialized Pentagon, Chapman became known as the "cerebral commandant" and an expert in management techniques, logistics, and communications. Candidly admitting "We've got a problem," Chapman faced morale and racial problems on Okinawa and in Vietnam rear areas during his tour and retired in January 1972. A year later President Nixon appointed him commissioner of immigration and naturalization, and he retired from that post in May 1977.

Sources: *New York Times*, 1968-1977; J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 1982.

Dudley Acker

## **CHARNER, LEONARD VICTOR JOSEPH**

Leonard Charner was born in February 1797 and died in February 1869. He spent his career in the French navy, and as a result of his efforts in 1861, the French secured their control of [Saigon](#) and controlled the flow of rice into eastern Vietnam from the western provinces. He returned to [France](#) in 1862 to become a senator and he was promoted to the rank of admiral in 1864.

Source: Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, 2 vols., 1967.

## CHIANG KAI-SHEK

Chiang Kai-shek, longtime leader of the Kuomintang and Nationalists in [China](#), was born in 1887. Chiang was trained and served in the Japanese army between 1909 and 1911, and then joined Sun Yat-Sen in the [Chinese](#) nationalist movement. After Sun Yat-Sen's death in 1925, Chiang became leader of the Kuomintang. Although the Nationalists split with the Communists in the Kuomintang in 1927, they later joined together to resist Japanese oppression in China, especially after 1937. The civil war with the Communists resumed in 1946, and Chiang, along with the other Nationalists, was expelled from China to Taiwan after the Communist victory in 1949. From 1950 to his death in 1975, Chiang served as president of Taiwan, and although he was willing, and even anxious, to provide troops to assist the American war effort in [South Vietnam](#), U.S. policymakers resisted the idea, worried that it might bring a large-scale intervention from the People's Republic of China.

Sources: Keiji Furuya, *Chiang Kai-shek. His Life and Times*, 1981; William Morwood, *Duel for the Middle Kingdom: The Struggle Between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung for Control of China*, 1980.

## CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

The chief of naval operations is the senior officer of the United States [Navy](#). Between 1959, when Admiral Arleigh Burke held the position, and the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, six men served as chief of naval operations: Admiral Arleigh Burke (1959-61); Admiral George W. Anderson (1961-63); Admiral David L. McDonald (1963-65); Admiral [Thomas H. Moorer](#) (1965-70); Admiral Elmo Zumwalt (1970-74); and Admiral James L. Holloway (1974-75).

Sources: John M. Collins, *U.S. Defense Planning: A Critique*, 1982; Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

## CHIEF OF STAFF, U.S. AIR FORCE

The senior officer in the United States Air Force is the chief of staff. Six people occupied that position between 1959 and 1975. They were General Thomas D. White (1959-61); General [Curtis LeMay](#) (1961-65); General John P. McConnell (1965-68); General John D. Ryan (1968-73); General [George S. Brown](#) (1974); and General David C. Jones (1974 until after the war).

Sources: John M. Collins, *U.S. Defense Planning: A Critique*, 1982; Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973*, 1977.

## CHIEF OF STAFF, U.S. ARMY

The post of army chief of staff is the senior officer in the United States Army, and seven people held the position between 1959 and 1975, starting with General [Maxwell Taylor](#). Taylor was replaced in 1959 by General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, who served until October 1960. General George Decker succeeded Lemnitzer and served until 1962. General [Earle Wheeler](#) became chief of staff in October 1962 and stayed there until July 1964, when General [Harold K. Johnson](#) took over the position. General [William Westmoreland](#) replaced Johnson in 1968 and remained in office until October 1972. General [Creighton Abrams](#) served as chief of staff until his death from cancer in 1974. General [Fred C. Weyand](#) took over after Abrams's death.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; James M. Collins, *U.S. Defense Planning: A Critique*, 1982.

## CHIEU HOI PROGRAM

Efforts to destroy the National Liberation Front (NLF; see [Vietcong](#)) included the "Chieu Hoi" (Open Arms) amnesty program initiated at the insistence of American and [British](#) advisers, including Sir Robert Thompson. The program, like all others in Vietnam, generated impressive statistics, nearly 160,000 [deserters](#) and 11,200 weapons turned in, but only meager results. The program was conducted in typical American fashion with leaflets dropped from the air in NLF-controlled areas and Vietnamese psyops ([psychological operations](#)) personnel haranguing peasants via bullhorn from hovering helicopters. Those who rallied to the government were usually low-level personnel, many of whom may not have been enthusiastic about the NLF program to begin with. The program, in part because of its failure to develop face-to-face contacts, attracted few members of the NLF political or military cadres. In fact, critics charged the program was an "R and R" for the NLF, allowing NLF soldiers to "rally" temporarily to recuperate themselves and then return to the NLF. Evidence indicates some may have "changed sides" as many as five times. Of those who rallied, however, were some who genuinely changed sides and were recruited into the GVN military (see [Republic of Vietnam](#)), often as [Kit Carson Scouts](#). Good Kit Carson scouts were highly prized by American military units because of their familiarity with guerrilla movements, tactics, and [booby traps](#). Unfortunately, far more of the Chieu Hoi deserters also infiltrated American and [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) military units and caused serious problems.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Tran Dinh Tho, *Pacification*, 1979; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman



## CHINESE

Ethnic Chinese constituted the largest minority group in [South Vietnam](#). At the peak of the conflict, there were approximately one million Chinese living in South Vietnam, most of them in the [Cholon](#) suburb of [Saigon](#). They constituted a highly prosperous group active in banking, foreign trade, real estate, and commerce. Because of centuries of conflict between the Chinese and ethnic Vietnamese, the Chinese were often resented by the larger population, but their services and skills were important to the local economy. Large numbers of Vietnamese [refugees](#) to the United States after 1975 consisted of the ethnic Chinese escaping the economic restrictions imposed by the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#).

Sources: F. Raymond Iredell, *Vietnam: The Country and the People*, 1966; Joan Schrock et al., *Minority Groups in the Republic of Vietnam*, 1967.

## CHOLON

Cholon is the [Chinese](#) part of the city of [Saigon](#). It was originally separate from Saigon and populated exclusively by native Chinese living in [Indochina](#) and prospering commercially. Urban growth eventually brought Cholon into the Saigon metropolitan area, and at the height of the Vietnam War the Cholon population exceeded one million people.

Sources: *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, 1984; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## CHOMSKY, AVRAM NOAM

Noam Chomsky, a leading intellectual critic of the war in Vietnam, was born in Philadelphia on December 7, 1928. He received a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1949, specializing in language and linguistics, and the M.A. and Ph.D. in 1951 and 1955. Chomsky joined the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1955 and became a full professor in 1961. He wrote several well-received books in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including *Syntactic Structures* (1957) and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). Chomsky openly opposed the war in Vietnam as early as 1965, speaking widely on the northeastern campus circuit in 1966 and 1967, but he really made his mark on the [antiwar movement](#) with the publication of his *American Power and the New Mandarins* in 1969. There he argued that the United States had become intoxicated with its own military and economic power, had assumed an ideology of superiority in world politics, and was destroying a society in the name of freedom. He also accused American intellectuals of having become stooges of the business and government establishment.

Sources: *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985; Noam Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, 1969; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984.

## CHURCH, FRANK FORRESTER

Frank Church was born in Boise, Idaho, on July 25, 1924. During World War II Church served as a military intelligence officer in [China](#), India, and Burma, and in 1947 he graduated from Stanford University. Church attended Harvard Law School for a year, but a bout with cancer brought him back west again, and in 1950 he graduated from the Stanford University Law School. Between 1950 and 1956 Church practiced law in Idaho and was active in Democratic politics, serving as chairman of the statewide Young Democrats organization. He won the party's nomination for the U.S. Senate in 1956 and went on to upset the Republican incumbent, Herman Welker. At thirty-two, Church was the youngest member of the Senate. He quickly earned a reputation as an outspoken liberal, and by supporting majority leader [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) on civil rights legislation, Church gained favor and was appointed to the prestigious Senate [Foreign Relations Committee](#) in 1959. In 1960 Church supported [John F. Kennedy](#) for the presidential nomination, and he won reelection to the Senate in 1962.

After 1965, Senator Church became increasingly apprehensive about U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. He warned against American support for repressive regimes such as that in [Vietnam](#) unless substantial progress was made toward reform. In 1965, he repeated this warning, contending that the rift in the Communist world between the [People's Republic of China](#) and the [Soviet Union](#) had diminished the threat of "monolithic communism." In 1966, Church broke with the Johnson administration over Vietnam policy by calling for an end to the bombing. In 1970, Church cosponsored the [Cooper-Church Amendment](#) to prohibit U.S. deployment of ground forces in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), setting off a six-month debate in the Senate. In 1972, in reaction to the [Nixon](#) administration's bombing of [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong and the [mining of Haiphong Harbor](#), Church joined with Senator [Clifford Case](#) of New Jersey in sponsoring a resolution seeking an end to all U.S. military activity in Southeast Asia. The proposal was considered the first step in the eventual adoption of the War Powers Resolution of 1973.

On the domestic front, Church chaired the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence which investigated excesses and violations of law by the [Central Intelligence Agency](#), Federal Bureau of Investigation, and National Security Agency under the Nixon administration. In 1976, Church made a bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, but he lost out to Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia. In 1980, Church was defeated for reelection to the Senate. He continued to live in Washington, D.C., practicing international law until his death from cancer on April 7, 1984.

Sources: *Current Biography*, 1978, pp. 75-79; *New York Times*, April 8, 1984.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## CIVIL OPERATIONS AND REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Throughout the war in Vietnam, the United States paid lip service to the idea of pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)), converting the loyalties of South Vietnamese peasants to the government, but the major American effort in [Indochina](#) was always military. In February 1966 [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) and [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) had agreed to strengthen the pacification program, and they renamed it Revolutionary Development. Several months later Ambassador [Henry Cabot Lodge](#) established the [Office of Civil Operations](#) to manage State Department-controlled pacification efforts. In May 1967, a new agency, named CORDS, was established, meaning Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support. [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) was in complete control of CORDS, removing it from State Department direction, but CORDS drew on support from the military, the [Central Intelligence Agency](#), the State Department, and the United States Information Agency. [Robert Komer](#) became director of CORDS and a deputy to MACV commander [William Westmoreland](#). Komer established unified civilian-military advisory teams in all forty-four provinces of South Vietnam and in 250 districts. By 1969 CORDS had more than 6,500 military personnel and 1,100 civilians pursuing pacification objectives in [South Vietnam](#). Although CORDS claimed credit for winning higher loyalties from the peasant population, most of the gains came only from peasant migration from rural areas to the major South Vietnamese cities. Actual gains in converting the population from the [Vietcong](#) were minimal. The [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968 became clear proof of that reality. When President [Richard Nixon](#) came to power in 1969, the United States quickly made its decision to withdraw from Vietnam, and after that point CORDS became an afterthought. Pacification efforts continued, but U.S. officials were more interested in getting out of Vietnam than in bringing about any real reformation of the distribution of power in Vietnam. The combination of the Tet Offensive and CORDS activities in 1968 and 1969 had severely weakened the Vietcong, but the [North Vietnamese Army](#) only filled the vacuum.

Sources: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; Robert Komer, "Clear, Hold, and Rebuild," *Army*, 20 (May 1970), 18-23; Tran Dinh Tho, *Pacification*, 1979; Thomas Scoville, *Reorganizing for Pacification Support*, 1982; J.K. McCallum, "CORDS Pacification Organization in Vietnam: A Civilian-Military Effort," *Armed Forces and Society*, 10 (Fall 1983), 105-122; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986.

## CIVILIAN IRREGULAR DEFENSE GROUP

The Civilian Irregular Defense Group, or CIDG, was a [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA) operation initiated in 1961 to prevent [Vietcong](#) control of Vietnamese minorities. The purpose of the program was to train the indigenous tribes of the Vietnamese interior in self-defense so the Vietcong would not be able to get control of the [Central Highlands](#) and to relieve regular South Vietnamese army forces of the responsibility of controlling the interior. The CIA went to work with the [Montagnards](#) first, and then gradually extended the defensive program out to such other tribes as the [Khmers](#), Nungs, [Cao Dai](#), [Hoa Hao](#), and some South Vietnamese youth groups. By mid-1963 the CIDG was functioning in more than 200 tribal villages, with 12,000 people participating in the program. The CIDG programs were more popular than later [counterinsurgency](#) efforts because they did not involve resettlement of people away from their home villages.

In October 1963 the CIDG programs were removed from CIA and placed under the control of the [Special Forces](#). At the same time the Special Forces assumed responsibility for about 600 people in Combat Intelligence Teams and more than 5,000 Border Surveillance personnel and Mountain Scouts. A group of Civilian Airborne Rangers were militarized and worked with the CIDG. The CIDG was under the command of the Luc Luong Dac Biet, South Vietnamese Special Forces. After the switch from the CIA to the Special Forces, the CIDG became more militarily aggressive, although their main purpose remained defensive. At times the CIDG forces were hired on a contractual basis, but usually they functioned as local security units. After 1964, some CIDG units began performing commando hit-and-run raids along the border of Vietnam, [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) and the Special Forces established twenty-four CIDG camps in the border area to stop North Vietnamese [infiltration](#). To defend some of the more remote camps, the Special Forces gave some of the CIDG groups more extensive training and named them Mobile Strike Force Commands. When [Vietnamization](#) took place after [Richard Nixon](#) became president, the CIDG units were changed either into border-patrolling battalions or special units. The Cambodians became part of the Khmer Republic Army and the Nungs, who were ethnic [Chinese](#), became part of the [Studies and Observation Groups](#) program. Vietnamese CIDG units went into the South Vietnamese army. Most of the transfers came in 1970.

Sources: Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971*, 1973; Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 1985; Kevin Generous, "Irregular Forces in Vietnam," in John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985; Ngo Quang Truong, *Territorial Forces*, 1981.

## CLAYMORE

Widely used in Vietnam, the claymore antipersonnel mine was designed to produce a directionalized, fan-shaped pattern of fragments. The claymore used a curved block of [C-4](#) explosive, shaped to blow all its force outward in a semicircular pattern. A large number of pellets were embedded in the face of the explosive, creating a devastating blast of fragments similar to the effect of an oversized shotgun.

With their directional pattern, claymores were well-suited as a perimeter-defense weapon. With electronic firing, defenders in bunkers could set claymores in a pattern to cover all approaches and fire them at will. One problem with this was the tendency of the enemy to use infiltrators to sneak into the defense perimeter before an attack and simply turn the claymores around. Then when defenders fired the mine, its fragments peppered their own position.

The [Vietcong](#) liked to use captured claymores as [booby traps](#). Set off by trip wires, a claymore mounted close to the ground was capable of cutting the legs off an unwary enemy.

A more unorthodox use was found for claymores by many American GIs. The explosive burned with intense heat, and a small amount of explosive could quickly heat a can of C-rations in the field. While never designed for it, and certainly never sanctioned, claymores became one of the most popular field stoves in the war.

Source: John Quick, *Dictionary of Weapons and Military Terms*, 1973.

Nolan J. Argyle

## CLERGY AND LAITY CONCERNED

Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam (CLCV) was founded in 1965 by an interdenominational group of religious leaders including Reverend John C. Bennett and Father Daniel Berrigan. Early cochairs included Father Berrigan, Rabbi Abraham Heschel, and [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) CLCV followed a moderate antiwar course, advocating a negotiated settlement and holding teachins, fasts, vigils, and orderly antiwar activities. They sponsored a 2,000-member demonstration at the White House in January 1967 and a February Fast for Peace with over one million reportedly participating. Although CLCV participated in events with more radical antiwar groups, it consistently resisted radical activities such as [draft](#) card burning and violent protest.

Late in 1966 CLCV commissioned a study entitled *In the Name of America* indicting U.S. involvement in Vietnam. It was published just before the 1968 [Tet Offensive](#). Drawing heavily on press reports and government documents, it argued that American involvement in Vietnam violated international law, and that the United States and its allies were committing crimes against humanity. It focused on issues including uses and effects of [napalm](#), gas, and defoliants; search and destroy operations; treatment of prisoners; forced relocation and pacification programs (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)); and the impact of [artillery](#), aerial, and [naval bombardment](#).

CLCV participated in the umbrella National Mobilization Committee protesting at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Like other antiwar and peace organizations, CLCV was under surveillance and subject to [infiltration](#) by government intelligence and police agencies, including the [Central Intelligence Agency](#)'s Operation CHAOS in 1969 in violation of the CIA charter prohibiting domestic operations. Reflecting its expanding focus from Vietnam to U.S. military policies in general, CLCV changed its name in 1974 to Clergy and Laity Concerned. Recently, the organization has protested high schools allowing armed forces recruiters and ROTC programs on campus without giving equal time to peace organizations; opposed the Nestle Corporation's marketing of infant formula in Third World countries; and called for corporate divestment in South Africa.

Sources: Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984; Daniel L. Migliore, "The Crisis of Faith in the Aftermath of Vietnam," *The Christian Century* 90, June 13, 1973, pp. 672-677; January 23, 1980; and March 24, 1982.

Samuel Freeman



## CLIFFORD, CLARK MCADAMS

Clark Clifford was born at Fort Scott, Kansas, on December 25, 1906. He attended Washington University in St. Louis and received his law degree there in 1928. Clifford practiced law in St. Louis until World War II, when he became an assistant to [Harry S. Truman](#)'s naval aide. In 1946 Clifford was named naval aide to the president. He resigned from the [navy](#) in June 1946 and joined Truman's staff as special counsel. During the next four years he became one of Truman's most trusted aides, playing key roles in the development of the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA), the Department of Defense, the Truman Doctrine, and U.S. policy toward Israel. Clifford resigned and returned to private law practice in 1950, although he remained in Washington, D.C., as a prominent consultant. In 1960 he helped plan [John F. Kennedy](#)'s campaign strategy, and when Kennedy was elected president, Clifford headed the transition team. After the election, Kennedy named Clifford to the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board to oversee CIA operations, and in 1963 Clifford became chairman of the board. After the assassination of Kennedy, Clifford soon broke into [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)'s inner circle. He planned Johnson's 1964 election campaign, and after the election Clifford advised the president on Vietnam, making frequent fact-finding trips to Southeast Asia and numbering himself among the "hawks."

When [Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara](#) resigned in 1968, Johnson persuaded Clifford to accept the cabinet post. He became the president's chief spokesman and defender on Vietnam policy. But after sounding out the generals on the future prospects in Vietnam, Clifford was dismayed that they had no timetable for completing the struggle. They just wanted more money, more men, and more weapons. With that sad prognosis, Clifford persuaded Johnson to put a lid on manpower allocations, limit bombing raids, and start peace negotiations.

In other foreign policy problems, such as the [USS Pueblo](#) incident, Clifford urged a cautious and restrained response. And he assumed (incorrectly it would seem) that [China](#) and not Russia posed the major threat to U.S. interests in the future. He believed that U.S.-Soviet relations would be normalized, given time, through detente. In January 1969, the [Nixon](#) administration took office and Clifford was replaced as secretary of defense by [Melvin Laird](#) of Wisconsin. Back in private life, Clifford became increasingly critical of the Nixon administration's policy in Vietnam. In 1970, he branded the invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) as "reckless and foolhardy," and said that Nixon's policy of [Vietnamization](#) was "a formula for perpetual war." He advocated an accelerated [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam in order to end the U.S. role in ground fighting no later than December 31, 1970.

Sources: *Current Biography*, 1968, pp. 90-93; Thomas G. Paterson, *American Foreign Policy*, 1983; *Facts on File*, 1970, p. 344.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## CLIMATES OF VIETNAM

Three distinct climatic regions are distinguishable in Vietnam between the Sino-Vietnam border in the north and the south coast along the South China Sea. All three climatic types found in Vietnam are variations of tropical climates. The Koppen climate classification system is used here, and average monthly rainfall and temperature data for three locations, [Hanoi](#), [Hue](#), and [Ho Chi Minh City](#), are used to show major climatic characteristics. *Highland Tropical Savanna Climate (Koppen)*

Based on the Koppen climate classification system, Hanoi falls within a climatic zone of Southeastern Asia located in latitudes 20 to 25 degrees north of the equator. This climate is described as temperate, rainy in the spring and summer, with a dry winter and a hot, humid summer. Slightly over 60 inches of the total precipitation falls in the warmer six months (April-October) of the year. The annual temperature is 23 F with the warmest monthly average in July and the coolest in January. The Cw, or "temperate-tropical wet-dry climate," is a pole-ward extension of the true tropical savanna (Aw). While Hanoi is not in the highlands (elev. 53 ft.), it is in a geographical position to be influenced by the highlands west and north of the city. As a result, two months out of the year have average temperatures that cool below 64.4 F and therefore cannot be classified as tropical. As one progresses south of Hanoi towards Hue, the climate becomes both tropical and monsoon in nature.

The distinct wet-dry season results in the development of a vegetation complex identified as "tropical savanna." It is characterized by open expanses of tall grasses, with shrubs, thorn bushes, and scattered trees. True forest exists in areas where a permanent water supply is available. All of this vegetation can be classified under the heading "Raingreen Vegetation." Soils are mostly yellowish or red latisols (Ultisols). Extensive leaching is common, and often the true highland soils are infertile. Frequently, local alluvial soils are quite productive and extensively used. This climatic type (Cwa), "highland tropical savanna," was greatly favored by Europeans who settled in the tropics in the nineteenth century. *Tropical Monsoon*

Monsoons are found in close association with rainy tropics, generally along coast where there is a seasonal onshore flow of moist air. In Vietnam the monsoon extends southward along the coast from Vinh, to Dong Hoi, Hue, and south to Quang Ngai. The windshift occurs in September, and from then until early February the wind blows from the northeast across the South China Sea onto the north-central coast of Vietnam.

It differs from rainy tropics in that it has a distinct dry season. However, storage of soil moisture is generally sufficient to maintain a forest in dry season. Monsoons can be regarded as transitional between rainy tropics (Aw) and the wet and dry tropics (Cwa), having total rainfall comparable to the true rain forest and a precipitation regime comparable to the Aw's (tropical savanna).

The term "monsoon tropics" does not apply to all climates affected by a monsoonal wind circulation. Its use stems from the characteristic climates of monsoon Asia, but the designation "wet-and-dry tropics" is applied to those regions with less annual precipitation and a distinct dry season.

There is little difference in the temperature characteristics of the monsoon and tropical rain forest. The most noticeable, however, is the occurrence of the maximum temperature prior to the onset of the rain period. The diurnal temperature variations are greater than in the rain forest, with greatest differences occurring in the dry months.

The average precipitation in the monsoons is around 70 inches, but where orographic conditions exist, annual precipitation can be tremendous, running over 200 inches annually. Most of precipitation comes as heavy showers, especially where the orographic effect plays a major role.

Soils in the monsoon region are usually lateritic (Ultisols) and red and yellow in color. In some localized areas, they can be utilized for tropical plantation agriculture as well as subsistence agriculture. *Tropical Savanna (Koppen)*

Described as the "tropical wet-dry" by Koppen, this climatic type has a wet summer controlled by moist, warm equatorial and maritime tropical air masses and a dry season dictated by continental (dry) tropical air in the winter months. In Vietnam, this climatic type extends from approximately 8 to 15 degrees north latitude. A very distinct characteristic of the tropical savanna (Aw) is that the warmest average monthly temperature occurs in the spring, just prior to the onset of the rain season. (See the data for Ho Chi Minh City.) There is also a distinct dry season in the winter and a wet, humid summer. In the case of Ho Chi Minh City, the annual climatic distribution is isothermal. According to the Koppen system, any location with an annual temperature range of 9 F or less is classified as "isothermal," indicated by the lowercase letter (i). The Asiatic wet-dry climate probably has a stronger monsoon control than other regions of the tropics. The vegetation of the tropical savanna is distinct and consists of coarse-textured, tall grass mixed with scattered trees and tall brush. Permanent and true forests exist along and/or around permanent streams or water bodies. Profitable agriculture is possible in the form of tropical plantations. In the case of Vietnam, rubber plantations were particularly important in the lower [Mekong Delta](#) of the south. In addition, subsistent, riverine agriculture is important in the tropical savanna regions of Vietnam. As with the highland tropical savanna (Cwa) in the north, the vegetation of the tropical savanna (Aw) can be classified as "Raingreen vegetation." The soils are yellow and red latisols (Ultisols) but more severely leached than those in the highland tropical savanna because of warmer temperatures and more precipitation.

Sources: F. Raymond Iredell, *Vietnam: The Country and the People*, 1966; Daniel Hall, *Atlas of Southeast Asia*, 1964.

Gerald Holder

## COAST GUARD, UNITED STATES

The origins of the Coast Guard go back to the Revenue Cutter Service, a military organization founded shortly after the American Revolution and assigned to cooperation with the United States [Navy](#) in 1799. The modern Coast Guard was formed in 1915 when the Revenue Cutter Service and the Life-Saving Service were merged. The Lighthouse Service merged with the Coast Guard in 1939, and in 1942 the Bureau of Navigation and the Steamboat Inspection were added to the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard was financed out of the Treasury Department until 1967, when it became part of the Department of Transportation. At the direction of the president of the United States, the Coast Guard serves within the United States Navy. On April 30, 1965, President [Lyndon Johnson](#) designated Coast Guard [Squadron](#) One to be assigned to Vietnam. In 1965 and 1966, twenty-six Coast Guard patrol boats were deployed to the coast of the South China Sea, where they engaged in coastal surveillance using [Da Nang](#), [Qui Nhon](#), [Nha Trang](#), [Vung Tau](#), and An Thoi as bases. Coast Guard Squadron Three went to South Vietnam in 1967. During the war the Coast Guard vessels boarded approximately 250,000 small craft, usually sampans and junks, and participated in 6,000 support missions. Their main objective was to stop the [infiltration](#) of supplies to the [Vietcong](#). In January 1969 South Vietnamese crews began operating the cutters, and in 1971 and 1972 all of the cutters were turned over to South Vietnam.

Sources: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984; Stephen Evans, *The United States Coast Guard, 1790-1915*; Eugene Tulich, *The United States Coast Guard in Southeast Asia During the Vietnam Conflict*, 1975.

## COASTAL SURVEILLANCE FORCE

A major problem facing the United States and the South Vietnamese was [infiltration](#) of enemy men and supplies along the 1,200-mile coastline between the seventeenth parallel (see [Geneva Accords](#)) and the border with [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). It was a difficult task because on any given day literally thousands of small junks were plying the rivers of South Vietnam. A tight blockade of the coast became a major American strategic concept, and the [Seventh Fleet](#) established a Coastal Surveillance Force to maintain the blockade. At first the [navy](#) transferred former destroyer escorts from the North Atlantic to serve as radar picket ships in the South China Sea. A number of coastal surveillance centers were set up along the South Vietnamese coast. Late in 1965 P-5 Marlin seaplanes and P-3A Orion aircraft were patrolling the coast up to 150 miles offshore, while [Coast Guard Squadron One](#), equipped with nearly 100 50-foot "Swift" boats and 26 83-foot cutters were patrolling closer to shore. [Operation Game Warden](#) involved use of a riverine force to monitor boat and ship movements on the interior rivers. The Coastal Surveillance Force's work off the coast of South Vietnam was code-named [Operation Market Time](#) beginning in July 1967.

Sources: Victor Croizat, *The Brown Water Navy: The River and Coastal War in IndoChina and Vietnam, 1948-1972*, 1984; Anthony Preston, "The Naval War in Vietnam," in John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985.

## COCHIN CHINA

Geographers divided Vietnam into three general areas: [Tonkin](#), [Annam](#), and Cochin China. Cochin China comprises the six southern provinces of Vietnam. In the mid-sixteenth century, Portuguese adventurers referred to Vietnam as Cauchichina, taking "Cauchi" from "Giao Chi," the [Chinese](#) term for Vietnam, and then added the term "China" to separate it from their Cochin colony in India. By the nineteenth century, the French were using the term "Cochin China" to refer only to the southern part of Vietnam. The economy of Cochin China was dominated by the [Mekong Delta](#). Unlike the Red River in Tonkin, the Mekong River is more regular in its flow, not given to flooding, and far more predictable. The largest city of Cochin China was [Saigon](#), now known as [Ho Chi Minh City](#). Located approximately 40 miles inland from the coast, Saigon is connected to the South China Sea by the tidal Dong Nai River. North and east of the Mekong Delta are the forestlands of the Annamese highlands. Large regions there are still uninhabited because of extensive swamps and malaria-ridden swamps. To the west are the lowland plains of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), which constitute an extension of the Mekong Delta. The weather of Cochin China is usually very hot. The dry season extends from November to April, while heavy rains from May to October combine with oppressive heat. Cochin China consists of approximately 26,500 square miles.

Before the second half of the nineteenth century, Cochin China was part of [China](#), the Khmer Empire of Cambodia, and the Empire of Annam. The French seized Saigon in 1858, and four years later the emperor of Annam ceded the eastern portion of Cochin China to [France](#). In 1887 the rest of Cochin China became part of the French colony. In June 1946, Cochin China became an independent republic in the new Federation of [Indochina](#), but three years later Cochin China voted to become part of Vietnam.

Source: Milton E. Osborne, *The French Presence in Cochin China and Cambodia*, 1969.

## COFFIN, WILLIAM SLOAN, JR.

William Sloan Coffin, a leading figure in the [antiwar movement](#), was born in New York City on June 1, 1924. He served in the army during World War II and later studied at Yale and the Union Theological Seminary. Between 1950 and 1953 he worked as a Soviet expert for the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA), but left the CIA to complete his seminary studies at Yale. Coffin was ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1956 and in 1958 became chaplain of Yale. A political activist committed to civil rights and antipoverty causes, Coffin also became an early opponent of the Vietnam War. He traveled widely around the country calling for [draft](#) resistance and serving as an officer of the National Emergency Committee of Clergy Concerned About Vietnam. In 1968 Coffin was indicted and convicted for conspiring to assist draft resisters, but the convictions were eventually overturned and then dropped by the Department of Justice. Coffin left Yale in 1975 to pursue new interests in lecturing and writing.

Sources: *New York Times*, October 17, 1967; Thomas Powers, *Vietnam, The War at Home*, 1984; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984.



## **COLBY, WILLIAM EGAN**

William E. Colby was born on January 4, 1920, in St. Paul, Minnesota. He graduated from Princeton in 1940, and after completing officer candidate school for the United States Army, he was assigned to the Office of Strategic Services where he worked with the French resistance. In 1947, the Office of Strategic Services became the [Central Intelligence Agency](#). Colby earned a law degree at Columbia University and joined the CIA in 1950. In 1959, Colby became station chief for the CIA in [Saigon](#) where he supervised recruitment of Montagnard tribesmen and the [strategic hamlet](#) program. Colby returned to Washington, D.C., in 1962 as head of the CIA's Far East Division. In that position he directed [Air America](#) and the [Phoenix Program](#). Colby returned to [South Vietnam](#) in 1968 as a deputy to General [William Westmoreland](#), commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam. There Colby was responsible for the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support program and the Phoenix Program. Congressional investigations into charges of torture and assassination under the Phoenix Program brought Colby before several committees to testify where he maintained that most of the 20,000 people killed had died in combat situations. He never denied, however, that there had been assassinations under the Phoenix Program. Colby became director of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1973 and retired three years later.

Source: William Colby and Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA*, 1978.



## COLLINS, JOSEPH LAWTON

From November 3, 1954, to May 14, 1955, General J. Lawton Collins served as special U.S. representative in Vietnam, a designation that made him the de facto American ambassador in [Saigon](#) during that period. Born on May 1, 1896, Collins graduated from West Point in 1917. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, he commanded the [25th Infantry Division](#) in successful campaigns on Guadalcanal and New Georgia. His soldiers in the Pacific gave him the nickname "Lightning Joe." Transferred to Europe in 1944, Collins commanded the VII Corps in the Normandy invasion and the assault on Germany. From 1949 to 1953 he served with distinction as army chief of staff, and he was the U.S. representative to the Military Committee and Standing Group of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) when President [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) sent him to Saigon in 1954.

Collins's mission to Vietnam came at a decisive moment in the history of U.S. involvement in [Indochina](#). In June 1954 Emperor [Bao Dai](#) had selected [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) as prime minister of the state of Vietnam. Since the partitioning of Vietnam under the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#) was to be only temporary, the hopes of a nationalist alternative to the Communists in the North rested on the prospects of Diem's government in the South. Collins's assignment was to assess Diem's abilities and to seek ways for the United States to assist his government. Working with General [Paul Ely](#), the French high commissioner in Indochina, Collins made progress in the reorganization and training of the South Vietnamese armed forces, but he soon concluded that Diem lacked the leadership qualities and experience necessary to compete with [Ho Chi Minh](#). In April 1955 Collins specifically recommended that the U.S. shift its support from Diem to other South Vietnamese leaders. After direct consultations in Washington between the general and [Secretary of State John Foster Dulles](#), a decision was reached to accept Collins's judgment. At that moment, however, Diem precipitated a hostile confrontation with his South Vietnamese opponents. The [Vietnamese National Army](#) helped Diem survive the crisis, and the prime minister's advocates in Washington sustained Dulles in reversing the decision to dump Diem.

The reaffirmation of American support for Diem wedded Washington to his regime in Saigon. In the years that followed, Collins's assessment of Diem's weaknesses proved tragically correct. Collins left Saigon in May 1955 and returned to duty with NATO. He retired from the army in 1956 and later served as an executive with Charles Pfizer & Company.

Source: J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe: An Autobiography*, 1979.

David L. Anderson

## COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY DEMONSTRATIONS

During the week of April 23-30, 1968, [Students for a Democratic Society](#) (SDS) and the Students Afro-American Society (SAS) led 700 to 1,000 Columbia University students in the seizure and occupation of five campus buildings. Among the buildings occupied was Low Library, which contained the office of president Grayson Kirk. While in control of Low Library students committed several acts of vandalism including ransacking Kirk's files, ostensibly searching for secret links between the university and the military establishment. Among their demands, the demonstrators called for a halt to construction of a controversial gymnasium at Morningside Park and the severing of university ties with the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA). The IDA was a Pentagon-sponsored group of universities that advised the government on defense strategies. Other demands dealt with the university's disciplinary policies.

The events of April 23-30 began with a rally called at the sundial, a gathering place for students, which was to start at noon, by the Columbia chapter of SDS under the leadership of Mark Rudd. The demonstrators had been called to protest disciplinary actions taken against students who had participated in a protest against the university's tie with the IDA and to demand that the university end its involvement with that organization. After an unsuccessful attempt to gain entry to Low Library, the students drifted over to Morningside Park, which had become a symbol of division between Columbia and the surrounding black community of Harlem. Following a confrontation with police, Mark Rudd, who had arrived later, led the students back to the sundial. The demonstrators then marched into Hamilton Hall to hold a sit-in. While in control of Hamilton the protesters issued their demands. They also took a hostage, Henry Coleman, the acting dean of Columbia College, who was later released unharmed. On April 24, after much discussion, the white students were asked to leave Hamilton by the SAS, who wanted to use this event to demonstrate black power and discipline. The students who left, including Rudd, occupied Low Library shortly thereafter. Eventually, various student groups occupied Fayerweather, Avery, and Mathematics halls.

Attempts to negotiate a peaceful resolution of the crisis were hampered by distrust on the part of the students and the administration. Finally, on April 30 at 1:30 A.M. one thousand New York City police cleared the buildings of demonstrators. Except for Hamilton Hall, where the black demonstrators has assured police that they would leave peacefully, the police used violence to expel the students. The Cox Commission, headed by Harvard law professor Archibald Cox and charged with investigating the events of April 23-30, concluded that violence was to be expected when students resisted arrest.

Immediately after the events of April 23-30, a university-wide strike was called by the SDS. On May 21, Mark Rudd and about 350 supporters again occupied Hamilton Hall over a dispute concerning disciplinary action against Rudd and others who had participated in the April 23-30 demonstrations. Again the police were called in to dislodge the protesters. This time the police used violence not only against the demonstrators but also against innocent bystanders. The Cox Commission characterized it as "brutality for which a layman can see no justification unless it be that the way to restore order in a riot is to terrorize civilians."

Following twenty-one days of hearings beginning on May 4, 1968, and after listening to seventy-nine witnesses, the Cox Commission determined that the university's connection with the IDA had become a symbol of Columbia's participation in the Vietnam War. As such, Columbia had become a surrogate for the frustrations students felt over their inability to affect national policy on the war. The Cox Commission further concluded that while the Vietnam War was not the only grievance expressed at Columbia, it was of overriding concern for nearly all students and was a potentially explosive issue.

Source: *Crisis at Columbia: Report of the Fact-Finding Commission Appointed to Investigate the Disturbances at Columbia University in April and May 1968*, 1969.

Mike Dennis

## COMBINED ACTION PLATOONS

One of the problems the United States Marines faced in their combat activities in [I Corps](#) was pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) and village security. Although designed as an assault force, the marines found themselves in static positions trying to defend territory from the [Vietcong](#) and the North Vietnamese. In that sense they were performing a mission which had not historically been part of their function. Since security was the primary prerequisite of any pacification program, the marines developed the Combined Action Platoons (CAP) program in 1965. Under the CAP program, a marine rifle [squad](#) would operate with a South Vietnamese [Regional Forces](#) (RF) [company](#). Beginning in 1970, the program was changed to Combined Action Groups, in which an entire marine company was assigned to work with an RF [battalion](#). The theory was that if the Combined Action Platoons or Groups were able to provide security, pacification efforts would succeed in winning the fidelity of the South Vietnamese peasants.

Sources: Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counter-insurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986; Jack Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War 1966, 1982*.

## COMING HOME

*Coming Home* was a bittersweet movie made in 1977 about the plight of American veterans of the Vietnam War and those they left behind. The film centers on Sally Hyde (Jane Fonda), the wife of a volatile [marine](#) captain (Bruce Dern) who went to Vietnam determined to uphold the honor of the nation. Sally had been a typically docile service housewife before his departure, but her husband's absence forces her to change her ways. She takes up volunteer work at the post hospital, makes new friends, and asserts her independence. More daring still, she falls in love with Luke Martin (Jon Voight), a bitter paraplegic Vietnam veteran who turns her against the war her husband is fighting.

Sally and Luke's romance is the heart of *Coming Home*. Their affair, at times perhaps a bit contrived, ultimately is both believable and poignant. It points up both the inconsistencies of personality in all the main characters and the inconsistencies of the Vietnam involvement in the 1960s. The anguish that each character expresses summarizes well that of the nation at large. Directed by Hal Ashby, *Coming Home* is an important statement of personal belief by the director and a valid description of the perspective from which many Americans viewed the conflict in the 1970s.

Source: *Magill's Survey of Cinema. English Language Films*, 1981.

Roger D. Launius

## COMMANDANT, U.S. MARINE CORPS

The [Marine Corps](#) commandant is the senior officer in the United States Marine Corps. Between the time of the first American [casualty](#) in [Vietnam](#) in 1959 and the end of the war in 1975, five men occupied the office of commandant of the Marine Corps. General Randolph Pate was replaced in 1960 by General [David Shoup](#), who served until January 1964. Shoup was replaced by General Wallace M. Greene, who served until January 1968, when General [Leonard Chapman](#) became commandant. Chapman was commandant until January 1972. General [Robert Cushman](#) replaced Chapman and served as commandant until after the Vietnam War.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, 1980.

## COMMANDER IN CHIEF, PACIFIC COMMAND

Also known as CINCPAC, the commander in chief of the [Pacific Command](#) changed four times during the Vietnam War. Admiral Harry D. Felt served until June 1964, when he was replaced by Admiral [U. S. Grant Sharp](#). Sharp stayed in the post exactly four years until Admiral [John S. McCain](#) replaced him. In September 1972 Admiral Noel Gayler took over for McCain. Gayler remained as CINCPAC until the end of the war.

Sources: U.S. Grant Sharp, *Strategy for Defeat: Vietnam in Retrospect*, 1978; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, 1982.

## COMMANDER, MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM

The [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) was established on February 8, 1962, with its headquarters in [Saigon](#). During the course of the war in Vietnam, four men served as commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam: General [Paul D. Harkins](#) (February 1962 to June 1964); General [William C. Westmoreland](#) (June 1964 to July 1968); General [Creighton W. Abrams](#) (July 1968 to June 1972); and General [Frederick C. Weyand](#) (June 1972 to the end of the conflict).

Sources: George S. Eckhardt, *Command and Control, 1950-1969*, 1974; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.



## COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM

This party was formally established in June 1929, although its true origins predated this formal establishment. [Ho Chi Minh](#), originally named Nguyen Sinh Cung, was really a nationalist prior to the success of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. While in Paris young Ho was exposed to Marx and other socialist writers and leaders through his friendship with Jules Raveau, a veteran French Marxist. By this time he had adopted a more militant name, Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot), and joined the Communist party.

By the 1920s French officials scrutinized Ho's revolutionary activities. In 1924 Ho went to Moscow where he met Stalin and attended the University of Oriental Workers. It is from here that Asians learned the fundamentals of Marxist-Leninism. Later in 1924 Ho moved to Canton (now with the name Ly Thuy), where he mobilized and organized Vietnamese students in southern [China](#). [Chiang Kai-shek](#)'s betrayal of his Communist associates in 1927 forced Ho to flee. He returned to Moscow, toured Europe, and slipped into Paris secretly under the name of Duong. Ho in 1928 moved to Bangkok, where he established a school and espoused the doctrines he had preached to the [Thanh Nien Cach Menh Dong Chi Hoi](#) (Revolutionary Youth League), an organization he created while in southern China.

The revolutionary climate inside Vietnam was not very good during the 1920s. Many of Ho's students and comrades were imprisoned for revolutionary activities. Finally in the summer of 1929, Ho organized a meeting in Hong Kong of rival Communist factions from Vietnam. Out of the meeting grew a cohesive Communist party dedicated to the overthrow of colonial rule in French [Indochina](#). The new party Ho named the Indochinese Communist party (see [Lao Dong party](#)), reflecting the assembled leaders' ultimate goal of extending their control over all of Indochina. They called for Vietnamese independence and a proletarian government.

The 1930s were a period of both growth and repression for Ho and his comrades. Although Ho eluded imprisonment by the French, his comrades [Pham Van Dong](#) and [Le Duc Tho](#) were not so lucky. Both ended up at the infamous prison island of [Poulo Condore](#). During this same period, thousands of Vietnamese peasants were tortured and killed by French authorities, because of their support of Ho's war of liberation. By the late 1930s, Ho determined that his party was too limiting and began to press his associates to form a broader movement, which in 1941 resulted in the creation of the [Vietminh](#). Ho Chi Minh's war against the French did not gain momentum until after World War II and ended with the surrender of [Dien Bien Phu](#) in May 1954.

Sources: Charles Fenn, *Ho Chi Minh: A Biographical Introduction*, 1973; Peter Wiles, *Ho Chi Minh: A Political Biography*, 1968; William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 1976.

John S. Leiby

## COMPANY

A company is an organizational institution commanded by a captain and consisting of two or more  [platoons](#). It varies widely in size according to its mission. An  [artillery](#) company is called a  [battery](#) and a cavalry company is called a  [troop](#).

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## CON THIEN, BATTLE OF (1967-68)

Also known as the "Hill of Angels," Con Thien is a series of three hills, approximately 475 feet high, located south of the [Demilitarized Zone](#) (DMZ) in eastern [Quang Tri](#) Province. Elements of the [Third Marine Division](#) had established fixed positions on Con Thien in hopes of stopping [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) [infiltration](#) across the DMZ and establishing McNamara's Wall, or [Project Practice Nine](#), and electronic barrier south of the DMZ. It was a role the marines did not like. Trained as a rapidly moving assault force, they found themselves holding down a defensive position. From mountains in the DMZ, the NVA regularly shelled the marine positions with heavy Soviet [artillery](#). In preparation for large-scale infiltration of NVA troops into [South Vietnam](#) and an offensive against South Vietnamese cities in 1968, [General Vo Nguyen Giap](#) instigated a series of border battles in 1967 to distract American and [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) attention away from the most populated areas. These border clashes occurred near the DMZ, the [Central Highlands](#) of the Cambodian-Laotian-South Vietnamese border, and the rubber plantations near the Cambodian border in [III Corps](#). The siege of Con Thien was the first of the border battles.

Early in September 1967, the artillery barrage against Con Thien intensified. The American media began to portray Con Thien as another [Dien Bien Phu](#), but General [William Westmoreland](#) launched [Operation Neutralize](#) to relieve the marines there. [Seventh Air Force](#) Commander William M. Momyer developed the [SLAM](#) campaign, which concentrated [B-52](#) strikes, tactical air support, and [naval bombardment](#) on NVA positions surrounding Con Thien. By early October 1967, when the NVA 324B Division abandoned the siege, the United States had flown more than 4,000 [sorties](#) against Con Thien, unloading more than 40,000 tons of bombs. The North Vietnamese could not withstand such firepower and gave up the battle. In the short term, the battle of Con Thien was an American victory which left more than 2,000 North Vietnamese troops dead. But in the long run, it did serve Vo Nguyen Giap's purpose in distracting American attention away from the South Vietnamese cities, which would soon face the [Tet Offensive](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; William W. Momyer, *Airpower in Three Wars*, 1978.

## CONEIN, LUCIEN

Lucien Conein was born in Paris but grew up in the American midwest when his mother sent him to live with her sister, who had married a World War I veteran. In 1940, Conein volunteered for the French Army, and when [France](#) surrendered in late June 1940, he deserted and, after some difficulty, made his way to the United States. The newly formed Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA), recruited him, and he parachuted into France to work for the resistance. When the war in Europe ended, he joined a commando group harassing the Japanese in northern Vietnam. Conein entered [Hanoi](#) when Japan surrendered and met [Ho Chi Minh](#) and other [Vietminh](#) leaders. Between 1954 and 1956 Conein was back in Vietnam, this time as part of Edward G. Lansdale's intelligence mission.

In 1962 Conein was reassigned to Vietnam, this time as an army lieutenant colonel assigned to the Interior Ministry, but his real assignment was to maintain CIA contacts with Vietnamese generals. Almost all of them trusted Conein; indeed, some of them trusted only Conein, because he once had been their commanding officer in the 1940s and early 1950s. Conein's codename in 1962 and 1963 was Lulu or Black Luigi. His major role in Vietnam then was in the military coup against [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in 1963. Conein knew that American support for Diem had all but disappeared, and he worked with the generals in letting them know that the United States would not look unfavorably on a change in government. The coup, complete with Diem's assassination, took place on November 1, 1963. Conein left Vietnam shortly thereafter and retired from government service early in the 1970s.

Sources: Marvin E. Gettleman et al., eds., *Vietnam and America: A Documented History*, 1985; John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars. CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986.

Charles Dobbs

## CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism is a religious and moral philosophy based on the teachings of the [Chinese](#) sage Confucius, who lived in the sixth century B.C. Confucianism emphasizes worship of the family and ancestors and imposes on all people the obligation of accepting their station in life. Personal honor depends on social complacency; one has to behave in accordance with the expectations of society, and the essence of personal behavior is obedience, submissiveness, and peaceful acquiescence in the social hierarchy. As a political philosophy, Confucianism views the state as an extension of the family, with a political leader acting as a father, providing his followers with a good example, protection, and love. A leader who protects and cares for his family can automatically expect complete obedience and reverence from them. When the Chinese subjugated Vietnam in the second and third centuries B.C., Confucianism, which was rapidly permeating Chinese culture, came into Vietnam and became the dominant ideological force there. The Vietnamese emperors accepted the Chinese model of bureaucratic government based on a Confucian-trained civil service. That bureaucracy dominated Vietnamese life until the arrival of the French in the nineteenth century.

Although both Confucianism and [Buddhism](#) coexisted in the Vietnamese spiritual world, they came into serious political conflict during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Buddhists resented the control Confucians had over the civil bureaucracy, while the Confucians accused the Buddhists of exploiting peasants through religious influence to their villages, pagodas, and monasteries, where they still exercised considerable authority in Vietnamese cultural life. While Buddhism was the organized religion of Vietnam, Confucianism was the moral philosophy which the Vietnamese used to govern their society.

Sources: Ellen Joy Hammer, *Vietnam, Yesterday and Today*, 1966; Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhism in East Asia*, 1966; John Frank Cady, *Southeast Asia: Its Historical Development*, 1958.

## CONGRESS, UNITED STATES

The Vietnam War led to major changes in the foreign policy role of the U.S. Congress. At the beginning of the war, the Congress allowed the president a relatively free hand in foreign affairs, including the use of American armed forces abroad. By the end of the war, Congress was playing a major role in the conduct of American foreign policy.

The Constitution of the United States divides power in foreign affairs between the president and Congress, but it gives the dominant role to the president. Traditionally, presidents have taken the lead in foreign affairs, with Congress only occasionally using its powers to check presidential initiatives. This pattern continued in the aftermath of World War II. As we became involved in the Cold War, American foreign policy relations between the president and Congress were characterized by bipartisanship. Congress, arguing that partisan politics were inappropriate in foreign policy, allowed the president a great deal of freedom in the conduct of foreign policy. In the 1950s presidents committed U.S. military forces in a number of the world's trouble spots, and they generally received the full support of the Congress. While American military commitments in [Korea](#) were under the auspices of the United Nations, and were carried out with considerable congressional involvement, most American military commitments during this era were made by the president in his role of commander in chief and involved little congressional input. Early American military involvement in Vietnam occurred within this framework. Congress allowed presidents to take the lead role in determining the size and extent of American involvement. As that involvement grew, [President Johnson](#) instructed his assistants to [draft](#) plans to punish [North Vietnam](#). [William P. Bundy](#), assistant [secretary of defense](#), pointed out that taking military action against North Vietnam would normally require a declaration of war, something no one was prepared to do. Yet to proceed without legislative endorsement would be "unsatisfactory." He advocated obtaining a congressional resolution of the sort that had given [Eisenhower](#) a free hand in 1955 when it appeared the [Chinese](#) Communists might attempt to seize the islands of Quemoy and Matsu. Johnson's aides began drafting such a resolution. Five months later a series of circumstances allowed that resolution to form the basis of the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#), a resolution Johnson's aides called a virtual declaration of war.

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution resulted from a controversial series of events in July and August of 1964, culminating with the destroyer [USS Maddox](#) engaging three North Vietnamese PT boats in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 2, sinking one and damaging the other two. When word of the engagement reached Johnson, he purposely downplayed the incident. [Dean Rusk](#), however, instructed his staff to "pull together" Bundy's draft resolution. Talking to reporters, Rusk warned North Vietnam about any repeated action. Two nights later, during a thunderstorm, the *Maddox* and [USS C. Turner Joy](#) intercepted messages that gave the impression of an imminent attack by the North Vietnamese. Both vessels' radar and sonar were acting erratically due to weather conditions. Both vessels recorded what they believed to be torpedo attacks on their sonars, and took evasive action. They opened fire on radar blips, and officers of the *Maddox* reported sinking two or perhaps three Communist craft. By daylight, Captain Herrick, in command of the *Maddox*, was having serious doubts that any engagement had actually occurred, and informed his superiors of his doubts. He suggested that daylight reconnaissance be conducted and completely evaluated before any further action was taken.

While the commander at the scene doubted that he had been attacked, President Johnson had no such doubts, and announced to key Democratic members of Congress that an attack had taken place, that he would retaliate against North Vietnam, and that he would ask Congress for a resolution of support. Not a single congressman present raised an objection. On August 5, 1964, Johnson sent the resolution to Congress. Polls at the time indicated that 85 percent of the American public backed the president on this issue, and Congress passed the resolution, giving the president the power to "take all necessary measures." As Johnson later quipped, the resolution was "like grandma's nightshirt, it covered everything."

As American military involvement deepened in Vietnam, public support began to wane. The [Tet](#)

[Offensive](#), showing North Vietnamese ability to strike seemingly at will at a time when American leaders were predicting victory, represented a psychological turning point in the war. Although a military disaster for North Vietnam, the Tet Offensive resulted in a public relations coup; after Tet, Americans refused to believe anyone who said the end was in sight, and began pressing for an end to American involvement. Congress, reflecting this change in the attitudes of the public, began to assert itself in policy debates over Vietnam. In 1969 Congress passed its first restriction on presidential power in Vietnam, prohibiting the use of American combat forces in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) or [Laos](#). [President Nixon](#), ignoring the congressional dictate, launched a secret series of air attacks in Cambodia (see [Operation Menu](#)) that lasted fourteen months.

In 1973 Congress passed the [War Powers Resolution](#), limiting the ability of a president to commit American military forces without congressional involvement. That same year Congress voted to stop all bombing throughout [Indochina](#). By this time, American combat forces had been withdrawn, and American [prisoners of war](#) held in [Hanoi](#) had come home.

Throughout the war in Vietnam, Congress reflected public opinion in its actions. When the public was willing to give the president a free hand, Congress did so; when the public began to oppose American involvement, Congress reflected that opposition.

Sources: Thomas M. Franck and Edward Weisband, *Foreign Policy by Congress*, 1980; P. Edward Haley, *Congress and the Fall of South Vietnam and Cambodia*, 1982.

Nolan J. Argyle

## CONTAINMENT POLICY

First pronounced by [George Kennan](#) in a 1947 article in *Foreign Affairs*, "containment" was the most important postwar American foreign policy. At first it was designed to keep Soviet expansionism under control, preferably behind its 1945 military boundaries. In the beginning, containment was nonmilitary in nature, focusing on economic and technical assistance, and it was embodied in such programs as the Marshall Plan in 1947 and 1948 to rebuild the European economies and the [Truman Doctrine](#) to provide the funds Greece and Turkey needed to fight Communist guerrillas. As the Cold War escalated in the late 1940s, however, containment took on new global, military dimensions. After the fall of China in 1949, it came to imply the encirclement of the [People's Republic of China](#) and the [Soviet Union](#) with a network of military alliances: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Baghdad Pact, the [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization](#), and the enormous military buildup of the 1950s and 1960s. When the North Koreans invaded [South Korea](#) in 1950, the United States intervened in the conflict in the name of containment. Containment reached its peak during the [Eisenhower](#) years and the tenure of [Secretary of State John Foster Dulles](#) (1953 to 1959).

When the French were expelled from [Indochina](#) after the Battle of [Dien Bien Phu](#) in 1954, the United States began increasing its commitment to prevent a Communist takeover. American policymakers were applying the containment doctrine to Vietnam, assuming that Soviet and [Chinese](#) aggression were behind the North Vietnamese crusade to reunite the country. The [domino theory](#) and the containment policy fit nicely together in the 1950s and early 1960s. Not until the mid-1960s, however, when American policymakers began to see that communism was not a single, monolithic movement orchestrated from Moscow, did the application of containment to Vietnam begin to seem counterproductive. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, American policymakers accepted the importance of colonialism and nationalism in the history of the anti-French and anti-American movements in Vietnam. By that time as well, American policymakers realized that communism was a polycentric movement requiring creative, individual responses.

Sources: John L. Gaddis, "Containment: A Reassessment," *Foreign Affairs*, 55 (July 1977), 873-87; Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, 1974; Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance 1950 to the Present*, 1977.



## COOPER, CHESTER

Author of *The Last Crusade* (1979), Chester Cooper was born on January 13, 1917, in Boston, Massachusetts. He attended MIT, New York University, and Columbia, and took a Ph.D. at American University in Washington, D.C. Cooper worked for the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) between 1945 and 1952, and then joined the staff of the [National Security Council](#). Between 1963 and 1964, he served as deputy director of intelligence, and between 1964 and 1966 he was a member of [McGeorge Bundy](#)'s staff, where he specialized in Asian affairs. Unlike most men in either the [Johnson](#) or [Nixon](#) administrations, Cooper consistently advocated a political solution over a military solution to the conflict. However, he also defended U.S. policies in [South Vietnam](#), arguing that the United States did not exert itself more with [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) because it did not want to play the role of colonial master. With prospects for peace negotiations in early 1968, Cooper urged establishment of communication channels with both the North Vietnamese and the [Vietcong](#) and insisted that South Vietnamese resistance to negotiations must be overcome if negotiations were to succeed. He opposed the Cambodian invasion (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) because it widened the war and made it impossible to negotiate a genuine peace settlement in Paris without dealing with [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) and [Laos](#). One of the first to recognize the plight of American children, Cooper recommended in 1973 that the United States offer vigorous support for UNICEF's program to care for them.

Sources: *Contemporary Authors*, vols. 29-32, 1978; Chester L. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam*, 1970.

Samuel Freeman

## COOPER, JOHN SHERMAN

John Sherman Cooper was born in Somerset, Kentucky, on August 23, 1901. He graduated from Yale in 1923 and attended the Harvard Law School from 1923 to 1925. He served in the Kentucky legislature from 1928 to 1930, and then served eight years as a judge in Pulaski County. Cooper was a circuit judge in the 28th Judicial District in Kentucky (1938-46), and won a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1946. He served three terms in the Senate, 1947-48, 1952-55, and 1957-73. Between 1955 and 1956 Cooper was the U.S. ambassador to India. He specialized in foreign affairs, and during the late 1960s he became an increasingly vocal critic of American policy in Vietnam. In 1970, after the invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)), Cooper openly called for American [withdrawal](#) from Cambodia (see Kampuchea) and condemned the widening of the war. Along with Senator [Frank Church](#), Cooper sponsored the [Cooper-Church Amendment](#) demanding a withdrawal from or cutting off all funds for military operations in Cambodia. The amendment succeeded in the Senate but failed in the House. Cooper left the Senate in 1973 and became U.S. ambassador to the German Democratic Republic. He retired from public life in 1976.

Sources: *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986.

## COOPER-CHURCH AMENDMENT

In reaction to the invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) ordered by the [Nixon](#) administration in 1970 without consultation with Congress, Senators [John Sherman Cooper](#) (Republican, Kentucky) and [Frank F. Church](#) (Democrat, Idaho) proposed an amendment that would prohibit spending funds without congressional approval after June 1, 1970, for the purposes of keeping U.S. troops in Cambodia, for sending U.S. advisers into Cambodia, for providing combat air support for Cambodian troops, or for financing the sending of troops or advisers into Cambodia (see Kampuchea) by other nations.

Supporters saw the proposed amendment as an overdue attempt by Congress to reassert its constitutional control over the power to make war. The administration and its supporters in Congress denounced the amendment as an unconstitutional intrusion into the president's power as commander in chief. After bitter debate, the Senate adopted the Cooper-Church Amendment on June 30 by a vote of 58 to 37.

The amendment was attached to a foreign military sales bill. That bill also carried another amendment repealing the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#). But the repeal was not significant because the Nixon administration cited the president's constitutional powers as commander in chief and not the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution as the basis for his war-making authority.

Sources: *Facts on File*, 1970, pp. 343-44, 359, 461-62; Paul L. [Kattenburg](#), *The Vietnam Trauma in American Foreign Policy, 1945-1975*, 1980.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## CORPS

The term "corps" has a dual meaning in the armed services. It can be used to designate any group of military personnel performing a similar function, like the Signal Corps or the Medical Corps. As an organizational element in the military, a corps is a unit made up of at least two [divisions](#). The corps commander, usually a lieutenant general, controls combat operations by issuing directives to division commanders and coordinating the work of [artillery](#) and cavalry groups. There were four corps operating in [Vietnam](#) during the war: the [XXIV Corps](#), [III Marine Amphibious Force](#), [II Field Force Vietnam](#), and [I Field Force Vietnam](#).

Sources: Shelby Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## COUNTERINSURGENCY

Counterinsurgency is the strategy and tactics for winning a revolutionary guerrilla war. Guerrilla war is ancient, though taking its name from Spanish resistance to the Napoleonic French occupation. Revolutionary guerrilla war adds a new goal: it seeks not merely to resist another force but to overthrow it and achieve the political goal of seizing control of a country. Examples include the Mexican revolution which overthrew Porfirio Diaz, [Mao Zedong's](#) expulsion of [Chiang Kai-shek](#) from [China](#), and [Ho Chi Minh's](#) and [Vo Nguyen Giap's](#) conquest of Vietnam.

British expert Robert Thompson suggested five basic rules for successful counterinsurgency: the goal must be clearly that of establishing a unified country which is democratically run and stable politically and economically; one must operate according to the law rather than violating it, avoiding the use of brutality; there must be a coherent plan of operations; first priority must be to defeat political subversion rather than guerrillas; and one must make base areas secure before doing anything else. Uppermost here, and in others' admonitions, is to avoid alienating the local population. As Mao put it, "The guerrilla is the fish; the people are the water." Hence, a sixth rule: do not use foreigners, especially in a former colony. Subordinate rules include making sure of reliable intelligence regarding the enemy and cutting him off from outside aid if at all possible.

Both Frenchmen and Americans violated these precepts in their wars in Vietnam, and both lost. The French, indeed, ignored the concept of counterinsurgency, and Charles de Gaulle typified this in saying, "I know of two types of warfare: mobile warfare and positional warfare. I have never heard of revolutionary warfare."

The American approach was naive, first in believing that one merely had to instruct peasants in democracy and then in oversimplifying counterinsurgency into "winning the people over," somehow or other. At best, it represented the use of unorthodox techniques rather than real political mobilization of a people. [Lyndon Johnson](#) ignored [Roger Hilsman's](#) suggestion to train South Vietnamese to operate as guerrillas, though this could have kept out foreigners, American troops. Some American officials were contemptuous of the Vietnamese and hence all too willing to make the war an American one.

[President John F. Kennedy](#) sought to develop "special forces" capable of counterinsurgency. But his position was weak because of the narrowness of his 1960 victory, most of his advisers did not understand revolutionary war, and the U.S. Army limited counterinsurgency largely to being an "additional duty" for all regular units. Its leaders ignored the long-published works of Samuel B. Griffith and, once committed to Vietnam, fought a technological war, highly destructive to civilians and thus arousing anti-American feelings. Members of the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) had some grasp of the situation, but Americans in Vietnam squabbled among themselves about tactics and withheld crucial intelligence from each other.

Pacification efforts (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) such as a [Strategic Hamlet](#) Program failed because of South Vietnamese inefficiency combined with [Saigon's](#) wish to use the program as a means of control rather than to help peasants. [CORDS](#) (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support) was organized only when insurrection had progressed too far. Also, it was meant for Saigon's use, but that government was not interested in anything that helped the peasant but not its own power. Hence, the U.S. Army took it over and again ignored the rules of counterinsurgency. The army could not buy enough time for South Vietnam to become stable and democratic because of the war's destructiveness and also because of Saigon's own antidemocratic tendencies. Most important was the fact that Vietnamese nationalism was on the side of the revolutionary guerrillas.

Sources: Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance 1950 to Present*, 1977; Lawrence E. Grinter, "South Vietnam: Pacification Denied," *Southeast Asia Spectrum* 3 (July 1975), 49-78; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986.

Robert W. Sellen

## COWARD

*Coward* is the title of Tom Tiede's 1968 novel about the Vietnam War. The novel focuses on Private Nathan Long, a conscientious objector who protests the war with a hunger strike, undergoes a court-martial, and is sentenced to a combat tour of Vietnam, where he is captured and tortured to death by the [Vietcong](#). The novel is full of [atrocities](#) and the futility of the American military effort there.

Sources: Tom Tiede, *Coward*, 1968; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## CREDIBILITY GAP

The term "credibility gap" referred to the discrepancies between the public pronouncements and private policies of American political leaders in the 1960s and 1970s. The idea of the credibility gap first emerged during the [Lyndon Johnson](#) presidency in general but with the Vietnam War in particular. In February 1968 White House staffer Fred Panzer wrote a position paper explaining the psychology of the credibility gap. He blamed the phrase on "antiwar and anti-Johnson forces" who focused on the charge that Johnson lied to the American people in the election of 1964 by promising to stay out of Asian wars. The term was first used by reporter David Wise in a May 23, 1965, article for the *New York Herald Tribune*, and was popularized by a December 5, 1965, article by Murray Marder for the *Washington Post*. Talk about the credibility gap had escalated as doubts appeared about what had actually happened in the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964 (see [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#)); intensified even more after the [Tet Offensive](#) in February 1968; reached a fever pitch with the publication of the [Pentagon Papers](#) in July 1971; and climaxed with the entire series of [Watergate](#) revelations between 1972 and 1974.

Sources: David Culbert, "Johnson and the Media," in Robert Divine, ed., *Exploring the Johnson Years*, 1981; Peter Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and [Television](#) Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington*, 1983.

Frances Frenzel



## CRONKITE, WALTER LELAND

Rising through the journalistic ranks, Walter Cronkite became the preeminent media figure of the 1960s and 1970s as correspondent and anchorman for CBS Television. Born in St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1916, Cronkite was a correspondent for United Press in World War II and joined CBS in 1950, serving as anchor and managing editor of the "CBS Evening News," 1962-81. Cronkite was widely watched and respected, and his coverage and reporting of Vietnam was seen as both reflecting and influencing American public opinion.

On September 2, 1963, in a prime-time interview with Cronkite, [President John Kennedy](#) was critical of the South Vietnamese government then headed by [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) and said that changes needed to be made in [South Vietnam](#). However, Kennedy said, "I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw. That would be a great mistake. We must be patient. We must persist." In the following years, Cronkite did not publicly question this position, and his coverage was generally uncritical of Johnson administration policies. During the [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968, however, Cronkite made his first visit to Vietnam since 1965. Upon his return, Cronkite delivered a somber assessment on February 27, saying that it seemed certain "that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in stalemate." Rejection of the administration's optimistic forecasts by Cronkite, who had been called the "most trusted man in America," sent shock waves through the government, according to George Christian, [President Johnson's](#) press secretary. Cronkite's comments especially upset Johnson, who viewed it as a turning point in American attitudes toward the administration's Vietnam policies. [David Halberstam](#) later wrote that Johnson said that "if he had lost Walter Cronkite he had lost Mr. Average Citizen," and this development helped to solidify Johnson's decision not to run for reelection.

Sources: Kathleen J. Turner, *Lyndon Johnson's Dual War: Vietnam and the Press*, 1985; David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be*, 1979.

Hoyt Purvis

## CUONG DE

Cuong De, a direct descendant of Emperor [Gia Long](#), was born in 1882 in Vietnam but lived most of his life in [Japan](#). The nationalist rebel [Phan Boi Chau](#) came to know Cuong De in the early 1900s, and began to campaign for a royal, nationalist religious movement against the French. Phan Boi Chau had Prince Cuong De study in Japan instead of Europe as part of an Asian pride movement, but he eventually abandoned his support of Cuong De when he became convinced of the need for a democratic revolution. Cuong De remained for years in Japan and collaborated with the Japanese during their occupation of [Indochina](#) between 1940 and 1945, hoping they would give him accession to the Vietnamese throne. But when World War II ended and the French returned, Cuong De's hopes were destroyed when [Bao Dai](#) was installed as emperor. Cuong De had strong support among the [Hoa Hao](#) and the [Cao Dai](#) religious sects, but he never gained the power necessary to take control of the Vietnamese throne. Cuong De died in 1951.

Sources: *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary*, 1893, p. 250; Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, 1958.

## CUSHMAN, ROBERT EVERTON, JR.

When Vice President [Richard Nixon](#) chose Cushman as his [national security adviser](#) in 1957, he put the combat- and [CIA](#)-trained colonel on an inside track for selection as commandant of the [Marine Corps](#) in January 1972. Born in Minnesota in 1914, Cushman graduated tenth in his 1935 Naval Academy class, served in [China](#), and commanded the marine detachment aboard the battleship USS *Pennsylvania* when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Decorated for bravery on Bougainville and Iwo Jima, he also received a [Navy](#) Cross for valor on Guam and after the war assumed ascending staff positions at Quantico, the Pentagon, and the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA), which he joined in 1949.

Cushman would always speak openly about his friendship with Nixon, but after leaving the White House in 1961 he built an enviable record on his own, taking command of the [Third Marine Division](#) on Okinawa in 1961, becoming assistant chief of staff of the Marine Corps the following year, and then serving as Camp Pendleton's commander for three years before his selection to command the [III Marine Amphibious Force](#) in April 1967. In Vietnam from 1967 to 1969, Cushman led 163,000 soldiers and marines, the largest combat force under a marine general in history, and often at the controls of a helicopter conducted the defense of [Khe Sanh](#) and Battle for [Hue](#) as well as the overall [I Corps](#)'s counteroffensive in the wake of the 1968 [Tet Offensive](#).

Nixon appointed Cushman deputy director of the CIA in 1969, and during [Watergate](#) then-Commandant Cushman became briefly entangled in accusations concerning the alleged CIA authorization of a burglary at the offices of [Daniel Ellsberg](#)'s psychiatrist; no formal charges were brought and the matter quickly faded in the press. General Cushman served as commandant until his retirement in 1975, stressing mobility as the key to combat success and decrying the "static defense concepts" he believed had undermined the U.S. military in Vietnam. He died on January 2, 1985.

Sources: *New York Times*, January 3, 1985; Edwin H. Simmons, *The Marines in Vietnam*, 1974.

Dudley Acker

## THE CHICAGO 8

"The Chicago 8" was the name given to eight persons tried in Chicago in 1969 on charges of criminal conspiracy with intent to start a riot in August 1968. The trial was also called the Chicago Conspiracy Trial. The trial was occasioned by the massive anti-Vietnam War demonstrations held in streets and parks around the site of the Democratic party's 1968 national nominating convention, which had opened in Chicago on August 26. Considerable violence occurred during the demonstrations; however, in December, the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence concluded that the violence was caused by a "police riot," not by the demonstrators. Despite political pressure to prosecute the alleged leaders of the Chicago demonstrations, U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark concluded that there was no basis for prosecution. Nevertheless, U.S. District Court Judge William J. Campbell, a friend of Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley, convened a federal grand jury to investigate the demonstrations. Under the administration of President [Richard M. Nixon](#), U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell agreed to prosecute the presumed demonstration leaders. An indictment was issued on March 20, 1969. The defendants were charged with violating the so-called Anti-Riot Statute or "H. Rap Brown Law," a rider that had been attached to the Civil Rights Act of 1968 in an attempt to quell rioting and civil disturbances. [David T. Dellinger](#), Rennard C. Davis, [Thomas E. Hayden](#), [Abbott H. Hoffman](#), [Jerry C. Rubin](#), Lee Weiner, John R. Froines, and Bobby G. Seale were charged with conspiracy to cross state lines with intent to cause a riot, to interfere with the performance of duties of police officers and firemen, and to teach and demonstrate the use of incendiary devices. Weiner and Froines were also charged with teaching and demonstrating incendiary devices. The other defendants were also charged with actually crossing state lines with intent to cause a riot. The trial began on September 24, 1969, before seventy-four-year-old U.S. District Court Judge Julius Jennings Hoffman. The trial was a raucous and well-publicized event. Judge Hoffman frequently denied defense motions and mispronounced the names of defendants and their attorneys. Insults and epithets were traded between the judge and the defendants and their attorneys. The defendants sought to make the Vietnam War, racism, and domestic repression the central issues of the trial. At one point, the defendants draped [Vietcong](#) and American flags across their defense tables. When Seale's attorney was hospitalized, Seale, the only black defendant, requested a postponement of proceedings and then the right to defend himself. Judge Hoffman denied both requests. Seale protested frequently and called Hoffman a racist, a fascist, and a pig. Hoffman ordered Seale to be gagged and chained hand and foot to a metal chair. When Seale banged his chains on the chair, Hoffman placed him in a wooden chair with a larger gag over his mouth. On November 5, Hoffman declared a mistrial for Seale, severed him from the case, and sentenced him to four years in prison on sixteen contempt charges. After the jury retired to deliberate on the case of the remaining defendants, Judge Hoffman found all seven defendants and two trial lawyers, William M. Kunstler and Leonard I. Weinglass, guilty of 175 charges of criminal contempt and sentenced them to terms of imprisonment (four years and thirteen days for Kunstler and one year and eight months for Weinglass). On February 18, 1970, after five days of deliberation, the jury found all defendants not guilty of conspiracy, but found Dellinger, Davis, Hayden, Hoffman, and Rubin guilty on substantive charges of intent to riot. Each defendant was sentenced to five years in prison and fined \$5,000. These convictions were overturned on November 21, 1972, by the U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit. Contempt and conspiracy charges against Seale were dropped after a new trial. Contempt charges against the remaining defendants and their attorneys were reduced and dismissed during ten years of appeal.

Sources: Jason Epstein, *The Great Conspiracy Trial*, 1970; Clark Dougan and Steven Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: A Nation Divided*, 1984; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984.

John Kincaid



## D

``DINK``

D'ARGENLIEU, GEORGES THIERRY

DA LAT

DA NANG

DAI VIET QUOC DAN DANG

DAK TO, BATTLE OF (1967)

DAN VE

DANIEL BOONE OPERATIONS

DEFENSE ATTACHE OFFICE

DEFOLIATION

DELLINGER, DAVID

DEMILITARIZED ZONE

DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION OF 1968

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

DENTON, JEREMIAH

DEROS

DESERTION

DESOTO MISSIONS

DEWEY, A. PETER

DIEN BIEN PHU, BATTLE OF (1954)

DIKES

DIVISION

DIXIE STATION

DOMINO THEORY

DONG HA

DONG HA, BATTLE OF (1968)

DONG XOAI, BATTLE OF (1965)

DRAFT

DULLES, JOHN FOSTER

DUONG VAN DUC

DUONG VAN MINH

DURBOW, ELBRIDGE

DUSTOFF

DYLAN, BOB

THE DEER HUNTER







## **“DINK”**

“Dink” was a racist reference to enemy forces or to civilians in Vietnam. The difference in usage by Americans in Vietnam of such epithets from similar epithets in previous wars was the generalized application of such words to the civilian population rather than just to enemy forces. It is generally recognized that soldiers usually dehumanize the enemy in order to help accept the reality of killing them. To some extent military training, in preparing soldiers for combat, encourages development of such an attitude. A problem occurs when dehumanization proceeds to the point where the conscience is totally numbed, enabling a soldier to become a wanton killer. Another problem occurs when the soldier begins to generalize such attitudes to the civilian population. This was very easy to do in Vietnam where it was so difficult to distinguish the enemy from the civilian population. Such generalization facilitated intentional, indiscriminate killing of civilian noncombatants and lent credit to charges by the war's critics that it was an immoral, racist conflict directed against the Vietnamese people.

Sources: Loren Baritz, *Backfire*, 1985; Peter Trooboff, *Law and Responsibility in Warfare*, 1975; Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978.

Samuel Freeman

## **D'ARGENLIEU, GEORGES THIERRY**

Born in [France](#) in 1889, Georges d'Argenlieu graduated from the French Naval Academy and served on active duty until 1920, when he entered the Carmelite Order. He eventually became provincial of that order in 1932 but returned to active duty in the navy in 1940. Early in 1941 d'Argenlieu joined de Gaulle in London and became commander in chief of the Free French Naval Forces. He was promoted to admiral in 1943. Between August 1945 and March 1947 d'Argenlieu was the first high commissioner to [Indochina](#). He was highly committed to the French Empire and adamantly opposed to any negotiated settlement with the [Vietminh](#). After he returned from Indochina, d'Argenlieu returned to the Carmelite Order and died in 1964.

Source: Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 1, *From Colonialism to the Vietminh*, 1967.

## DA LAT

Located in Tuyen Duc Province of [II Corps](#) in the [Central Highlands](#), Da Lat was one of [South Vietnam](#)'s six autonomous municipalities with administrative powers similar to those of the provinces. The other cities with such status were [Saigon](#), [Hue](#), [Da Nang](#), [Vung Tau](#), and [Cam Ranh](#). Blessed with a cool climate on the plateau of the Central Highlands, Da Lat was a resort town for Vietnamese generals. Its population in the late 1960s was nearly 60,000 people. The Da Lat Military Academy was the Vietnamese ``West Point" for officers in the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#).

Sources: Harvey Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Paul Isoart, *Le Phenomene National Vietnamien: De L'Independance Unitaire a L'Independance Fractionne*, 1961.

## DA NANG

Da Nang, a port city in Quang Nam Province, was the second largest city in [South Vietnam](#). At Western insistence, the 1954 Geneva Conference partitioned Vietnam along the seventeenth parallel (see [Geneva Accords](#)) so South Vietnam would include Da Nang and the imperial city of [Hue](#), a major concession since the [Vietminh](#) controlled most of the territory between the thirteenth and seventeenth parallels. On March 8, 1965, the first U.S. combat units in Vietnam landed at Da Nang. The city became [I Corps](#) headquarters, and a major military base, port, and resupply area for South Vietnamese and American forces.

As the war ground on, Da Nang became choked with [refugees](#) forced to flee their ancestral homes. With no jobs and limited opportunities, many catered to the desires of military personnel, alcohol, drugs, and prostitution. A generation of South Vietnamese were turned into pushers, pimps, and prostitutes as the war tore apart the Vietnamese social fabric.

During the 1966 "Buddhist Crisis" Da Nang was the site of massive anti-government demonstrations as rebellious [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) troops sided with the [Buddhists](#). [Premier Nguyen Cao Ky](#) sent loyal troops to "liberate" Da Nang although it was secured by United States Marines who averted a confrontation by interpositioning themselves between contentious troops.

In 1967 the [Vietcong](#) mortared and rocketed Da Nang's air base, destroying \$75 million worth of aircraft. Da Nang was attacked by Vietcong and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) forces in the 1968 [Tet Offensive](#). Unlike Hue, which was attacked by much larger forces, Da Nang's defenses held. The 1975 final offensive (see [Ho Chi Minh campaign](#)) produced total chaos in Da Nang. A million refugees struggled to enter a town besieged by the NVA. Military units evaporated as soldiers sought to assist their families or attempted their own escape. With the city cut off, families loaded on to anything that would float or waded out to sea, many only to drown, as men fought desperately to get on the few aircraft that dared brave NVA antiaircraft fire. Known as Tourane by the French, Da Nang had a population of nearly 450,000 people in 1970.

Sources: George McTurnan Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, 1967; Harvey H. Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, 1984; Carroll H. Dunn, *Base Development in South Vietnam, 1965-1970*, 1972; *Building the Bases: The History of Construction in Southeast Asia*, 1975.

Samuel Freeman

## DAI VIET QUOC DAN DANG

The Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang, or Nationalist Party of Greater Vietnam, was known as the Dai Viet and was founded in [Hanoi](#) in 1939 by the followers of [Phan Boi Chau](#), the pro-Japanese, anti-French, and anti-Communist nationalist. [Ho Chi Minh](#) outlawed the Dai Viet in 1946 and forced them into exile in [South Vietnam](#). The Dai Viet declined in the south and fractured into several groups, but still attracted the loyalties of large numbers of civil servants. After the collapse of the [Diem](#) regime in November 1963, the Dai Viet was revived by Phan Thong Thao and Nguyen Ton Hoan. It had a membership of approximately 20,000 people, and its strength was concentrated in [Hue](#) and [Quang Tri](#) Province in central Vietnam. By 1965 there were three major Dai Viet factions, and their prominent leaders were Ha Thuc Ky, Nguyen Ngoc Huy, Tran Van Xuan, Dang Van Sung, and [Phan Huy Quat](#). Because of its internal factionalism, the Dai Viet was not able to assume political power in post-Diem South Vietnam, although Dai Viet leaders continued to occupy seats in the national legislature.

Source: Harvey H. Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967.

## DAK TO, BATTLE OF (1967)

Located in Kontum Province in northwestern [II Corps](#), isolated Dak To sat astride an [infiltration](#) route into the [Central Highlands](#) for [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) forces operating out of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). In August 1962, [Special Forces](#) established a border monitoring unit at Dak To to be manned by Montagnard forces organized to watch the border. The [Montagnards](#) could not hold the outpost as the sparsely populated area fell under Vietcong control. As the United States substantially increased its military presence with the introduction of combat units, the Special Forces reestablished a camp there in August 1965.

By May 1967 the 24th NVA [regiment](#) had established a way station and supply area nearby, leading to a series of skirmishes between elements of the regiment and Special Forces-led Civilian Irregular Defense Groups. In response to the NVA presence, elements of the [173rd Airborne Brigade](#) deployed in late summer to be joined by portions of the [4th Infantry Division](#). A series of sharp clashes ensued, culminating in November. The explosion of the 4th Division's ammunition dump virtually leveled the camp, which was reconstructed in December. Throughout early November the American troops attacked highly fortified NVA positions, complete with elaborate tunnels and bunkers, along the elevated ridgelines. By the third week of November the battle for Dak To was centering on Hill 875, located 12 miles west of the camp. General [William Westmoreland](#) called in more than 300 [B-52](#) missions and 2,000 fighter-bomber [sorties](#) to destroy the defensive positions of the 174th NVA Regiment before American troops began their ascent up the hill. Between November 19 and 23, 1967, the battle for Hill 875 raged, complete with air strikes, [napalm](#) bursts, and hand-to-hand combat. Late in the evening of November 22, the North Vietnamese evacuated the area, and the next morning the American soldiers reached the summit. For 1967 at least, the battle for Dak To was over.

From early May to late June 1969, Dak To and nearby Ben Het were besieged by the 28th and 66th NVA regiments. Although Dak To's perimeter wire was penetrated in May, Ben Het, located to the northwest and closer to the Cambodian border, bore the brunt of the NVA attacks. Manned by irregular forces, the camps were little more than thorns in the side of the NVA, which attacked the camps with token forces while infiltrating the main body of their forces around them. The camps were kept open by the United States primarily for their symbolic political value. Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 1985; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972.

Samuel Freeman

## DAN VE

The Dan Ve were village militia units organized by the [Diem](#) government in the late 1950s and early 1960s to provide self-defense against [Vietcong](#) attacks. Local supporters of the Diem regime would receive weapons and ammunition, though often antiquated, and a small monthly stipend. Like so many of the programs of the Diem regime, the Dan Ve were riddled with corruption, many of the militiamen using their authority to fleece the peasants while others actually converted to the Vietcong.

Sources: Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian*, 1963; Ngo Quang Truong, *Territorial Forces*, 1981; Tran Dinh Tho, *Pacification*, 1980.

## DANIEL BOONE OPERATIONS

``Daniel Boone" was the codename for U.S. [Special Forces](#) operations into [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). Teams typically included two or three Americans and about ten indigenous personnel. Operations were authorized in June 1966, but operational permission was delayed until May 1967. Their mission was to penetrate Cambodia on foot or by heliborne insertion, conduct reconnaissance, plant ``sanitized self-destruct antipersonnel" mines, sabotage, and gather intelligence. Over four years there were 1,835 Daniel Boone missions with twenty-four prisoners captured. Initially the operations were limited to a small section of the Cambodian border but were expanded, encompassing the entire [South Vietnam](#)-Cambodian border to a depth of 30 kilometers (about 20 miles). Many missions were detected within hours of insertion, prompting a race to effect extraction before being cornered.

Daniel Boone teams collected information on [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese border base camps, providing much of the basis for [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) requests to strike the [sanctuaries](#), planning the secret bombing of Cambodia ([Operation Menu](#)) beginning in 1969, and planning the 1970 Cambodian invasion (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)). After the first [B-52](#) raids, Daniel Boone teams were sent to survey the damage. They were slaughtered. Some teams then refused to go, with Americans being arrested and threatened with court-martial. Some still refused, knowing they could not be court-martialed for violating Cambodian [neutrality](#).

Daniel Boone operations were authorized and conducted in a manner specifically intended to prevent congressional awareness. Their legality was debatable. International law recognizes ``hot pursuit" and the right of one nation, under attack by irregular forces, to attack those forces in a second nation if the second nation does not prevent cross-border attacks. U.S. law, however, prevents U.S. military and private citizens from attacking nations with which the United States is at peace and has diplomatic relations. ``Daniel Boone" was renamed ``Salem House" in December 1968 and ``Thot Not" (pronounced ``Tot Note") in 1971.

Sources: William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 1985.

Samuel Freeman



## DEFENSE ATTACHE OFFICE

After the U.S. [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) closed early in 1973, President [Richard M. Nixon](#) established a Defense Attache Office (DAO) in [Saigon](#) to provide assistance to the South Vietnamese military. Major General John Murray of the United States Army headed the DAO between January 1973 and June 1974, and Major General Homer Smith directed it from mid-1974 until the final [withdrawal](#) of American personnel late in April 1975.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; William E. LeGro, *Vietnam: From Ceasefire to Capitulation*, 1981.

## DEFOLIATION

“Defoliation” is the term used to describe American use of herbicides in Southeast Asia. According to the Department of Defense, three basic herbicides were commonly used. The chemical normally used for jungle defoliation was [Agent Orange](#), a fifty-fifty mixture of n-butyl esters of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T. It was dissolved in an organic solvent such as diesel oil or kerosene before spray application. Agent Orange produced leaf fall in three to six weeks and lasted from seven to twelve months. During the Vietnam War, 40 million pounds of Agent Orange were sprayed over 5 million acres of forest and vegetation at a cost of \$100 million. Another defoliant was Agent White, which combined picolinic acid with 2,4-D in a low-volatility amine salt formation. It produced longer control of a wide spectrum of woody plants plus the advantages of more accurate spray placements. Agent Blue, cacodylic acid, was a contact herbicide employed for rapid defoliation. It was used to keep down vegetation along roadsides and around military encampments. It was also widely sprayed on rice fields in “enemy-controlled” areas where it destroyed existing crops without affecting subsequent growth. Agent Blue withered vegetation within a few days.

Herbicides were first tested and used in Vietnam in 1961, and military defoliation became the largest known use of herbicides. The United States Air Force, primarily the Twelfth Air Commando [Squadron](#), carried out the defoliation. C-123 cargo planes, specially equipped for spray application, began operations in November 1961. They were the forerunners of [Operation Ranch Hand](#), which destroyed forest and vegetation in [Vietcong](#) areas. Despite Defense Department claims that defoliation actually benefited small Vietnamese farmers and the forest industry, use of chemical defoliants was widely condemned as inhumane, thoughtless, environmentally dangerous, and of little strategic value.

Sources: John Lewallen, *Ecology of Devastation: Indochina*, 1971; J. B. Neilands et al., *Harvest of Death, Chemical Warfare in Vietnam and Cambodia*, 1972; William A. Buckingham, *Operation Ranch Hand: The United States Air Force and Herbicides in Southeast Asia, 1961-1971*, 1982.

Linda Casci

## **DELLINGER, DAVID**

David Dellinger was born August 22, 1915, in Boston, Massachusetts, where his father was a conservative Republican lawyer. David graduated from Yale in 1936 with a degree in economics, studied at Oxford University and two divinity schools, and served as an associate pastor in 1939 and 1940. A pacifist, Dellinger refused to register for the [draft](#) in 1942 and had to serve a year in prison. When he refused to report for duty in 1943, he was sentenced to two more years in prison. Between 1946 and 1967, Dellinger lived in New Jersey and owned the Libertarian Press. In 1956 he was a founder and editor of the magazine *Liberation*, which became a leading organ for radical pacifism.

In October 1965, Dellinger coordinated the Committee for a Fifth Avenue Peace Parade, the first major antiwar demonstration in New York City. In 1967 he was a judge in Bertrand Russell's unofficial "International War Crimes Tribunal" at Stockholm, which found the United States guilty of war crimes in Vietnam. In 1967 he also became chairman of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, which sponsored an antiwar march of about 150,000 people on the Pentagon in October. His passport had been revoked in 1966 when he traveled to [Hanoi](#) to meet with [Ho Chi Minh](#), but he met with North Vietnamese officials again in 1968 and 1969. He then became a key link between the American peace movement and [North Vietnam](#). As head of the Committee of Liaison with the Families of Servicemen Detained in North Vietnam, Dellinger arranged for the release of six [prisoners of war](#).

In August 1968, Dellinger was a leading figure in the antiwar demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. At the famous trial of the "[Chicago Eight](#)" in February 1970, Dellinger was convicted of inciting to riot and contempt of court, fined \$5,000, and sentenced to five years in prison. In 1972 a federal appeals court overturned the convictions.

By that time the [antiwar movement](#) had become national in scope. In 1971, when the "New Mobe", New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, changed its name to the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice, Dellinger became a leader and continued his open opposition to the war. In 1975, he founded the *Seven Days* magazine to promote active resistance to war. In Stewart Alsop's words, "For Dellinger, somehow, the truth shines, still, and his ideals [bu8] are amazingly unfaded."

Sources: David Dellinger, *More Power Than We Know: The People's Movement Toward Democracy*, 1975; J. Anthony Lukas, *The Barnyard Epithet and Other Obscenities: Notes on the [Chicago Conspiracy Trial](#)*, 1970; Jason Epstein, *The Great Conspiracy Trial: An Essay on Law, Liberty, and the Constitution*, 1970; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984.

John Ricks

## DEMILITARIZED ZONE

At the Geneva Conference (see Geneva Accords) in 1954, negotiators ``temporarily" divided Vietnam into [North Vietnam](#) and [South Vietnam](#). From the South China Sea to the village of Bo Ho Su, the demarcation line followed the [Ben Hai River](#), and from there it headed due west to the border of [Laos](#). It roughly followed the seventeenth parallel. A buffer zone five miles wide surrounded the line, and the entire area was designated the Demilitarized Zone, or DMZ.

Source: Robert F. Randle, *Geneva, 1954*, 1969.

## DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION OF 1968

More than anything else, the Democratic National Convention of 1968 exposed the political divisions created by the Vietnam War. After the [Tet Offensive](#) in February 1968 had undermined the credibility of the American war effort, Senator [Eugene McCarthy](#) of Minnesota had almost defeated President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) in the New Hampshire presidential primary in March. Senator [Robert Kennedy](#) then announced his candidacy, and at the end of March Johnson announced his decision not to seek reelection. Vice President [Hubert Humphrey](#) and Robert Kennedy then became the front-runners for the Democratic presidential nomination. Kennedy's assassination on the night of his June primary victory in California left the campaign in Humphrey's hands. Senator [George McGovern](#) of South Dakota entered the race, and some liberals began touting Senator [Edward Kennedy](#) of Massachusetts, but Humphrey was clearly the leader when the Democratic delegates met in Chicago in August 1968.

Inside the convention hall, the delegates bitterly debated the war, with pro-Johnson-Humphrey forces running the convention with an iron hand. Outside the convention hall, antiwar protesters led by people like Tom Hayden and [David Dellinger](#) demonstrated against the war and against "establishment" control of the Democratic party. Chicago police, on the orders of Mayor Richard Daley, brutally attacked the crowds. Later dubbed a "police riot," the brutality on the streets of Chicago stunned a nation watching the battle on [television](#). Hubert Humphrey secured the nomination, and he selected Senator Edmund Muskie as his running mate. Sources: Norman Mailer, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*, 1969; Theodore White, *The Making of the President, 1968*, 1969.

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

The name "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" was the national description of the North Vietnamese government. In mid-August 1945, with the Japanese government reeling under the impact of the atomic bombs and the imminent American invasion of the mainland, [Ho Chi Minh](#) and the [Vietminh](#) invaded [Hanoi](#), and after encountering no resistance they proclaimed the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. At the same time the French moved into [Cochin China](#), with the assistance of [British](#) troops, and announced their intention to return to [Tonkin](#) in the north as well. They returned in force in February 1947, invading Hanoi and pushing more than 100,000 Vietminh into the countryside where the guerrilla war culminating in the Battle of [Dien Bien Phu](#) in 1954 began. After the French surrender there and the division of the country at the seventeenth parallel in the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#), Ho Chi Minh again proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as an independent nation-state. This time he was right. The term "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" was used until 1975, when North Vietnamese troops conquered the [Republic of Vietnam](#) (South Vietnam). The reunited country was then given the new name "[Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#)."

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 1, *From Colonialism to the Vietminh*, 1967.

## DENTON, JEREMIAH

Born in 1924, Jeremiah Denton had become an outstanding naval pilot by the 1950s. In June 1965 he went to Vietnam, and one month later he was shot down about 75 miles south of [Hanoi](#). He spent the next seven years in North Vietnamese prisons, remaining steadfastly uncooperative with his captors. Denton came to national attention during a televised interview. While the North Vietnamese were pleased with his verbal answers, Denton was eye-blinking, in Morse code, the word "torture" to the cameras. In 1973 Commander Denton was one of the first American [prisoners of war](#) released after the Paris Peace Accords, and his smart salute and "reporting for duty" comment after deplaning at Clark Field in the [Philippines](#) endeared him to the American public. In 1980 Denton became the first Republican to win a seat in the United States Senate from Alabama since Reconstruction. He was unsuccessful in his bid for reelection in 1986.

Sources: Jeremiah A. Denton, *When Hell Was In Session*, 1976; John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985.

## DEROS

DEROS is an acronym for Date Eligible to Return from Overseas. Every military individual assigned to duty in Southeast Asia knew in advance how long he or she would be there. For most United States Army personnel, the normal tour of duty was [365 days](#), while Marines usually served 13 months. After that date, the individual would be reassigned, usually to the United States and often to immediate separation from military service (discharge). Since leaving Vietnam safely became the fundamental objective for most troops, each individual's DEROS became a vital statistic for him or her. As an individual's DEROS approached, he/she became a "short-timer," and both anxiety and anticipation increased.

Source: Al Santoli, *Everything We Had*, 1981.

Stafford T. Thomas



## DESERTION

During the Vietnam War, the highest desertion rates occurred among soldiers of the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN). Between 1967 and 1971, more than 57,000 ARVN troops deserted. During the same period, the number of North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) deserters totaled only 87,000 soldiers. Between 1965 and 1973, nearly 7,600,000 Americans served in the military in Vietnam, and the total number of desertions exceeded 550,000. All but 100,000 of those men and women returned to active duty after absences of less than one month. The others were discharged from the armed forces for desertion. Most of those cases involved non-combat-related problems. There were 32,000 cases involving failure to report to duty in Vietnam, refusal to return from rest and relaxation breaks, and unauthorized absences after completing a tour of duty in [South Vietnam](#). There were only 5,000 cases of desertion "in country," and only 24 of those were to avoid hazardous duty. When the war ended in 1973, more than 10,000 servicemen and women were still listed as deserters, and more than 7,000 of them received amnesty from Presidents [Gerald Ford](#) and Jimmy Carter.

Sources: Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation*, 1978; Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## DESOTO MISSIONS

DeSoto Missions were the codename for covert U.S. naval operations. Ever since the 1950s, DeSoto Missions had been carried out against the [People's Republic of China](#), the [Soviet Union](#), and North Korea. Intelligence agents or commando units would harass coastal radar transmitters so that American electronic intelligence vessels could monitor the transmissions, measure frequencies, and pinpoint locations. In the spring of 1964 the United States [Navy](#) began DeSoto operations off the coast of [North Vietnam](#) using South Vietnamese commando units to harass radio transmission units. The destroyer [USS Maddox](#) was assigned to begin the program, and it was these DeSoto Missions which led to the [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#) in July and August 1964.

Sources: Anthony Preston, "The Naval War in Vietnam," in John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985; Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

## **DEWEY, A. PETER**

Peter Dewey was the first American serviceman to be killed in Vietnam. Dewey was a member of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a World War II unit. One of the activities of the OSS was to work "behind the lines" with partisan groups fighting against U.S. enemies. In early 1945, one OSS detachment, the "Deer Team," parachuted into [Tonkin](#), made contact with [Ho Chi Minh](#), and assisted the [Vietminh](#) in its guerrilla war against the Japanese. A close personal relationship developed between Ho and the Deer Team officers, and the impression resulted that the OSS was an advocate of early independence for Vietnam, under a Vietminh government. In August 1945, Dewey led another OSS detachment into [Saigon](#), which was then under the control of the [British](#), who had accepted the Japanese surrender in Vietnam south of the sixteenth parallel. The British commander, Douglas D. Gracey, was faced with a near-impossible task of governing in the midst of turmoil, chaos, and confusion. Rival political and military units were operating throughout the south, and Saigon was the focal point of activity. The major parties in this setting were the British, the French, the Japanese, and various factions of Vietnamese nationalists, religious sects, and warlords. Dewey and his OSS unit were a minor group, but Dewey was sufficiently outspoken and abrasive to anger Gracey repeatedly, especially by giving the appearance of siding with the Vietminh, which the OSS in fact did. One incident in particular summarized the antagonistic relationship between Gracey and Dewey: Dewey wanted to fly an American flag on the fender of his car, but Gracey prohibited it on technical grounds. As a result, Dewey decided to leave Saigon and Vietnam. On his way to Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport, Dewey's Jeep, without the flag, was fired upon, probably by mistake, by Vietminh soldiers. Dewey was killed instantly, on September 26, 1945.

Ho Chi Minh apologized to the United States. It would be fourteen years before another U.S. soldier would be killed in Vietnam.

Source: Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience: Passing the Torch*, 1981.

Stafford T. Thomas

## DIEN BIEN PHU, BATTLE OF (1954)

General Henri Navarre (see [Navarre Plan](#)), the French commander in chief for [Indochina](#), was responsible for the decision to build an outpost in the Red River Delta and its ultimate loss. Dien Bien Phu had been a peaceful crossroads village in northwest Indochina before the French entered it to defeat [Vietminh](#) soldiers. The French dropped paratroopers in to build the post since the only roads in were little more than trails, and all of them were controlled by the Vietminh. Navarre concentrated seventeen battalions in the main outpost, which was located in a ten mile-long river valley surrounded by hills. Navarre hoped to draw the Vietminh out into a battle where superior French firepower would overcome them. He was not really worried about the hills, even though Dien Bien Phu's two airstrips were within [artillery](#) range of them. All supplies coming into the French garrison had to come by plane. Unknown to the French, the [Chinese](#) had supplied the Vietminh with artillery and it had been carried into position on the backs of guerrillas who then reassembled it.

Between November 1953 and March 1954, General [Vo Nguyen Giap](#), leader of the Vietminh, tightened his noose around the French. The first artillery bombardment was a real shock to the French, and within four days three French commands had surrendered. The monsoons then arrived and turned the valley into a mudhole, rendering French tanks useless. With the airfield constantly under artillery bombardment, the French had to depend on air drops for supplies, and the Vietminh captured most of them. In March 1954, Vietminh also destroyed thirty-eight French aircraft at the airfield in Haiphong. Those planes were used to resupply Dien Bien Phu. Between late March and early May 1954 Giap attacked Dien Bien Phu repeatedly in daily assaults. Inside the French outpost, latrines overflowed, water spoiled, and food supplies ran out. Too weary to bury their dead, the French soldiers resorted to wearing masks to endure the stench. The last French command surrendered on May 7, 1954. Of the original 12,000 defenders at Dien Bien Phu, 2,293 were killed and 5,134 wounded. Survivors were herded on a long death march to Vietminh prison camps. The defeat was a bitter psychological blow to the French and inspired their permanent withdrawal from Indochina and the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#).

Sources: [Bernard Fall](#), *Vietnam Witness, 1953-56*, 1966, and *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu*, 1966; Jules Roy, *The Battle of Dien Bien Phu*, 1965; Vo Nguyen Giap, *Dien Bien Phu*, 1962.

## DIKES

For more than two thousand years a system of dikes has regulated water flow in the Red River Delta of northern Vietnam, and systematic construction of dikes began intensely in the thirteenth century. By the 1970s there were more than three thousand miles of dikes to protect against the monsoon floods of the Red River. During the Vietnam War, there were proposals for large-scale American bombing of the dikes during the monsoon season. Such an attack would have destroyed the system, caused widespread flooding of the Red River Delta, ruined rice crops, and drowned thousands of civilians. Because international law prohibited deliberate attacks on civilian populations, Presidents [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) and [Richard Nixon](#) never adopted the proposal.

Sources: Gerard Chaliand, *The Peasant of North Vietnam*, 1969; [Bernard Fall](#), *The Two Vietnams*, 1967.

## DIVISION

A division is a nearly universal military organization consisting of approximately 20,000 troops commanded by a major general. During the Vietnam War, the following U.S. divisions or elements thereof participated in the conflict: the [1st Cavalry](#); the [1st](#), [4th](#), [Fifth](#), [Ninth](#), [23rd](#), and [25th Infantry](#); the [82nd](#) and [101st Airborne](#); the [1st](#), [Third](#), and [5th Marines](#); and the Second, Seventh, and [834th Air](#).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## DIXIE STATION

“Dixie Station” was the place name for the United States [Seventh Fleet](#)'s staging area in the South China Sea. During 1965 and 1966, Task Force 77, the carrier strike [group](#) in the Seventh Fleet, used Dixie Station as the reference point for its operations. Dixie Station was located at 11;dg N 110;dg E off the coast of [Cam Ranh Bay](#).

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## DOMINO THEORY

The domino theory was first proposed by President [Harry S Truman](#) and the Truman Doctrine in 1946, when he argued that unless the United States provided military aid assistance to Greece and Turkey, both countries and much of the Middle East would fall, like a row of dominoes lined up against each other, to Communist aggression. In April 1954, during the siege at [Dien Bien Phu](#), President [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) announced the same idea about Southeast Asia, arguing that if [Vietnam](#) fell to Communist guerrillas, the rest of the region, including [Cambodia](#) (see [Kampuchea](#)), [Laos](#), [Thailand](#), and Burma, would fall as well, and perhaps much of East Asia. Malaysia, Indonesia, [New Zealand](#), [Australia](#), and the [Philippines](#) would also be threatened. Presidents [John F. Kennedy](#) and [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) both used the domino theory to justify the commitment of American resources to Vietnam in the 1960s. America's strategic interests, the theory demanded, required a strong military presence in South Vietnam.

Since the fall of [South Vietnam](#) in 1975, the domino theory has really not been fulfilled. Armies from the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#) have invaded Cambodia and Laos, both of whom have experienced Communist takeovers, but Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia have retained their pro-Western positions; Burma is still neutral; and the integrity of Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines is still intact.

Sources: Russell H. Fifield, *Americans in Southeast Asia*, 1973; Richard J. Barnet, *Roots of War: The Men and Institutions Behind U.S. Foreign Policy*, 1972; Gabriel Kolko, *The Roots of American Foreign Policy*, 1969.



## DONG HA

Located at the junction of Routes 1 and 9 and less than 15 kilometers from the southern boundary of the [Demilitarized Zone](#), Dong Ha was a combat base and supply center for [III Marine Amphibious Force](#) units operating in [Quang Tri](#) Province. An ideal site for the [Third Marine Division](#)'s headquarters, established in June 1968, the base also proved crucial to the defense of the Cua Viet River system, through which supplies unloaded at the river's mouth on the South China Sea were taken upstream to Dong Ha's force logistics unit and then distributed to U.S. Marine and [Republic of Vietnam](#) forces.

Together with Gio Linh north on Route 1, [Con Thien](#) to the northwest, and Cam Lo west on Route 9, Dong Ha became the southeast anchor of "Leatherneck Square." In April 1968 enemy forces attacked the base, and intermittent but heavy fighting continued in the area until late summer. Meanwhile, after the marines abandoned [Khe Sanh](#) and other northern fire bases in the same year, Dong Ha retained its role as a command and logistics center, and marines fanned out from the base conducting operations as far west as the Laotian border. The marines turned Dong Ha over to the South Vietnamese army when the [Third Marine division](#) left northern [I Corps](#) for Okinawa in November 1969.

Sources: *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1974; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975.

Dudley Acker

## **DONG HA, BATTLE OF (1968)**

In the spring of 1968, after the [Tet Offensive](#) and before the opening of the [Paris peace talks](#), the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) and [Vietcong](#) made a concerted attempt to improve their bargaining position. They conducted 119 attacks on provincial and district capitals, military installations, and major cities in [South Vietnam](#). At [Dong Ha](#) in [I Corps](#), the United States Marines maintained a supply base. It was in the northeastern area of [Quang Tri](#) Province. Late in April and early in May, the NVA 320th Division, complete with 8,000 troops, attacked Dong Ha and fought a concerted battle against an allied force of 5,000 marines and South Vietnamese troops. The North Vietnamese failed to destroy the supply base and had to retreat back across the [Demilitarized Zone](#), leaving behind 856 dead. Sixty-eight Americans died in the fighting.

Sources: Clark Dougan and Steven Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: Nineteen Sixty-Eight*, 1983; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975; *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1974.

## DONG XOAI, BATTLE OF (1965)

Dong Xoai was a district capital in Phuc Long Province of [III Corps](#). An American [Special Forces](#) Camp at Dong Xoai was manned by 400 [Montagnard Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) troops and 24 U.S. [Seabees](#) and soldiers. Early in the morning of June 10, 1965, approximately 1,500 [Vietcong](#) guerrillas, armed with [AK-47](#) rifles, grenades, and flamethrowers, attacked the camp. The defenders quickly retreated to one area of the installation, and American and South Vietnamese aircraft attacked the Vietcong with [napalm](#) and phosphorus bombs. Soldiers from the [ARVN](#)'s (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) 42nd Ranger Battalion were helicoptered in, and the Vietcong retreated. At the end of the first day's fighting, 20 Americans were killed or wounded, along with 200 Vietnamese civilians and soldiers. [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) reported 700 dead Vietcong. On June 11 and 12, ARVN Rangers searched for the Vietcong, but late on June 12 the Vietcong attacked the Rangers. ARVN soldiers quickly deserted their positions and ran into the surrounding jungles, and the American advisers were airlifted out. The Battle of Dong Xoai affected American policy by undermining faith in the stability of ARVN troops and making the commitment of large numbers of American ground forces inevitable.

Source: Terence Maitland and Peter McInerney, *The Vietnam Experience: A Contagion of War*, 1983.

## DRAFT

Over two million men were inducted into military service during the Vietnam War period in accordance with the Selective Service Act of 1948 and its ensuing extensions. The draft law provided for the registration of all males upon their eighteenth birthday. The president delegated authority in draft matters to the director of the Selective Service System. The director, his staff, and about 4,000 local draft boards throughout the country administered the system. Local draft boards were under the supervision of state directors, but quotas for inductees were set at the national level which made its decision relative to the number of men from each state already in the military. The Department of Defense initiated draft calls for a given number of men, based on projected enlistments and needs. Draft deferments in terms of essential activities and critical occupations were defined by the Departments of Commerce and Labor. The [secretary of defense](#) defined the standards for physical, mental, and moral acceptability for military service. Although the system operated under the regulations and standards drawn up at a national level, where the president could adjust induction numbers to meet changing political and military needs, local draft boards had considerable latitude in selecting men for service. Major inequities in the Selective Service System and its deferment procedures were recognized by both supporters and critics of the draft, but the majority of recommendations made by President [Lyndon Johnson's](#) National Advisory Commission on Selective Service in 1967 to eliminate most deferments were not incorporated in the 1967 draft extension act. Both the inequities, where poor, rural, and minority young men were disproportionately drafted and sent to combat, and the increasing number of young men called to the draft, made the Selective Service a natural target of the [antiwar movement](#). Antidraft activity ranged from Stop-the-Draft week in October 1967 to break-ins of draft boards with the symbolic pouring of blood over the draft files. President [Richard Nixon](#) ended all draft calls in December 1972, and President [Gerald Ford](#) issued a proclamation terminating the remaining draft registration requirements in 1975. President Jimmy Carter, on January 21, 1977, pardoned all who had been convicted of violating the Selective Service Act during the Vietnam period. In 1979, President Carter reintroduced draft registration.

Sources: Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation*, 1978; Stephen M. Kohn, *Jailed for Peace: The History of American Draft Law Violators*, 1986.

Linda Kelly Alkana

## DULLES, JOHN FOSTER

John Foster Dulles was born February 25, 1888, in Washington, D.C. He graduated from Princeton in 1908 and took a law degree from George Washington University in 1911. His grandfather, John Foster, had been [secretary of state](#) to President Benjamin Harrison, so Dulles was raised in a diplomatically conscious family. He specialized in international law and attended the Paris Peace Conference (1919), Washington Conference (1921-22), Reparations Commission (1920s), Berlin Debt Conference (1933), and the San Francisco Conference (1945) to establish the United Nations. President [Harry S. Truman](#) had Dulles negotiate the Japanese peace treaty in 1950-51, and in 1953 President [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) made Dulles secretary of state. Dulles was convinced that the United States had a mission to counteract global communism, to stop the [Soviet Union](#) from its imperial designs. For Dulles, the world was engaged in a moral struggle between good and evil, and his penchant for such phrases as "massive retaliation," "agonizing reappraisal," and "brinkmanship" alarmed critics.

As far as Dulles was concerned, the struggle in [Indochina](#) was only another example of Soviet evil. There was no doubt in his mind that the Soviets were manipulating [Ho Chi Minh](#) and the [Vietminh](#) and that French control over Vietnam had to be maintained. Dulles also expected, however, that the French would have to invest more resources in the struggle, eventually agree to grant independence to Vietnam, [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) in order to eliminate any taint of colonialism, and secure allied support from the English, Australians, and New Zealanders. Early in 1954, when the Vietminh were preparing the assault on French forces at [Dien Bien Phu](#), Dulles joined Admiral [Arthur Radford](#) in advocating [Operation Vulture](#), the American air assault on the Vietminh. Dulles was disappointed when President Eisenhower refused to approve the mission, but when Dien Bien Phu fell in 1954, Dulles argued that it would "harden, not weaken our purpose to stay united" in checking further Communist aggression. Dulles did not live to see the direct American intervention in Vietnam. After a two-year struggle with cancer, he died on May 24, 1959.

Sources: Michael Guhin, *John Foster Dulles: A Statesman and His Times*, 1972; [Townsend Hoopes](#), *The Devil and John Foster Dulles*, 1973.

## **DUONG VAN DUC**

Duong Van Duc was born in Sa Dec City in the [Mekong Delta](#) in 1926. He graduated in 1946 from the Vietnam Military Academy at [Da Lat](#) and the French Staff School in 1953. Duong Van Duc commanded paratroopers for the [Republic of Vietnam](#) and was promoted to brigadier general in 1956. Between 1956 and 1957 he served as minister to the [Republic of Korea](#). Duc was an influential force in the South Vietnamese military and participated in the abortive coup of September 1964, when his troops invaded [Saigon](#).

Sources: *Asia Who's Who*, 1960; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## DUONG VAN MINH

Duong Van Minh, the last president of the [Republic of Vietnam](#), was born in 1916 in the [Mekong Delta](#), in what was then the French colony of [Cochin China](#). Trained by the French, Minh became in 1955 the ranking army officer in [Ngo Dinh Diem](#)'s newly proclaimed Republic of Vietnam. He rose to prominence a year later as a result of defeating the Mekong Delta-based [Hoa Hao](#) sect, the leader of which was publicly guillotined. Minh's rising popularity combined with his outspokenness forced Diem to remove him from military command by "promoting" him to a largely honorific advisory position.

General Minh emerged from obscurity seven years later as the leader of a group of Vietnamese generals which staged the November 1963 military uprising that ended the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem. During the uprising Diem and his brother [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#) were assassinated, reportedly on Minh's orders. The generals replaced the Diem government with a Military Revolutionary Council, with Minh serving as nominal chairman. This remarkably ineffective group governed for only three months. The council, and General Minh, were ousted by a military coup led by [General Nguyen Khanh](#) in January 1964.

After living in exile for several years, Minh returned to South Vietnam in 1968. Once there he came to be regarded as a potential leader of a non-Communist coalition of opponents of President [Nguyen Van Thieu](#). Minh did in fact enter the 1971 presidential election, but he withdrew from the race when events eliminated any possibility of his defeating Thieu. Minh's last appearance on the Vietnamese political stage occurred in April 1975, during the last days of the crumbling Republic of Vietnam. On April 21, Thieu resigned the presidency. His elderly vice president, [Tran Van Huong](#), shortly thereafter appointed Minh to the presidency as North Vietnamese units converged on [Saigon](#). The Minh administration lasted only two days. On April 29, 1975, Minh was taken into custody, after surrendering unconditionally to the [North Vietnamese Army](#) unit that had occupied the presidential palace. Duong Van Minh, the last president of the Republic of Vietnam, was allowed to immigrate to [France](#) in 1983.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

Sean A. Kelleher

## DURBOW, ELBRIDGE

Elbridge Durbow was born on September 21, 1903, in San Francisco and eventually went to Yale University where he obtained a Ph.D. in 1926. He subsequently joined the foreign service where he served in a number of minor posts around the world until after World War II. Between 1948 and 1950, however, he was an instructor at the National War College. After his stint at the War College, he was promoted and named the chief of the Division of Foreign Service Personnel.

Durbow was a career foreign service officer, and in 1957 [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) decided to send this seasoned diplomat to the tiny country of [South Vietnam](#). Almost from the outset, Ambassador Durbow found much to criticize in [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). Of note, he would later acknowledge that the repression and corruption of the South Vietnamese regime was a catalyst to insurgency. He was also a shrewd diplomat who warned Diem that his brother, [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#), and his sister-in-law were damaging the government. Nhu's control of the secret police made him a most powerful man, and he used power indiscriminately.

Diem apparently did not heed Ambassador Durbow's warnings, and on December 4, 1960, he sent a message to Washington indicating that in the not too distant future the United States might be forced to support an alternative regime. Meanwhile, Diem continued to resist American pressures for reform. Most of the aid sent from the United States was used by Diem to enrich his own family and to prop up his regime. Only a very small fraction of the funds were utilized for South Vietnamese economic development.

Durbow's warnings about the unpopularity of the Diem regime finally bore fruit in November 1960. Lieutenant Colonel Vuong Van Dong staged an abortive military coup against Diem. Dong had revolted in response to Diem's arbitrary rule, his promotion of favorites, and his meddling in military operations against the insurgency. Although he succeeded in surrounding the presidential palace, Dong allowed the telephone lines to remain intact. Diem decided to wait out the dissident soldiers until loyal contingents arrived in [Saigon](#). Dong even went to Durbow to gain his assistance in overthrowing Diem. The ambassador, however, refused to assist Dong, knowing that Washington would never accept nor approve of Diem's overthrow with support from a U.S. ambassador. The rebellion was crushed, and Dong and other dissident soldiers fled South Vietnam.

Diem, however, was annoyed with Durbow's relationship with Dong and did not hesitate to express his displeasure with the ambassador to officials in the new Kennedy administration. [John F. Kennedy](#) was convinced that he could gain Diem's confidence and succeed in ending the Communist threat in South Vietnam. In April 1961, Kennedy replaced Durbow with the untested Frederick Nolting as the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam. Durbow nonetheless was apparently correct about the intractability of the Diem regime, because in late 1963 the United States assisted in the overthrow of Diem. Durbow returned to the State Department in 1961 and remained there until his retirement in 1968.

Sources: John E. Findling, ed., *Historical Dictionary of American Diplomatic History*, 1980; Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience*, 1986.

John S. Leiby



## DUSTOFF

“I need a dustoff” became an all-too-familiar call on the airwaves of Vietnam. Dustoff missions were medical evacuation missions (see [medevac](#)) using helicopters. While the term has been used to apply to all medical evacuation missions, GIs reserved the term for missions flown to pick up wounded soldiers in the field, often under fire. When a soldier was hit, the call went out for a dustoff, and any helicopter in the area without a higher priority mission could respond.

Many of the early helicopters used in Vietnam did not fare well in dustoff missions. The [CH-21](#) and [CH-34](#) were used in this role, but their lack of maneuverability and relatively slow speed, combined with a small door in the case of the CH-21, made them vulnerable to ground fire. During the [Tet Offensive](#), CH-34s flown by the U.S. Marines in a dustoff role took heavy [casualties](#). The [UH-1](#) “Huey” excelled in this role, with its wide doors and ability to get in and out quickly. Still, flying dustoffs took courage on the part of the crew, as ground fire was the rule rather than the exception. The rewards, however, were great. Dustoffs allowed wounded soldiers to be brought to medical facilities much more quickly than in any other war, usually in a matter of minutes, and saved many lives.

Source: Jim Mesko, *Airmobile: The [Helicopter War](#) in Vietnam*, 1985.

Nolan J. Argyle

## DYLAN, BOB

Born Robert Zimmerman in Duluth, Minnesota, on May 24, 1941, Bob Dylan (he took his name from the poet Dylan Thomas) soon became one of the most influential folk-rock artists in the world, especially after moving to New York City in the mid-1960s. As a performer Dylan refused to be categorized, be it his playing style, lifestyle, music, or political opinions. He wrote about injustice, women, drugs, and for a period about topics so obscure that no one knows exactly what he was seeking. Although he never wrote a specific song about Vietnam, he nevertheless became associated with the [antiwar movement](#) because his songs of social consciousness, particularly "The Times They Are A-Changin'" and "Blowin' in the Wind," became anthems of a kind to a generation seeking to change America. In the 1970s Dylan continued to produce albums, but critics charged that he was not as innovative as before. Nevertheless, Dylan had a strong influence on youth and antiwar movements in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Sources: Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 1969; Richard Flacks, *Youth and Social Change*, 1971.

Charles Dobbs

## THE DEER HUNTER

Michael Cimino's 1978 film *The Deer Hunter* starred Robert DeNiro, Christopher Walken, and John Savage as three friends from an eastern factory town caught up in the Vietnam War. Meryl Streep also starred as Savage's wife. The film follows the three young men from an opening wedding scene in their hometown into combat in Vietnam, their capture by the [Vietcong](#), their escape, and their return home. Critics viewed the film in mixed terms, some saying it was a powerful, symbolic portrait of the war, and others claiming it unfairly stereotyped the Vietnamese, particularly because of a Russian-roulette type of game that was the central symbol of the movie. *The Deer Hunter* was part of the antiwar genre of films popular in the 1970s.

Source: *Magill's Survey of Cinema. English Language Films*, 1981.



## **E**

11th ARMORED CAVALRY

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## 11th ARMORED CAVALRY

The 11th Armored Cavalry deployed to Vietnam on September 8, 1966. It was also known as the "Blackhorse Regiment." At peak strength, the 11th Armored Cavalry consisted of a tank [troop](#) of 51 tanks, a howitzer [battery](#) of 18 155mm howitzers, 296 [armored personnel carriers](#), and 48 helicopters. By 1970 it had 3,891 personnel attached to it. Most of its effort took place in [III Corps](#), especially in [War Zone C](#) of Tay Ninh Province. In January 1969, the 11th Armored Cavalry received its first detachment of M551 Sheridan tanks. Between April 1969 and June 1970 the 11th Armored Cavalry was under the control of the [1st Cavalry Division](#), and in 1970 they participated in the Cambodian incursion (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)). The 11th Armored Cavalry left Vietnam on March 5, 1971.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Michael D. Mahler, *Ringed in Steel: Armored Cavalry, Vietnam, 1967-68*, 1986.

## **18TH ENGINEER BRIGADE**

The 18th Engineer Brigade was deployed to the [Republic of Vietnam](#) in September 1965 and remained there until September 1971. It consisted of the 35th, 45th, and 937th Engineer Groups and confined its construction activities to [I](#) and [II Corps](#).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.



## **18TH MILITARY POLICE BRIGADE**

The 18th Military Police Brigade went to Vietnam in September 1966 and was charged with supervision of military police throughout [South Vietnam](#). In addition to traffic control and policing activities, the 18th Military Police Brigade provided security for convoys, highways, and bridges and supervised the evacuation of [refugees](#).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)) considered deploying the entire 82nd Airborne Division to Vietnam, only the 3rd Brigade ever received such orders, serving in Vietnam between February 18, 1968, and December 11, 1969. Attached to the [101st Airborne Division](#), the 3rd Brigade fought in [I Corps](#), primarily in [Hue](#). Late in 1968, the 3rd Brigade was moved down to [Saigon](#) to defend [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## 834TH AIR DIVISION

The 834th Air Division, stationed at [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#) outside [Saigon](#), provided [tactical airlift](#) for [Seventh Air Force](#) operations in [South Vietnam](#). The 834th functioned between its organization in October 1966 to its dissolution in November 1970, by which time most of its aircraft had been handed over to the South [Vietnamese Air Force](#).

Source: Ray L. Bowers, *The U.S. Air Force in Southeast Asia: Tactical Airlift*, 1983.

## EAGLE FLIGHT

“Eagle Flight” was a term used to describe airmobile strike forces used to ambush, raid, harass, and observe enemy positions. Eagle Flights were first used in 1963 in [South Vietnam](#), but the [Fifth Special Forces Group](#) began using them continuously in October 1964. An Eagle Flight group consisted of five American soldiers, thirty-six [Montagnard](#) irregular troops, a helicopter airlift, and several [UH-1 gunships](#). Eagle Flights supported [Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) operations as well as regular operations of the Fifth Special Forces Group.

Sources: John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Green Berets at War*, 1985.



## EASTERTIDE OFFENSIVE

Late in 1970, with [Vietnamization](#) in full gear, the North Vietnamese began planning an all-out assault on [South Vietnam](#). [Le Duan](#) visited Moscow in the spring of 1971 to secure heavy weapons supplies. [North Vietnam](#) wanted to break the military stalemate in South Vietnam and, with a major victory, perhaps help defeat [Richard Nixon](#)'s reelection bid in 1972, leaving the White House open to a more moderate, even anti-Vietnam Democratic president. Throughout 1971 the [Soviet Union](#) provided heavy supplies, trucks, surface-to-air ([SAM](#)) missiles, tanks, and [artillery](#), to prepare the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) and [Vietcong](#) for the attack.

The offensive began on March 30, 1972. Three North Vietnamese [divisions](#), strengthened by T-54 Soviet tanks, attacked across the [Demilitarized Zone](#) and along Highway 9 out of [Laos](#), with [Hue](#) as their objective. Three more North Vietnamese divisions attacked Binh Long Province, captured [Loc Ninh](#), and surrounded [An Loc](#). Other North Vietnamese troops attacked Kontum in the [Central Highlands](#). Finally, two North Vietnamese divisions took control of several districts in Binh Dinh along the coast of the South China Sea. [Quang Tri](#) Province was lost by the end of April 1972. But at that point the tide turned. [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) troops held their positions 25 miles north of Hue, and the NVA was unable to take Kontum and An Loc. President Nixon had already begun bombing North Vietnam again, but on May 8, 1972, he mined Haiphong Harbor and several other North Vietnamese ports. Fighting continued throughout the summer, with the ARVN launching a counteroffensive which recaptured Quang Tri Province. The Eastertide Offensive had failed. North Vietnam suffered more than 100,000 killed. But they still controlled more territory in South Vietnam than before and felt they were in a stronger bargaining position at the Paris negotiations.

Sources: Ngo Quang Truong, *The Easter Offensive of 1972*, 1980; G. H. Turley, *The Easter Offensive: Vietnam 1972*, 1985.

## EISENHOWER, DWIGHT DAVID

Dwight D. Eisenhower was born on October 14, 1890, in Denison, Texas. He was a West Point graduate who commanded Allied invasions of Europe during World War II, and was later army chief of staff, president of Columbia University, and commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) forces. Easily defeating Democrat Adlai Stevenson for president in 1952, Eisenhower saw his presidential role as one of creating equilibrium at home while keeping the United States involved in world affairs and avoiding nuclear war.

Eisenhower found the stalemate in French [Indochina](#) unacceptable; it would further drain French resources and morale, and undermine the French role in NATO. A French defeat seemed even worse despite Eisenhower's view that [France](#) had caused the war by refusing to grant full independence to the Indochinese states; the [domino theory](#) was already current, holding that defeat in Indochina would lead to Communist gains throughout Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Elected on a platform of "liberation" of Communist satellites, Eisenhower had accepted a Korean armistice that left North Korea in Communist hands. He told his cabinet that he could not give Democrats the chance to imitate Republican taunts of "who lost [China](#)?" by demanding "who lost Vietnam?" There was no way to obtain a French victory without American forces being sent to Vietnam, which Eisenhower opposed. He also vetoed as inflammatory the use of Chinese Nationalist forces from Taiwan (see [Chiang Kai-shek](#)). What Eisenhower really wanted was a joint U.S.-British intervention with air support and materiel but no ground troops. The [British](#) wanted nothing to do with it, so Eisenhower increased aid to France to about 75 percent of the war's cost.

Despite fervent French requests, Eisenhower limited American aid to a few aircraft and technicians. He also prepared for a deluge of demands for intervention, which he expected when [Dien Bien Phu](#) fell, by specifying conditions for American involvement: a clear grant of independence to the Indochinese states, British and Southeast Asian participation, congressional approval, and continued French participation under American command. Historians now generally believe that Eisenhower deliberately set conditions that were impossible, believing that the United States must not destroy its anticolonial image. He was thus prepared for pressure from Vice President [Richard Nixon](#), [Secretary of State John Foster Dulles](#), and [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Arthur Radford](#), even confronting them with the risk of global and nuclear war if the United States were actually to fight in Southeast Asia.

Though Eisenhower avoided direct intervention in 1954, he did not intend to abandon the region, using the domino theory in press conferences to explain Southeast Asia's importance. Trying behind the scenes, but failing, to keep France involved after the fall of Dien Bien Phu, he continued his idea of a multilateral effort to save South Vietnam. By September 1954 the United States had created the [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization \(SEATO\)](#), which Eisenhower hoped would protect the region from further Communist aggression. He also resigned himself to accepting the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#) partitioning Vietnam, supposedly temporarily. Eventually that "temporary" clause was discarded when the United States refused to participate in the elections promised in the Geneva Accords. U.S. recognition of the government of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) led to economic and military assistance. Prophetically, while Eisenhower was still in office, a few U.S. advisers went out into the field with the South Vietnamese, exposing themselves to combat and [casualties](#).

Eisenhower's last involvement with Vietnam came as a former president giving advice and support to [Lyndon Johnson](#) during the escalation stage of the conflict. Eisenhower's advice followed his own earlier views: there must be multilateral aid and forces, and the Vietnamese must not depend on American troops but shoulder the bulk of the fighting themselves. While he was consistently a hawk in his approach, urging Johnson to find a way to win, Eisenhower never told Johnson that victory would be easy. He was furious when, in March 1968, Johnson withdrew from the presidential race, ended most bombing, and in effect signaled that he had given up. Dwight D. Eisenhower died on March 28, 1969.

Sources: Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*. Vol 2, *President and Elder Statesman*, 1984; Elmo

Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 1979; Robert A. Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War*, 1981.

Robert W. Sellen

## ELECTION OF 1955 (SOUTH VIETNAM)

The 1954 Geneva Conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)) produced six unilateral declarations, three cease-fire agreements which were signed by the principals, and an unsigned Final Declaration which called for reunification elections to be held between July 1955 and July 1956. Whether any nations present "agreed to" the Declaration or took the election provisions seriously has been hotly debated. What is clear is that [Walter Bedell Smith](#) issued a statement "taking note" of the Declaration and pledging the United States to support it. The [Republic of Vietnam](#) refused to sign, making it clear they did not consider themselves bound by the Declaration.

Neither [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), the United States, nor [France](#) was enthusiastic about reunification elections, first because northern Vietnam had several million more people than in the south, and second because [Ho Chi Minh](#) had substantial popularity in the south. It was conceivable he would win a majority vote even in the south. Consequently, Diem, with the strong support of the United States, announced there would be no reunification elections because free elections were impossible. Instead there would be two plebiscites in the south to decide first whether to abolish the monarchy, and second whether to authorize drafting a new constitution. General [Edward Lansdale](#) advised Diem how to manipulate election machinery to his own benefit, including the color of the ballots, red (signifying good luck) for Diem and green (signifying misfortune) for Emperor [Bao Dai](#). Lansdale also admonished Diem not to rig the election, stating that receiving 60 percent of the vote would convince Americans that Diem had a legitimate mandate. However, such a small winning margin fit neither with Diem's absolutist nature nor with Vietnamese culture. In an election marked by massive fraud, Diem collected 605,000 votes from the 405,000 registered voters in [Saigon](#) and "won" the election with 98.2 percent of the total vote.

Sources: George McTurnen Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, 1967; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; John C. Donnell and Charles A. Joiner, eds., *Electoral Politics in South Vietnam*, 1974.

Samuel Freeman



## ELECTION OF 1967 (SOUTH VIETNAM)

Justification of U.S. policy in Vietnam often hinged on [South Vietnam](#)'s being (or becoming) a democracy, necessitating elections for at least a facade of democratic structure. Ironically, Vietnam historically had elected village chiefs, but [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) tampered with this. [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) abolished it, all with American acquiescence. Local elections, however, don't get U.S. headlines like national elections. Although local elections might be more indicative of meaningful democracy, the United States put its money on national elections. Some argue this "top down" approach made defeat inevitable.

As a result of the [Honolulu Conference of 1966](#), [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) tried to consolidate power, precipitating the 1966 "Buddhist Crisis." Denouncing American imperialism and military rule, [Buddhists](#) brought Ky's government to the verge of collapse, ending the crisis only when they were promised elections for a National Assembly and the presidency. But seeing an electoral structure which would ensure junta control of the National Assembly, the Buddhists boycotted the elections they had demanded. Ky and Thieu opposed elections because of the remote prospect that the military's candidates would lose and because both felt the elections were an attempt by the United States to humiliate and depose them. National Assembly candidates and the electorate, despite a large turnout, were singularly apathetic, possibly because they were the eleventh and twelfth national elections since 1955 and were likely to be no more meaningful than previous ones.

The 1967 presidential election was marked by less voter fraud than the 1955 embarrassment. More accurately, it was "managed" sufficiently to ensure a Thieu-Ky victory (with 35 percent). Buddhist leaders were arrested. Press censorship was tightened. Serious opposition candidates such as General [Duong Van Minh](#) and "neutralists" or "leftists" were banned. All candidates other than Thieu or Ky had to travel together and were at the mercy of the military for transportation. Politically unknown [Truong Dinh Dzu](#), a semi-peace candidate who got on the ballot by concealing his program until after the screening process, came in second with 17 percent. He was jailed shortly thereafter. There was evidence of coercing voters, multiple voting by military personnel, stuffing ballot boxes, and fraudulent vote counts, a typical "demonstration" election ultimately conducted more for its propaganda value in the United States than anything else.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake*, 1972; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam; A History*, 1983; Edward Herman and Frank Borhead, *Demonstration Elections*, 1984; John C. Donnell and Charles A. Joiner, eds., *Electoral Politics in South Vietnam*, 1974.

Samuel Freeman

## ELECTION OF 1968 (U.S.)

The presidential election of 1968 was one of the stormiest in American history. Although there had been considerable opposition to a third term for President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), few people in the Democratic party had any hope of wresting the presidential nomination from him until after the political disaster of the [Tet Offensive](#) in [South Vietnam](#), when [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese troops administered a stunning setback to American forces by proving they still had the will and ability to resist. Senator [Eugene McCarthy](#), an antiwar Democrat from Minnesota, announced his candidacy for the presidency and to everyone's surprise, won 42 percent of the vote in the New Hampshire primary, an almost unheard-of total against an incumbent president. Four days after the March 12, 1968, New Hampshire primary, Senator [Robert F. Kennedy](#) of New York, another antiwar Democrat, announced his candidacy, and on March 31 Lyndon Johnson informed the country in a television speech that he would not run for reelection.

With Johnson's decision, Vice President [Hubert Humphrey](#) decided to seek the presidency, and the race quickly became a struggle between him and [Robert Kennedy](#). Kennedy's assassination after the California primary on June 6 then left the nomination in Humphrey's hands. He received the nomination after a tempestuous [convention](#) in Chicago where Mayor Richard Daley's police brutally attacked antiwar demonstrators on the streets. [Richard M. Nixon](#) won the Republican nomination after promising a diplomatic solution to the war, and he named [Spiro Agnew](#), governor of Maryland, as his running mate. Alabama governor George Wallace staged a vigorous third-party campaign based on a military victory in South Vietnam and an end to federal government liberalism. He selected former Strategic Air Command chief [Curtis LeMay](#) as his running mate.

It was a dramatically close election and Richard Nixon became the next president of the United States. The Democrats had self-destructed because of opposition to the war and the spectacle in Chicago, and George Wallace cut into their strength in the blue-collar districts of the Midwest and Northeast. Nixon received 302 electoral votes and 31,785,480 popular votes, 43.4 percent of the total, to Hubert Humphrey's 191 electoral votes and 31,275,166 popular votes, 42.7 percent of the total. George Wallace took 45 electoral votes, all in the South, and 9,906,473 popular votes, 13.5 percent of the total. Democrats kept control of the House of Representatives by 243 to 192, and the Senate by 58 to 42.

Sources: Richard B. Morris, *Encyclopedia of American History*, 1976; Clark Dougan and Stephen Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: Nineteen Sixty-Eight*, 1983; Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1968*, 1969.

## ELECTION OF 1971 (SOUTH VIETNAM)

The South Vietnamese election of 1971 took place in the midst of the [Paris peace talks](#) to end the war. [Le Duc Tho](#), the representative of the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#), informed [Henry Kissinger](#) that a settlement would be easier to reach if the United States withdrew its support from [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), president of the [Republic of Vietnam](#). Vice President [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) and army General [Duong Van Minh](#) were challenging [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) for the presidency. The election was scheduled for October 3, 1971. North Vietnam supposed it would be easier to work out a political accommodation with someone other than Thieu. President [Richard Nixon](#), however, decided to stay with Thieu on the grounds of the need for stability. In the election, Thieu forced the [withdrawal](#) of Ky and Minh then decided not to run, making a sham out of the election. Running unopposed, Thieu won another term. [Ellsworth Bunker](#), the U.S. ambassador, was outraged at Thieu's high-handedness, but there was little he could do about it. The peace negotiations continued to stall over the status of the South Vietnamese government.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; John C. Donnell and Charles A. Joiner, eds. *Electoral Politics in South Vietnam*, 1974.

Samuel Freeman

## ELLSBERG, DANIEL

Daniel Ellsberg was born in Chicago on April 7, 1931. His father was a structural engineer and his mother a musician. In 1952 he graduated summa cum laude from Harvard with a degree in economics. Two years later he was commissioned a first lieutenant in the [Marine Corps](#) where, according to Sanford J. Ungar, author of *The Papers and the Papers* (1972), he "developed an authentically military approach to America's international responsibilities." In 1959 Ellsberg joined the [Rand Corporation](#) and became a specialist on game theory and risk in nuclear war. Eager to get in on decisions relating to Vietnam, he moved to Washington in August 1964 and became one of Defense Secretary [Robert McNamara](#)'s whiz kids, writing speeches and lobbying in support of the hawkish viewpoint on Vietnam. He later confessed that at times he furnished McNamara "ten alternative lies" to use in tight situations with the press.

In July 1965 Ellsberg volunteered to help Major General [Edward Lansdale](#) evaluate the success of the pacification programs (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) in [South Vietnam](#). In 1967 McNamara commissioned him as one of a research task force to write a history of American-Vietnamese relations from 1945 through 1967.

Ellsberg's hypothesis was that President [John Kennedy](#) had been led by bad advice to deepen American commitments in Vietnam. However, Ellsberg found that Kennedy acted against the counsel of many of his top aids. After looking at the whole picture of presidential actions and the advice presidents had received, he concluded that "to a large extent it was an American President's war. No American President, Republican or Democrat, wanted to be the President who lost the war." In 1968 he gave advice in Defense Department meetings that resulted in the bombing halt in November. Ellsberg began going to antiwar meetings and writing Senator [Robert F. Kennedy](#)'s policy statements on Vietnam during the 1968 presidential primaries. He also gave advice to president-elect [Richard Nixon](#)'s [National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger](#).

Beset with guilt feelings because of his involvement in policy decisions and the pacification program, Ellsberg in the fall of 1969 began using a copying machine to reproduce the Pentagon study. By making it public he hoped that "truths that changed me could help Americans free themselves and other victims from our longest war." Ellsberg gave a copy to Senator [William Fulbright](#), chairman of the Senate [Foreign Relations Committee](#). His increasingly public role caused Rand to pressure him to resign, which he did in late 1969 and then became a senior research associate at MIT's Center for International Studies.

After engaging in a whirlwind of antiwar activity, he became frustrated at how little influence he was able to exert. President Nixon's invasions of [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) and [Laos](#) (see [Lam Son 719](#)) angered him and in March 1971 triggered his leaking of the [Pentagon Papers](#) to the *New York Times*. The *Times* began publishing excerpts and articles based on the Papers on June 13, 1971. Although the Nixon administration secured an injunction against further *Times* publication, the *Washington Post* and the *Boston Globe* continued to make the documents public. On June 30 the Supreme Court decided in favor of the *Times* and the *Post*, saying that the First Amendment presumed that there would be no prior restraint on the press.

On June 29, 1971, Ellsberg was indicted for converting government property to his personal use and illegally possessing government documents. Later the grand jury charged him with conspiracy, theft, and violation of the Espionage Act. In the midst of the proceedings on May 11, 1973, Judge Matthew Byrne, Jr., dismissed all charges because of government misconduct, especially illegal wiretapping, breaking into the office of Ellsberg's former psychiatrist, and Nixon's attempt to influence Byrne by offering him the directorship of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Ellsberg remained active in the [antiwar movement](#), and during the 1980s he became a vocal proponent of strategic arms limitations.

Sources: Daniel Ellsberg, *Papers on the War*, 1972; Peter Schrag, *Test of Loyalty*, 1974.

John Ricks

## ELY, PAUL HENRY ROMAULD

Born in [France](#) in 1897, Paul Ely was a highly respected military officer who commanded French forces in [Indochina](#) in 1954 and 1955. Educated at the Lycee de Brest, Ecole Speciale Militaire de Saint Cyr, and the Ecole Superieure de Guerre, he worked his way through the military command system. In 1941-42, Ely was a commanding officer with the Tenth Chasseurs, and served the rest of the war as representative of the Allied High Command with the resistance movement. In 1945, Ely became commander of the infantry. He became military director to the minister of national defense in 1946, commander of the Seventh Region in 1947, and inspector general of the armed forces in 1948. Between 1950 and 1953, Ely served as the French representative to NATO, and late in 1953 was named commander in chief of the French Armed Forces in Indochina.

It was a lost cause. In 1954, as the final stage of the struggle began, Ely wanted American air support, and on March 20 he flew to Washington, D. C., to request assistance. There he warned Admiral [Arthur B. Radford](#) and other American leaders that the "destruction of [Dien Bien Phu](#) was likely." Direct American assistance was not forthcoming, and French forces at Dien Bien Phu surrendered on May 7, 1954. At the [Geneva Accords in 1954](#), Vietnam was divided into two countries, and American support replaced the French presence in the south. Ely departed [South Vietnam](#) in the spring of 1955. He served as chief general staff marshal until January 1959 and then as chief staff officer for defense until his retirement in 1961. Paul Ely died on January 19, 1975.

Sources: *International Who's Who, 1964-1965*, 1965; Joseph Buttlinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, 2 vols., 1967.

## ELYSEE AGREEMENT OF 1949

The Elysee Agreement was signed on March 8, 1949, by the puppet emperor [Bao Dai](#) and French president Vincent Auriol in Paris. The agreement declared that Vietnam was an independent nation but that [France](#) still had authority over defensive, financial, and diplomatic matters there. The agreement also promised to incorporate [Cochin China](#) into a unified Vietnamese nation. Bao Dai realized that the Elysee Agreement really did nothing to promote real independence, and the Vietnamese Communists under [Ho Chi Minh](#) viewed it as a sellout and realized that any real hope of securing independence peaceably from the French was a pipe dream.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina*, 1961; Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, 1958.

## ENCLAVE STRATEGY

The American buildup in Vietnam precipitated a major debate within the [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) administration about strategic commitments in [Indochina](#). People like Admiral [Ulysses Sharp](#) and General [William Westmoreland](#) wanted a rapid buildup and independent combat operations by U.S. personnel to "[search and destroy](#)" the enemy in a [war of attrition](#). Under Secretary of State [George Ball](#), on the other hand, was suspicious about the entire American commitment in the region. [Edward Lansdale](#) wanted the major American commitment to be directed at [counterinsurgency](#) and pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)). Initially, American forces secured cities and strategic military positions in a static defensive posture, but Westmoreland quickly abandoned it for the enclave strategy which was something of a compromise. Under the enclave strategy, American forces would conduct aggressive patrolling near their defensive enclaves. After gaining experience, U.S. troops would be permitted to conduct offensive operations in support of [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) forces within a 50-mile radius of their enclaves. Officially that strategy lasted only a year, but it was eroded almost immediately as Westmoreland succeeded in deploying the [173rd Airborne](#) to the [Central Highlands](#) and in initiating limited search and destroy operations. In 1967, sensing a stalemate, [Paul Warnke](#), head of International Security Affairs at the Pentagon, unsuccessfully recommended readoption of the enclave strategy to reduce [casualties](#) and costs, and to return the combat burden to the South Vietnamese.

Sources: Peter Poole, *Eight Presidents and Indochina*, 1978; William R. Corson, *The Betrayal*, 1968; Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-Year War*, 1984; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986; [Harold K. Johnson](#), "The Enclave Concept: A License to Hunt," *Army*, (April 1968).

Samuel Freeman



## ENTHOVEN, ALAIN

Alain Enthoven was born in Seattle, Washington, on September 10, 1930. He received a degree in economics from Stanford University in 1952, studied under a Rhodes scholarship at Oxford in 1954, and received the Ph.D. in economics from MIT in 1956. Enthoven was an economist and systems analyst for the [Rand](#) Corporation between 1956 and 1960, and after the election of John F. Kennedy he went to the Department of Defense as a deputy assistant secretary. At the height of the Vietnam War, Enthoven was a senior assistant to [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#), and he continually offered his opinion that the real issue in Vietnam was nationalism, not communism, and American bombing, money, and personnel would not stem the tide. Enthoven saw the war as a struggle between American public opinion, which was gradually souring on the war, the corruption of the South Vietnamese regime, and the growing strength of the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese. Consequently, Enthoven opposed the American troop buildup as futile. When the Democrats were ousted from the White House in the [election of 1968](#), Enthoven left Washington and joined Litton Industries as a vice president and later as president of Litton Medical Services. In 1973 he became the Marriner S. Eccles Professor of Management at Stanford University, where he still teaches.

Sources: *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969*, 1971.



## F

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FULBRIGHT, JAMES WILLIAM

I CORPS

I FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

IV CORPS



## ``FIVE O'CLOCK FOLLIES''

At 5:00 P.M. daily in downtown [Saigon](#) the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) briefed reporters on the previous day's events. They were dubbed the ``Five O'Clock Follies'' because of the general atmosphere of confusion, difficulties in presenting detailed information providing an overview of the war, and growing suspicion that the briefings overestimated National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)) losses and understated their successes while doing just the opposite with U.S. gains and losses. Briefing data was compiled at [Tan Son Nhut](#) airfield's ``Pentagon East'' by the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) Office of Information (MACOI). Although briefings were intended to be comprehensive, several problems made communication of information difficult. First, both MACOI and the press focused almost exclusively on U.S. operations. MACOI usually treated [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) operations as adjunct to American operations, and the press, if it reported on ARVN at all, usually did so in negative terms. Western reporters seldom attended ARVN briefings held across the street from JUSPAO offices. Second, it was impossible to discuss unconventional war in the typical terms of ``lines,'' ``fronts,'' and ``advances''; yet this was what the military, press, government officials, and public were conditioned to expect. Third, the war was being fought episodically throughout the country, making development of a comprehensive picture impossible. The media's ``spot news'' demands produced a war *du jour*, [Khe Sanh](#) one day, Tay Ninh, [My Lai](#), or [An Loc](#) the next. Fourth, MACOI was dependent on information from the field which might be incomplete, inaccurate, or unavailable. Fifth, most MACOI personnel had no field experience in Vietnam and seldom, if ever, ventured outside Saigon. Sixth, the war was such that reporters generally didn't know the right questions to ask. Those who knew did not attend the ``Follies.'' They were in the field getting answers for themselves. Seventh, military personnel, straining already difficult relationships, generally regarded the press as a necessary evil. This became most evident during the [Tet Offensive](#). Reporters were incredulous at General [William Westmoreland](#)'s standing on the grounds of the American embassy, surrounded by Vietcong bodies, claiming victory. Since most reporters lived in Saigon's comfortable and previously safe confines feeding off MACOI handouts, they had little experience with actual combat. What they saw was disconcerting, contradicting what they were told in the ``Follies.''

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Peter Braestrup, *Big Story*, 1983; Daniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman

## ``FRIENDLY FIRE''

``Friendly Fire" was a euphemism used during the war in Vietnam to describe air, [artillery](#), or small-arms fire from American forces mistakenly directed at American positions. The term gained national prominence as the title of C.D.B. Bryan's 1976 book *Friendly Fire*, describing the death of Michael E. Mullen in Vietnam on February 18, 1970. Mullen was killed by an accidental American artillery strike, and the telegram to his parents said he had been ``at a night defensive position when artillery fire from friendly forces landed on the area." In 1983 a [television](#) movie starring Carol Burnett further emphasized the term in the public consciousness.

Source: C.D.B. Bryan, *Friendly Fire*, 1976.

## 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)

Originally activated in 1921, the [1st Cavalry Division](#) fought (dismounted) in the Pacific during World War II and later in [Korea](#). In 1965 the division's flag was taken from Korea and presented to the experimental 11th Air Assault Division, which became the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). (The former 1st Cavalry Division, still in Korea, became the new 2nd Infantry Division.) The division was deployed to [South Vietnam](#) in September 1965 and was the first full division to arrive in the country. It was almost immediately in battle in the [Ia Drang Valley](#). The division won a Presidential Unit Citation for its fierce fighting. During 1966 and 1967 elements of the division were engaged in numerous actions throughout the [II Corps](#) Tactical Zone. Initially committed to operations in Binh Dinh Province in early 1968, the bulk of the division was hurriedly recommitted to the [Battle for Hue](#) and then to the relief of the [marine](#) position at [Khe Sanh](#). Later in the year the division served in the [A Shau Valley](#) before being shifted to protect the northern and western approaches to [Saigon](#). The division was in constant action throughout 1969, and in 1970 was a part of the American-South Vietnamese force which invaded [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)). Most of the division left South Vietnam in April 1973. The remaining 3rd Brigade returned to Fort Hood, Texas, in June.

As the army's first airmobile division, the 1st Cavalry Division pioneered air assault tactics. It was considered one of the army's elite units in Vietnam, highly valuable because of its extreme mobility. The 1st Cavalry participated in the following operations and battles: Ia Drang Valley (1965), [Masher/White Wing/Thang Phong II](#), [Paul Revere II](#), Davy Crockett, Crazy Horse, Thayer, [Irving](#), [Pershing](#), Tam Quan (1967), Hue (1968), [Pegasus/Lam Son](#)(Khe Sanh), [Delaware/Lam Son](#), Montana Raider, [Toan Thang](#). The division suffered over 30,000 [casualties](#) during the war.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam 1965-1973*, 1985; Edward Hymoff, *The First Air Cavalry Division*, 1985; Kenneth D. Mertel, *Year of the Horse, Vietnam: First Air Cavalry in the Highlands*, 1968.

Robert S. Browning III



## 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

The 1st Infantry Division, known as the "Big Red One," was first organized during World War I and saw extensive action during World War II in Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. The division arrived in Vietnam on October 2, 1965, and served in [III Corps](#). They fought [Vietcong](#) forces in Binh Dinh and Tay Ninh provinces in 1966, fought in [War Zone C](#) during 1966 and 1967 in [Operation Attleboro](#) and [Operation Junction City](#), and during the [Tet Offensive](#) defended [Saigon](#) against Vietcong attack. The 1st Infantry Division participated in Operations Birmingham, Hollingsworth, [Lexington III](#), [El Paso I and II](#), and [Toan Thang II](#). Throughout much of 1969 the division worked in pacification programs (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) and late in 1969 initiated Operation Keystone Bluejay, equipment transfers in preparation for departure from Vietnam. The 1st Infantry Division worked closely with the [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) 5th Division to train them for combat operations. The division left Vietnam on April 15, 1970.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## 1ST MARINE DIVISION

Known as "The Old Breed" in the [Marine Corps](#), the 1st Marine Division was widely recognized as one of the best military units in the United States. It was formally organized on February 1, 1941, as the first division in the history of the Marine Corps. During World War II the 1st Marines saw action on Guadalcanal, New Guinea, New Britain, Peleliu, and Okinawa, and fought in [Korea](#) as well in 1950 and 1951. In August 1965 the headquarters of the 1st Marines was moved from Camp Pendleton, California, to Okinawa. Its 7th Marine Regiment deployed to Chu Lai in [I Corps](#) in August 1965, and the 1st and 2nd battalions of its 1st Marine Regiment deployed there in August and November 1965. The 1st Marine Division arrived formally in Vietnam on February 23, 1966, and it was stationed at Chu Lai. In November 1966 division headquarters were transferred to [Da Nang](#). By midsummer 1966, 1st Marine Division strength exceeded 17,000 men.

During 1966 the 1st Marines fought small engagements and patrolled widely in I Corps, and at the beginning of 1967 the division was evenly divided between Chu Lai and Da Nang. Fighting was especially intense in the Phuoc Ha Valley between Chu Lai and Da Nang. In March and April 1967 the 1st Marines participated in [Operations Union I and II](#) in Quang Nam and Quang Tin provinces, and in September they fought against [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) and [Vietcong](#) forces in Operation Swift in the same region. In 1968, the division fought in the [Tet Offensive](#) and the [Battle of Hue](#), patrolled and fought widely along the border of Thua Thien and Quang Nam provinces in Operation Houston, and kept Highway 1 (see "[Street Without Joy](#)") open, especially along the [Hai Van Pass](#). They also engaged in Operation Mameluke Thrust in central Quang Nam Province. Early 1969 found the 1st Marine Division fighting the Vietcong and NVA in Operation Taylor Common in Quang Nam Province. They also patrolled widely throughout An Hoa Valley and Que Son Valley, protecting access routes to Da Nang. They had settled into a string of fire bases and strong points stretching from Da Nang's Monkey and Marble mountains, west to Hill 55, and then on to the An Hoa basin's "Arizona Territory."

The 1st Marine Division received two Presidential Unit Citations, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, and a [Republic of Vietnam](#) Civil Actions Award. Twenty of the division's marines, two of its corpsmen, and one navy chaplain won the Medal of Honor, and [President Nixon](#) appeared at the 1st Marine Division's nationally televised return to Camp Pendleton, California, in April 1971.

Sources: *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1974; R. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 1982; Edwin H. Simmons, *The Marines in Vietnam*, 1974; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

Dudley Acker

## 44TH MEDICAL BRIGADE

The 44th Medical Brigade deployed to Vietnam in April 1966 and remained there until 1970, when it was dissolved into subordinate units. The 44th Medical Brigade consisted of the 32nd Medical Depot at [Long Binh](#); the 43rd and 55th Medical Groups in [II Corps](#); the 67th Medical Group in [III Corps](#); and the 68th Medical Group in II and [IV Corps](#). the 44th Medical Brigade was responsible for medical evacuation (see [medevac](#)), evacuation hospitals, field hospitals, Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals, convalescent centers, and ambulance detachments.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Originally formed in 1917, the 4th Infantry Division (nicknamed the "Ivy Division") served in both World Wars. The division arrived in Vietnam in September 1966 and was immediately committed to action in [Operation Attleboro](#). During the last months of 1966 and the first half of 1967, most of the division attempted to secure [Pleiku](#) and Kontum provinces, while the division's 3rd Brigade participated in [Operation Junction City](#). Later in 1967 the division's 1st and 2nd brigades participated in [Operation MacArthur](#) in Kontum Province. In this operation elements of the 4th Division became involved in the bitter [Battle of Dak To](#) in November. The division continued to patrol the Pleiku and Kontum provinces of the western highlands throughout 1968 and 1969. In May 1970, the division entered [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) as part of [Operation Binh Tay](#). The division left Vietnam in December 1970 as part of the phased American [withdrawal](#). During the course of the Vietnam War, the 4th Infantry Division suffered 16,844 [casualties](#).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

Robert S. Browing III

## 5TH MARINE DIVISION

In March 1966 the Defense Department reactivated the 5th Marine Division and thus revived a unit that had fought on Iwo Jima, participated briefly in the occupation of [Japan](#), and ceased to exist in early 1946. When the Johnson administration decided not to call up the [Fourth Marine Division](#) from the Organized Reserve, Major General [Robert E. Cushman, Jr.](#), moved over from his skeletal reserve headquarters and began drawing on the additional 55,000 volunteers and draftees authorized for the [Marine Corps](#) by Congress in late 1965.

The first [battalion](#) of two regimental landing teams (RLT) eventually committed to [Vietnam](#) landed north of [Dong Ha](#) in September 1966, and by April the other two battalions of the 26th Marines were ashore and under the operational control of the [Third Marine Division](#). The 26th Marines (RLT-26) won a Presidential Unit Citation for their role in the defense of [Khe Sanh](#) in 1968 and later that year attached to the [1st Marine Division](#) for operations with the 27th Marines (RLT-27), also of the 5th Marine Division, south of [Da Nang](#). The 27th Marines left [I Corps](#) for Camp Pendleton in September 1968, but RLT-26 remained and conducted ten special landing force operations along the coast of southern I Corps until its return to California in the early fall of 1969. The 5th Marine Division disbanded in November of that year.

Sources: Donald L. Evans, "USMC Civil Affairs in Vietnam: A Philosophical History," in *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1983; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

Dudley Acker

## F-104 STARFIGHTER

The F-104 Starfighter was produced in 1956, after several years of development, by the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation as a lightweight air-superiority jet fighter to replace the aging F-100 force of Korean War-era aircraft. The F-104 entered the operational aircraft inventory of the United States Air Force on January 26, 1958, and saw service in Southeast Asia throughout the 1960s. The first twenty-four F-104s deployed to Southeast Asia on a temporary basis beginning April 7, 1965, with one [squadron](#) standing alert at Kung Kuan, Taiwan (see [Chiang Kai-shek](#)), and another at [Da Nang, South Vietnam](#). From Da Nang, these aircraft could strike targets in both South and [North Vietnam](#). The F-104s sustained heavy losses from enemy ground fire. They were relieved of the air defense commitment on November 21, 1965, and redeployed in December 1965. A permanent contingent of F-104s was deployed to Southeast Asia on July 5, 1966, in response to the escalation of the American commitment there. Accordingly, F-104Cs from the 479th Tactical Fighter [Wing](#) were assigned to the 435th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Udorn Royal Thai Air Base, [Thailand](#). These aircraft were heavily involved in combat operations throughout the theater until they were replaced in July 1967 by more efficient F-4D aircraft. During their operations in Southeast Asia, F-104s numbered a maximum of twenty-four aircraft. They flew a total of 7,083 [sorties](#); eight aircraft were lost, and there were no confirmed MiG victories.

Source: Marcelle S. Knaack, *Encyclopedia of U.S. Air Force Aircraft and Missile Systems*. Vol. 1, *Post-World War II Fighters*, 1978.

Roger D. Launius

## F-105 THUNDERCHIEF

The F-105 Thunderchief, a supersonic, tactical fighter-bomber (see [fighters](#)) capable of delivering conventional and nuclear weapons, was one of the work-horses of the United States Air Force (USAF) in Southeast Asia. The first F-105 production aircraft was delivered to the Air Force in May 1958; it incorporated the distinctive swept-forward air-intake ducts in the wing root leading edges that reduced turbulence in front of the tail section. The aircraft also had an internal bomb bay and positions for ordnance on wing pylons, as well as a six-barrel 20mm cannon that fired 6,000 rounds per minute. The F-105 was ultimately modified for several special missions: all-weather and night bombing, air interdiction, aerial reconnaissance, air superiority operations, and air-to-air and air-to-ground missile operations.

The F-105D, a model of the aircraft that began entering the air force inventory in the early 1960s, was the principal aircraft used for strikes on heavily defended ground targets in [North Vietnam](#) during the Southeast Asian conflict. These aircraft began to see action in the theater in early 1965, as F-105Ds, flying from Korat Air Base, [Thailand](#), and striking targets north of the seventeenth parallel (see [Geneva Accords](#)). While participating in tactical air strikes over [South Vietnam](#) in 1966 and subsequent years, they carried out more strikes against the North than any other USAF aircraft. Operating against ever-stiffening defenses, the F-105Ds also led in battle losses for USAF combat aircraft. These fighter aircraft, as well as the F-105F and F-105G configurations which began arriving in Vietnam in 1966, operated in the theater until 1973. During the eight years of operations, the maximum number of F-105 aircraft in Southeast Asia flew 137,391 [sorties](#) and scored 27.5 confirmed victories over enemy aircraft, while sustaining 334 combat losses.

Source: J. C. Scutts, *F-105 Thunderchief*, 1981.

Roger D. Launius

## F-111

Manufactured by General Dynamics, the F-111 was the most controversial aircraft in the American arsenal during the Vietnam War. Capable of delivering either nuclear weapons or conventional payloads of four 2,000-pound bombs or twelve to twenty-four 750-pound bombs, the F-111 was highly accurate because of its computerized APQ-113 attack radar and AJQ-20 inertial bombing-navigational system. The F-111 had terrain avoidance capabilities and could fly long distances at low altitudes, avoiding enemy radar contact. General Dynamics produced the F-111 and subcontracted the navy's F-111B to Grumman. Its top speed was 1,453 mph with a combat ceiling of 56,000 feet and a combat radius of 1,330 miles. On March 17, 1968, six F-111As arrived in [Thailand](#) to attack targets in [North Vietnam](#). After only fifty-five missions and three aircraft losses, operations were halted and the remaining F-111As returned to the United States. Serious doubts existed about the aircraft's structural stability, and all of them were retested. Between September 1972 and February 1973, two squadrons of fifty-two F-111As were redeployed and flew over 3,000 missions. Only seven were lost.

Source: Ray Wagner, *American Combat Aircraft*, 1982.



## F-4 PHANTOM II

The F-4 Phantom II, a twin-engine, all-weather, tactical fighter-bomber (see [fighters](#)), was one of the principal aircraft deployed to Southeast Asia. Capable of operating at speeds of more than 1,600 miles per hour and at altitudes approaching 60,000 feet, the first F-4s were deployed to participate in the air war over Vietnam in August 1964 by the United States [Navy](#). On August 6, 1964, in response to the [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#), five F-4Bs from the USS *Constellation* attacked North Vietnamese patrol boat bases. Operating from the USS *Ranger*, the USS *Coral Sea*, and the USS *Hancock*, the F-4 aircraft expanded their operations beginning on April 3, 1965, when fifty F-4Bs attacked a road bridge 65 miles south of [Hanoi](#).

The first United States Air Force (USAF) F-4s were deployed to Southeast Asia in early 1965. They became involved in significant air operations during the summer. For instance, on July 10, 1965, two F-4Cs shot down two MiG-17 fighters over [North Vietnam](#) with Sidewinder missiles. Additionally, in October 1965 the first RF-4s, aircraft equipped with reconnaissance equipment, were deployed to the theater. Operations expanded thereafter; by March 1966, seven USAFF-4 squadrons were in [South Vietnam](#) and three were in [Thailand](#). The buildup of F-4 aircraft and operations continued thereafter.

The air fighting over North Vietnam lasted from spring 1965 to January 1973, but included a long period between April 1968 and March 1972 when strikes in the north were halted or severely restricted by presidential decree. Consequently, regular air fighting by F-4s took place for approximately forty-three months during the seven-and-a-half year conflict. During their operations, USAF F-4s were credited with 107.5 air victories, Navy F-4s with 38, and [Marine Corps](#) F-4s with one. A total of 511 F-4s from all services were lost in Southeast Asia from June 6, 1965, through June 29, 1973. Of these, 430 were combat losses, while 81 resulted from aerial or ground accidents.

Sources: Francis K. Mason, *Phantom: A Legend in Its Own Time*, 1984; *Modern Fighting Aircraft: F-4 Phantom III*, 1984.

Roger D. Launius

## F-5

The F-5 was designed for smaller allied nations. Designed late in the 1950s by Northrup, the first production F-5 flew in 1963. Twelve F-5s arrived in Vietnam on October 23, 1965, for combat testing. Most of the F-5 aircraft were used by the [Vietnamese Air Force](#). The United States supplied them with fifty-four F-5s, and they leased another eighty from Taiwan, [South Korea](#), and Iran in 1973. The F-5 was armed with two 20mm guns, two AIM-9B Sidewinder missiles at the wing tips, three 1,000-pound and two 750-pound bombs.

Source: Ray Wagner, *American Combat Planes*, 1982.

## FALL, BERNARD

Author of *The Viet Minh Regime* (1956), *Le Viet Minh, 1945-1960* (1960), *Street Without Joy* (1961), *The Two Viet Nams* (1963), *Viet Nam Witness* (1966), *Hell in a Very Small Place* (1966), and *Last Reflections on a War* (1967), and editor with Marcus Raskin of *The Viet Nam Reader* (1967), Bernard Fall was a recognized authority on Vietnam and the wars fought there. Born in 1926, Fall served in World War II with the French underground until the liberation, and then with the French army until 1946. He was a research analyst at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal and worked for the United Nations in the International Tracing Service. He came to the United States in 1951 on a [Fulbright](#) Scholarship, earning an M.A. and Ph.D. in political science at Syracuse University. He first went to Vietnam in 1953 to do research for his doctorate and returned for the sixth time in 1966 on a Guggenheim Fellowship. When not in Vietnam, he was a professor of international relations at Howard University.

Fall was a complex man with a passion for Vietnam. He saw both wars there as tragedies. Although deep concern about communism in [Indochina](#) softened his criticism of both [France](#) and the United States, Fall held to the justice of an Indochina free of foreign domination, whether it be French, American, [Chinese](#), or Russian. A critic of both French colonialism and American intervention, Fall distinguished clearly between the policies of governments and the human beings caught in between. Fall combined meticulous scholarship with a humane writing style. He wanted to see the war as it was experienced by those condemned to fighting it, and he wrote sensitively about their travails. He loved the Vietnamese people and had great respect and admiration for the forces of the [Vietminh](#) and National Liberation Front (NLF; see [Vietcong](#)). On February 21, 1967, Bernard Fall was killed in the field with a United States [Marine Corps](#) unit when an NLF booby trap exploded.

Sources: *New York Times*, February 22, 1967; Bernard Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place*, 1966; *Last Reflections on a War*, 1967.

Samuel Freeman

## **FANK**

The acronym FANK stood for Forces Armees Nationales Khmeres, or the Khmer National Armed Forces. FANK was the military arm of the pro-American [Lon Nol](#) government which took over [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) after the collapse of [Norodom Sihanouk](#)'s neutral government in March 1970. FANK was defeated in 1975 when [Pol Pot](#)'s Vietnamese-trained [Khmer Rouge](#) troops seized the Cambodian capital in Phnom Penh.

Sources: Clark Dougan and David Fulghum, *The Vietnam Experience: The Fall of the South*, 1985; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979.

## FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION

The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) was an important, though not very publicly visible, influence on the civil rights and antiwar movements of the late 1950s and the 1960s. Formally founded in [Great Britain](#) in 1914 and then on November 11, 1915, in the United States, the current worldwide FOR has organizations in twenty-seven countries, with an international secretariat in Brussels. The American FOR, headquartered in Nyack, New York, is a religious, predominantly Christian, pacifist association of persons who "recognize the essential unity of all humanity and have joined together to explore the power of love and truth for resolving human conflict." FOR publishes a magazine called *Fellowship* eight times a year as well as other literature. During World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the years between those wars, FOR opposed conscription and provided support and encouragement for conscientious objectors and others wishing to protest war or refuse participation in the military. For many years, perhaps the leading spokesperson for FOR, and FOR's most well-known pacifist, was A. J. Muste (1885-1967). Muste was among the early organizers of FOR, along with such notable reformers as Jane Addams, Scott Nearing, and Norman Thomas. In the fall of 1964, Muste and other pacifists issued the first public statement endorsing [draft](#) resistance during the Vietnam War: the Declaration of Conscience Against the War in Vietnam. Muste died in February 1967 while helping to organize large antiwar demonstrations that were held on April 15. Throughout its existence, FOR's greatest influence appears to have come from its enduring ability to facilitate, and provide leadership for, the formation of other reform organizations including, for example, the [War Resisters League](#), American Civil Liberties Union, National Conference of Christians and Jews, Congress of Racial Equality, and American Committee on Africa. During the late 1950s, FOR supported the black civil rights movement in the South by participating in demonstrations and conducting workshops on nonviolence and civil disobedience. Prominent black civil rights leaders, such as James Farmer, [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), and Bayard Rustin, were members of FOR. Similarly, FOR supported, provided leadership for, or helped to educate new organizations, such as [Clergy and Laity Concerned](#) and Another Mother for Peace, that were formed to protest the war in Vietnam. After the [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#) in 1964, FOR rallied more than 3,000 clergy to endorse a statement saying "In the Name of God Stop It." FOR members conducted long-term vigils and mounted hunger strikes against the draft and the war, and in 1970 held a month-long series of Daily Death Toll "die-ins" in front of the White House. During the war, FOR especially sought to establish ties with [Buddhist](#) pacifists and "third force" activists in [South Vietnam](#). Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, first came to the United States in 1965 under FOR sponsorship. FOR supported and housed the U.S. Liaison Office for the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation. After the war, FOR continued to protest the mistreatment of Buddhist pacifists and other antiwar and antimilitary activists in Vietnam. While most of the youth-based organizations as well as many others of the Vietnam era had disappeared by 1975, FOR remained active, in part because it did not deviate from its nonviolent beliefs, it had always had a reform agenda larger than the Vietnam War, and its members have been, as a group, older and more committed to pacifism as a religious philosophy. As of 1986, FOR reported a membership of 33,000 in the United States (up from some 23,000 in 1973).

Sources: Vera Brittain, *The Rebel Passion*, 1964; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest and the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984.

John Kincaid

## **FIELDS OF FIRE**

*Fields of Fire* is the title of James Webb's 1978 novel about Vietnam. The plot follows a [platoon](#) of Marines slogging through the rice paddies and jungles outside of An Hoa, suffering violent death, horrible injuries, wretched living conditions, and poor morale because they see no rationale for the sacrifice, no reason to die. The central character is Will Goodrich, a Harvard student who enlists in the Marine Corps Band only to be assigned by mistake to Vietnam.

Sources: James Webb, *Fields of Fire*, 1978; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## **FIFTH INFANTRY DIVISION**

The First Brigade of the Fifth Infantry Division arrived in Vietnam on July 25, 1968, from Fort Carson, Colorado. The brigade had been involved in riot control activities in the United States early in 1968, and then had undergone reorganization as a mechanized unit. When the brigade arrived in [Quang Tri](#) of [I Corps](#) in July, it had more than 1,300 vehicles. The brigade came under the direction of Lt. General Richard G. Stillwell and the [XXIV Corps](#), and worked closely with the [Third Marine Division](#) and the [101st Airborne Division \(Air-mobile\)](#) in the northern provinces of [South Vietnam](#). The First Brigade of the Fifth Infantry Division left Vietnam on August 27, 1971.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## FIFTH SPECIAL FORCES GROUP

Various [Special Forces](#) groups had served tours of duty in [South Vietnam](#) during the early 1960s; it was not until October 1964 that the Fifth Special Forces Group was formally deployed there. The Fifth established its headquarters at [Nha Trang](#). It consisted of groups of A, B, and C teams. Each twenty-man C team was in charge of three B teams, which controlled four twelve-man A teams. The A teams were the operational units used to head Special Forces camps, attack and infiltrate enemy units, reconnoiter enemy positions, and call in air strikes. There were four Fifth Special Forces Companies, one assigned to each of the four [corps](#) tactical zones. The Fifth Special Forces Group was also responsible for directing the work of Montagnard tribal units of the [Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) (CIDG) camps. Between October 1964 and October 1969, the Fifth Special Forces Group grew from 950 U.S. personnel and 19,000 irregular troops to 3,740 U.S. troops and more than 40,000 irregulars. The Fifth Special Forces Group also directed the [Eagle Flight](#) program, developed the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol program, supervised [Projects Delta](#), [Sigma](#), and [Omega](#), and helped transform many CIDG units into [Regional Forces](#), [Popular Forces](#), and South Vietnamese Ranger units. The Fifth Special Forces Group was withdrawn from South Vietnam in March 1971. At the time of its [withdrawal](#), the Fifth Special Forces Group had also been responsible for a wide variety of civic action and pacification projects (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)). They claimed to have established 49,902 economic aid projects in Vietnam, 34,334 educational projects, 35,468 welfare projects, and 10,959 medical projects.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *Green Berets at War*, 1985; Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971*, 1973; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.



## FIGHTERS

A variety of fighters and fighter-bombers were used by the American military forces during the Vietnam War. The mainstay of the U.S. Air Force attack was the Republic [F-105 Thunderchief](#), or "the Thud." [F-105s](#) flew more combat missions over North Vietnam than any other air force craft, but by the end of the 1960s they were being replaced by the [F-4 Phantom II](#). The F-4 was also used extensively by the U.S. [Marines](#) and the [Navy](#). The navy and marines also made wide use of the [A-4 Skyhawk](#) as well as the [A-6 Intruder](#). The air force also used the F-100 Super Sabre and the [A-7 Corsair II](#), for close air support. In 1967 the air force introduced six General Dynamics [F-111s](#) to Southeast Asia, but three of them were lost almost immediately because of severe technical difficulties. They were not ready for widespread use in Vietnam until September 1972. Until the cease-fire in January 1973, the F-111s flew more than 3,000 combat missions over North Vietnam.

Sources: Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973*, 1977; William W. Momyer, *Airpower in Three Wars*, 1978.

## FIRST AVIATION BRIGADE

Headquartered at [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#) (May 1966 to December 1967 and December 1972 to March 1973) and [Long Binh](#) (December 1967 to December 1972), the First Aviation Brigade carried out aerial reconnaissance, medical evacuations (see [medevac](#)), tactical assaults, fire support, and cargo handling. At its peak strength, the First Aviation Brigade consisted of 7 aviation groups, 20 aviation battalions, 4 [air cavalry](#) squadrons, 641 fixed-wing aircraft, 441 [Cobra AH-1G](#) attack helicopters, 311 [CH-47](#) cargo helicopters, 635 OH-6A observation helicopters, and 2,202 [UH-1](#) utility helicopters. The First Aviation Brigade also worked actively with the Rural Development Program in relocating Vietnamese civilians during pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)). During its deployment to Vietnam, the First Aviation Brigade had eight commanders: Brigadier General George P. Seneff (May 1966 to November 1967); Major General Robert R. Williams (November 1967 to April 1969); Brigadier General Allen M. Burdett, Jr. (April 1969 to January 1970); Brigadier General George W. Putnam, Jr. (January 1970 to August 1970); Colonel Samuel G. Cockerham (acting) (August 1970); Brigadier General Jack W. Hemingway (August 1970 to September 1971); Brigadier General Robert N. Mackinnon (September 1971 to September 1972); and Brigadier General Jack V. Mackmull (September 1972 to March 1973).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## FIRST LOGISTICAL COMMAND

The First Logistical Command arrived in Vietnam from Fort Hood on March 30, 1965, and established its headquarters in [Saigon](#). At first it was responsible for logistical support of all U.S. military units in [II](#), [III](#), and [IV Corps](#), with the United States [Navy](#) in charge of logistics in [I Corps](#). In 1968, when United States Army units became active in I Corps, the First Logistical Command assumed jurisdiction there as well. Eventually the First Logistical Command moved its headquarters to [Long Binh](#), and it controlled the major subordinate commands of United States Army Support Commands at Saigon, [Cam Ranh Bay](#), [Qui Nhon](#), and [Da Nang](#). The First Logistical Command supervised the maintenance of the transportation system in [South Vietnam](#); supervised ammunition, petroleum, and food supply depots; and delivered supplies to American troops on military bases and in the field. The First Logistical Command was consolidated with the [United States Army Vietnam](#) on June 26, 1970. The First Logistical Command left Vietnam on December 7, 1970, and returned to Fort Bragg. The United States Army Vietnam assumed control of logistical support.

Sources: Joseph M. Heiser, Jr., *Logistic Support*, 1974; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## **FIRST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING**

The First Marine Aircraft Wing, which contained nearly 500 aircraft and helicopters, was established at [Da Nang](#) in May 1965 and remained in Vietnam until April 1971. The First Marine Aircraft Wing was in charge of all marine aircraft operations in Vietnam.

Sources: Jack Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War 1966*, 1982; Jack Shulimson and Charles M. Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Landing and the Buildup 1965*, 1978.

## FIRST SIGNAL BRIGADE

Because of the increasing size and complexity of the U.S. military forces in Vietnam, the Department of the Army created the Strategic Communications Command Signal Brigade, Southeast Asia, on April 1, 1966. This unit, which was under the operational control of the [United States Army Vietnam](#), was redesignated the First Signal Brigade on May 26, 1966.

In the fall of 1965, General [William Westmoreland](#) had formally protested the "fragmentation of command and control of Army Signal Units" above the field-force level. The creation of the First Signal Brigade solved this problem by bringing all long-lines communications under its control and the control of the theater commander in Vietnam. By the end of 1968 the First Signal Brigade was larger than divisional size. It was composed of six Signal groups, twenty-two Signal battalions, and over 23,000 men. It was the largest Signal organization that the United States had ever deployed to a combat theater.

The First Signal Brigade provided a secure voice and message transmission system throughout all of [South Vietnam](#) and linked that system to [Thailand](#) and to the Department of Defense's worldwide communications network. This network provided cable, line-of-sight, tropospheric scatter, and satellite communications support to all U.S. military units, Army, [Navy](#), [Marine](#), Air Force, and [Coast Guard](#). By 1970 the communications system was so highly refined that direct-distance dialing was possible even into the most remote areas.

Source: Thomas M. Rienzi, *Vietnam Studies: Communications-Electronics, 1962-1970*, 1972.

David L. Anderson

## FISHHOOK

The term "Fishhook" referred to a geographical region in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) approximately 50 miles northwest of [Saigon](#). American military and political officials had long suspected that [Central Office for South Vietnam](#) (COSVN), the central headquarters of the [Vietcong](#), was located in the Fishhook, although [Central Intelligence Agency](#) and other intelligence officers doubted. Nevertheless, the Fishhook was a sanctuary for Vietcong and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) forces attacking [South Vietnam](#), and in 1970 President [Richard Nixon](#) made the region the central thrust of the Cambodian "incursion" (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)). A major objective of the invasion of Cambodia was to destroy Vietcong and NVA supplies. On May 1, 1970, the invasion of Fishhook was underway, with tanks and [armored personnel carriers](#) of the [11th Armored Cavalry](#) crossing the border and helicopters dropping the [1st Air Cavalry](#) into the area. They established fire support bases throughout the Fishhook and then used those bases for search and destroy operations, although their major objective was to locate COSVN and major supply caches. During the second week of May the [25th Infantry Division](#) invaded the "Dog's Head," a region approximately 30 miles southeast of the Fishhook. The 9th Infantry also joined the invasion. President Nixon ordered American troops to confine themselves to military activity within 35 miles of the border. In the invasion, the U.S. troops captured 15 million rounds of ammunition, 143,000 rockets, 14 million pounds of rice, 23,000 weapons, 62,000 grenades, 5,500 mines, and 200,000 antiaircraft rounds. They also destroyed "The City", 11,700 Vietcong bunkers. Still, they did not locate COSVN, and the invasion triggered a storm of protest in the United States and the [Kent State](#) University disaster.

Sources: Samuel Lipsman et al., *The Vietnam Experience: Fighting for Time*, 1983; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979.

John E. Wilson

## **FLACK JACKET**

A heavy, fiberglass-filled vest worn by American soldiers in the field during the Vietnam War as a protection against shrapnel, the flack jacket became the public image of the American soldier. Because of the heat of the Southeast Asian climate, soldiers frequently wore the flack jacket while going sleeveless. The picture of the sleeveless, helmeted soldier, chest covered by the bulky flack jacket, was published or broadcast thousands of times during the Vietnam War.

Source: Al Santoli, *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-Three American Soldiers Who Fought It*, 1981.

## **FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC COMMAND**

Based in Hawaii, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific Command (FMFPAC) was responsible for all United States Marine forces in the Pacific theater and immediately subordinate to the United States [Navy's](#) commander in chief of the Pacific Command (CINCPAC), who in turn was responsible to Washington. Lacking authority to direct particular operations in Vietnam, FMFPAC nevertheless influenced the direction of the war and contributed to its planning, while its chief concerns included overseeing the provision of personnel and materiel to the theater's marines and thus providing the [III Marine Amphibious Force](#) with an administrative and logistical link to [CINCPAC](#). During the time of the Vietnam War, there were three FMFPAC commanders: Lt. General Victor H. Krulak (1964-68); Lt. General Henry W. Buse, Jr. (1968-70); and William K. Jones (1970-73).

Sources: Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, 1980; Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps*, 1984.

Dudley Acker



## **FLIGHT**

A basic organizational element in the United States Air Force is called a flight. A major usually commanded a flight during the Vietnam War, and it was composed of five aircraft and their crews. An air force [squadron](#) consisted of four flights.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## FONDA, JANE

Jane Fonda was born on December 21, 1937, in New York City. Her father, Henry, was a well-known actor and her mother, Frances Seymour, was a socialite who in a fit of depression committed suicide in 1950. Jane attended Vassar College for two years. She appeared in her first stage role opposite her father in a 1954 production of *The Country Girl* in Omaha, Nebraska. In 1958 she studied method acting under Lee Strasberg in the Actors' Studio. In 1964 Fonda went to France, where she met and married director Roger Vadim, who tried to mold her into a sex symbol like his previous wife, Brigitte Bardot. He starred her in *The Circle of Love* (1964) and *Barbarella* (1968). The publicity posters for these films were popular pinups for American soldiers in Vietnam. Later she regretted her nude scenes, explaining that she was ``reacting against the attitude of puritanism I was brought up with."

During 1966 and 1967 Fonda became disturbed at reports on French television that American planes were bombing Vietnamese villages and hospitals. Unhappy with her marriage and genuinely concerned about the war, she returned to the United States and worked with the Free Theater Association, which sponsored satirical antimilitary plays and skits in coffeehouses near bases all over America. She participated in demonstrations against the war throughout 1969 and 1970, and in February 1971 helped financially support the [Winter Soldier](#) Investigation in Detroit, where more than 100 veterans testified about [atrocities](#) and war crimes they had either committed or witnessed in Vietnam. Fonda won an Academy Award for Best Actress in 1971 for her role in *Klute*.

## FONTAINEBLEAU CONFERENCE OF 1946

When World War II ended and the Japanese withdrew from [Indochina](#), the Vietnamese, under [Ho Chi Minh](#), declared their independence while the French expressed the intention of returning and reestablishing their imperial apparatus and government. Ho Chi Minh wanted an independent Vietnam with [Cochin China](#), [Annam](#), and [Tonkin](#) united under one flag, and although the French at first seemed sympathetic to such an arrangement, with a united and independent Vietnam closely tied economically and politically with [France](#), they renounced the idea in the spring of 1946 when they established the Republic of Cochin China. Ho went to Paris in June 1946 to negotiate the future of Vietnam, and met with French officials in the Fontainebleau forest outside of Paris. At the conference, the new conservative French government under [Georges Bidault](#) favored a French Union of former colonies tightly connected politically to France, while Ho Chi Minh preferred a much more open arrangement similar to the [British Commonwealth of Nations](#). At the conference they also debated the problem of Cochin China, whose independence Ho viewed as a setback. The conference lasted for more than eight weeks, but Ho had no satisfaction on unification or independence. He initialed an agreement accepting a temporary modus vivendi, but resented the agreement for the rest of his life. His lifelong passion for unification of the country reached back to the Fontainebleau Conference of 1946.

Source: Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## FORCED DRAFT URBANIZATION

To deprive the [Vietcong](#) "fishes" of their civilian "sea," the United States developed a policy of depopulating rural areas and creating "free fire zones." This displaced population was relocated to "Strategic Hamlets," "New Life Hamlets," "Really New Life Hamlets," or became [refugees](#) in [Saigon](#), other cities, or the countryside. Other tactics contributing to rural depopulation included chemical warfare, destruction of Vietcong villages, and general fighting. Before the war approximately 15 percent of the South Vietnamese population lived in cities. By 1970, 40 to 50 percent lived in cities, especially Saigon, with 30 to 35 percent of them temporary or permanent refugees. Such massive uprooting of the population bode ill for "winning the [hearts and minds](#) of the people," especially among peasants committed to ancestor worship and family villages who saw leaving their land as a form of death. Samuel Huntington, in a 1968 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, used the term "forced draft urbanization" to describe the [counterinsurgency](#) tactic of rural population movement. One way to counter the rural revolutionary strategy of the Vietcong was to bring about an accelerated modernization of the Vietnamese economy. Supposedly the modernization of the Vietnamese economy, industrialization and urbanization, would destroy the rationale of [Mao Zedong's](#) "people's wars" (see [Wars of national liberation](#)). According to Huntington, "In an absent-minded way, the United States may well have stumbled upon the answer to 'wars of national liberation.' The effective response lies neither in the quest for a conventional military victory, nor in esoteric doctrines and gimmicks of counterinsurgency warfare. It is instead forced-draft urbanization and modernization which rapidly brings the country in question out of the phase in which a rural revolutionary movement can succeed."

Source: Samuel Huntington, "The Bases of Accommodation," *Foreign Affairs*, 46 (July 1968), 642-56.

Samuel Freeman

## FORD, GERALD RUDOLPH

Gerald R. Ford was born on July 14, 1913, in Omaha, Nebraska, and was raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He attended the University of Michigan on a football scholarship. After graduating he turned down several offers to play professional football and attended the Yale Law School. After graduating from Yale in 1940, Ford practiced law briefly until joining the [navy](#) after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Ford served on the aircraft carrier USS *Monterey* in the Pacific. He returned to Grand Rapids after the war to practice law, became active in Republican politics, and in 1948 won a congressional seat from the Fifth District in Michigan. Ford was a loyal member of the "Republican team" until 1973, when he was named vice president of the United States, filling a vacancy created by the resignation of [Spiro Agnew](#). House minority leader since 1965, Ford had a reputation as a party regular and a reliable "hawk" concerning the Vietnam War. After [Richard Nixon](#)'s resignation in August 1974, Gerald R. Ford became the thirty-eighth president of the United States.

Since 1974 the Paris Peace Accords had long been violated by both sides, and by autumn North Vietnam was stronger than the South. Still, Gerald Ford received overly optimistic reports from Ambassador [Graham Martin](#) and the Defense Attache Office. A Congress that was antiwar and controlled by Democrats limited aid to South Vietnam, preventing its forces from using U.S. equipment and bringing on political and economic woes. [North Vietnam](#) launched attacks late in 1974 and a major offensive in March 1975. [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) forces promptly collapsed. Ford requested \$300 million in emergency aid in late January and another \$722 million on April 10, alienating many congressmen with the "hawkish" rhetoric accompanying the request. Ford received only \$300 million for evacuating Americans and for use on "humanitarian purposes." As [South Vietnam](#) collapsed, President Ford declared that the war was "finished as far as America is concerned." North Vietnamese forces entered [Saigon](#) on May 1, 1975. Shortly thereafter, when the new [Khmer Rouge](#) government of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) captured the *Mayaguez* (see [Mayaguez incident](#)), an American merchant vessel, Ford sent in a contingent of United States Marines to rescue the crew, even though Cambodia had already agreed to release them. Both Ford and [Secretary of State Henry Kissinger](#) wanted to prove that although the United States had suffered a debacle in the Vietnam War, its resolve to maintain a position of strength in Asia was still strong. In the presidential election of 1976, Gerald Ford lost narrowly to Democrat Jimmy Carter.

Sources: Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*, 1983; Robert T. Hartman, *Palace Politics: An Inside Account of the Ford Years*, 1980; Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford*, 1979.

Robert W. Sellen

## FORRESTAL, MICHAEL VICENT

Michael V. Forrestal was born on November 26, 1927, in New York City. The son of James Forrestal, the first U.S. [secretary of defense](#), he became an aide to [W. Averell Harriman](#), working on Marshall Plan affairs, and in 1953 he received a law degree from Harvard. Forrestal practiced law in New York until 1962, when he joined the White House National Security staff. In late 1962 President [John F. Kennedy](#) sent [Roger Hilsman](#) and Forrestal on a fact-finding mission to [South Vietnam](#). Their "balanced" report, delivered early in 1963, struck a middle ground between the embassy's optimism and journalists' pessimism. Forrestal and Hilsman had serious reservations about [ARVN's](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) effectiveness, saw flaws in the [Strategic Hamlet](#) Program, felt [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) was increasingly isolated, and concluded that the United States and South Vietnam were "probably winning" but that the war would "probably last longer than we would like" and "cost more in terms of lives and money than we had anticipated." Their report reinforced doubt about the accuracy of official estimates of progress.

In August 1963, the first [Buddhist](#) crisis paralyzed Diem's government as ARVN generals plotted coups. Ambassador [Henry Cabot Lodge](#) requested instructions from Washington, but it was a weekend and most of Kennedy's key advisers were out of town. Forrestal drafted a response with Harriman and Hilsman stating the United States would no longer tolerate [Ngo Dinh Nhu's](#) influence over Diem and called for the removal of Nhu from power. Otherwise U.S. support for Diem would end. Kennedy approved the cable but was later enraged when he found out that Secretary of Defense [Robert McNamara](#) and [Central Intelligence Agency](#) director John McCone had not seen it before it was sent. During the Johnson administration, Forrestal was a member of the White House national security staff. Believing that the military's war reporting was grossly optimistic and supporting a negotiated settlement, Forrestal fell into disfavor with Johnson, was excluded from policy discussions, and resigned in 1965. He then returned to private law practice.

Sources: Nelson Lichtenstein, ed., *Political Profiles. The Kennedy Years*, 1976; Loren Baritz, *Backfire*, 1985; Michael Maclear, *The Ten Thousand Day War*, 1981.

Samuel Freeman

## FORWARD AIR CONTROLLER

The forward air controller, or FAC, had the responsibility for calling in air strikes on enemy positions during the Vietnam War. Usually flying a low-level, low-speed aircraft, such as a single-engine Cessna 0-1 Bird Dog spotter plane, the FAC identified [Vietcong](#) or North Vietnamese positions and relayed the information to attack aircraft, helicopter [gunships](#), or high-altitude bombers. On the ground, a forward air controller would call in similar information.

Source: Terrence Maitland and Peter McInerney, *The Vietnam Experience: A Contagion of War*, 1983.

## FOUR-PARTY JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION

One of the provisions of the [Paris Peace Accords](#) was establishment of a Four-Party Joint Military Commission (FPJMC) to supervise the [withdrawal](#) of American and allied troops from [South Vietnam](#), implement a [prisoner-of-war](#) (POW) exchange, and maintain the existing cease-fire. At the time there were still more than 50,000 American, [South Korean](#), [Australian](#), and [New Zealand](#) troops in South Vietnam and 587 American POWs in North Vietnamese prisons. The FPJMC formally came into existence at the end of January 1973 and consisted of representatives from South Vietnam, [North Vietnam](#), and the United States, and the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)), or [Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam](#). The FPJMC dissolved on March 29, 1973. By that time the American and allied forces had been removed from South Vietnam and 587 American POWs had been released. The cease-fire, of course, had not been maintained because the South Vietnamese, Vietcong, and North Vietnamese were still struggling for power.

The problem of American military personnel missing-in-action had not been resolved, and on March 29, 1973, a Four-Party Joint Military Team (FPJMT) replaced the dissolved commission, with the same representation. The FPJMT was far less successful than the FPJMC had been. The Vietcong and North Vietnamese, no longer bothered by any American military presence, refused to cooperate. Not until 1974 did the United States receive any real information, and that came only with the release of two dozen bodies. The U.S. delegation to the FPJMT withdrew from [Saigon](#) on April 10, 1975, just before the occupation of the city by North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces.

Sources: Stuart A. Harrington, *Peace With Honor*, 1984; Walter Scott Dillard, *Sixty Days to Peace*, 1982; Alan Dawson, *55 Days: The Fall of South Vietnam*, 1977. FOUR-PARTY JOINT MILITARY TEAM See Four-Party Joint Military Commission



## FOURTH MARINE DIVISION

The Fourth Marines fought at Kwajalein, Saipan, and Tinian, and landed the first waves at Iwo Jima's southern beachhead in 1945. Disbanded in early 1946 but later reactivated as part of the [Marine Corps](#) Organized Reserve, the Fourth Marine Division was almost completely manned and trained in 1965, and in early February 1966 Major General [Robert E. Cushman, Jr.](#), took command of a staff of twenty-nine officers and sixty-nine enlisted men at Camp Pendleton, California, and began planning for mobilization should the Pentagon call the division to active duty. The [Johnson](#) administration, however, gave scant consideration to mobilizing reserve units to fight in Vietnam and in March reactivated the [5th Marine Division](#), with its ranks to be filled from the expanding pool of 80,000 volunteers and 19,000 draftees allotted to the marines that year.

Sources: *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1974; J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 1982.

Dudley Acker

## FRAGGING

During the Vietnam War "fragging," the murder of overzealous officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOS), was estimated to have taken the lives of 1,016 officers and NCOs. The term arose because the most popular method of eliminating the victim was to roll a fragmentation grenade into his hooch or tent. A fragmentation grenade was preferred because it left no evidence; the murder weapon was destroyed along with the victim. Fragging was not new to the Vietnam War; the mutiny of Roman legions at Pannonia in A.D. 14 was marked by the murder of unpopular officers, for example. There have been recorded incidences of troops murdering unpopular officers throughout the history of warfare. In his book *A Soldier Reports*, General [William Westmoreland](#) concluded that fragging "increases when a sense of unit purpose breaks down and esprit de corps fails and when explosives and weapons are loosely controlled."

Except for a brief period in 1967-68 where soldiers in the [Mekong Delta](#) pooled their money to pay the person who killed a marked officer or NCO, there were few fragging cases until 1969. In 1969 there were 96 documented assault cases; that number increased to 209 in 1970 and peaked in 1971 with 333 confirmed fragging incidences and 158 possible fraggings. For the most part, fragging was almost entirely confined to the army.

By 1969 the war was winding down for American soldiers, who were being pulled out and replaced by South Vietnamese troops in President [Richard Nixon](#)'s attempt to [Vietnamize](#) the war. Many American soldiers failed to see the purpose of dying in a war that their government was presumably abandoning. Many units at the [platoon](#) and [squad](#) level were refusing to obey orders that they perceived to place their lives in peril. It was this attitude of fear and frustration combined with drug use, racial tension, and the inherent inequality of the military (which afforded some special privileges because of rank) that led to fragging. In some cases, especially in rear areas, there were cases of fragging without apparent provocation. The reason could be as trivial as forcing a soldier to wear his [flack jacket](#), which could be perceived as harassment. Often the fragging victim would be warned first by placing a grenade pin by the entrance of his tent or attacking him with a smoke grenade. If the warning was not heeded, a fragmentation grenade would be used. Fragging was a method soldiers could use to control their officers, who would have to consider the possibility when giving orders. One second lieutenant refused an order to advance on a hill; when his men heard this, they removed a bounty they had earlier placed on his head. In the end fragging had become one symptom of a demoralized army.

Sources: Eugene Linden, "Fragging and Other Withdrawal Symptoms," *Saturday Review* (January 1972), 12-17; Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle*, 1985.

Mike Dennis

## FRANCE

France became involved in Vietnam because of the European missionary movement in Asia, which coincided with rising interest in trade. In the seventeenth century, Frenchmen founded both a Society of Foreign Missions and an East India Company, two vehicles of *la mission civilisatrice*, the "civilizing mission" to non-Westerners. In the 1780s a bishop's private expedition restored to power the [Nguyen](#) family, traditional Vietnamese rulers, in the person of [Gia Long](#), who tolerated Christianity but whose xenophobic heir spurned Western overtures and repudiated toleration. Incidents in the 1840s and 1850s, combined with religious and business pressure, led to expeditions and the conquest of the [Mekong Delta](#). After the Franco-Prussian War Frenchmen were divided, some arguing that imperialist adventures merely distracted France from recovering Alsace and Lorraine, while others held that colonies could compensate for such losses while providing raw materials and markets necessary to industry. The latter won, and an 1883 expedition took all of Vietnam amid the disorder following Emperor Tu Duc's death. France even abolished the name of Vietnam, dividing it into [Cochin China](#), [Annam](#), and [Tonkin](#). Resistance continued into the twentieth century, but Frenchmen refused to recognize the depth of Vietnamese nationalism.

Their colonial administration was "direct," using Frenchmen instead of ruling through indigenous institutions. This meant a large French presence, ways of governing which did not fit Vietnam, and Vietnamese mostly in low-level positions. A few converts collaborated in return for nominal high status. French law destroyed traditions and was itself discredited by the jailing of political prisoners without trials. France also shifted the fiscal burden to the Vietnamese, imposing taxes and lucrative monopolies on alcohol, rice, and opium. Frenchmen and their allies took land, creating a growing and discontented peasantry, and ruthlessly exploited labor on rubber plantations and in mines. The global depression in the 1930s made the situation worse yet, but on the eve of World War II some 40,000 *colons* ignored signs of unrest. Their rules for governing were "a lot of subjugation, very little autonomy, a dash of assimilation."

French surrender in 1940 produced a "cataclysm" in [Indochina](#), undermining the myth of invincibility. Vichy officials, unable to act, were reduced to orating about France as a colonial power. The Free French saw the empire as an integral part of France, but could not defend it. French forces in Asia were totally inadequate to resist Japanese advances, which began in June 1940 with the demand that France stop the flow of war supplies through Haiphong to China. Governors had to accept such demands while trying to delay the erosion of French control, in July 1941 having to grant bases in south Vietnam for 50,000 Japanese troops. During the war [Japan](#) encouraged Vietnamese nationalism and, in March 1945, took control of the colony in a coup. Emperor [Bao Dai](#) was persuaded to declare independence and French rule had ended. Frenchmen, however, refused to recognize the fact.

When Japan surrendered in August 1945, the [Vietminh](#) made its play for power, taking [Hanoi](#) and organizing a national congress. Having effective independence, it proclaimed the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) on August 29. Seeking to restore French greatness, de Gaulle in Paris was committed to recovering Indochina and refused to guarantee its independence. He and his officials were ignorant of Vietnam and did not listen to those who understood it. At Japan's surrender he sent what forces he could, shaping future events by his choice of leaders. Jean Sainteny, son-in-law of former governor Albert Sarraut, was a *colon*; High Commissioner Admiral [Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu](#) was rigid; General Jacques Leclerc was ready to fight. The arrival of British troops in the south and the rearming of liberated French soldiers in the north gave Hanoi's *colons* overconfidence; they attacked Vietnamese and violence grew. By the end of 1945 Leclerc had regained some control in the south, but the Vietminh ruled the north. It was able to hold elections, even clandestinely in Leclerc's area. D'Argenlieu's new government in [Saigon](#) included Vietnamese, but the latter had accepted French culture and were unable to rally their countrymen. Yet [Ho Chi Minh](#), the Vietminh leader, found no support among French Communists, the United States supported France, and the USSR appeared to be indifferent. On March 6, 1946, he

consented to French troops in the North in exchange for independence within the new French Union. But a trip to Paris for confirmation was humiliating; the independence was not real, and he returned to Hanoi to meet militants' anger. That anger and French intransigence made peace impossible. Premier [Georges Bidault](#) allowed d'Argenlieu to use a skirmish at Haiphong late in 1946 as an excuse for a full-scale attack on the Vietminh. Violence escalated, leading to [Vo Nguyen Giap](#)'s December 19 call for resistance. The First Indochina War had begun.

Amid changing French cabinets and offers to Ho which would mean his surrender, officials in Paris paid no heed to Leclerc's warning to deal with Vietnamese nationalism. Instead, they bullied Bao Dai into accepting obviously phony independence while ignoring Ho's offer of a neutralist Vietnam. Both sides turned to the battlefield. Vietminh forces operated as guerrillas, and with [Mao Zedong](#)'s conquest of [China](#), aid became readily available. As French [casualties](#) and costs mounted with no victory in sight, so did discontent at home. Replacement of commanders, even the appointment of renowned General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, was of no avail. A deadlock broke when Giap trapped French forces at [Dien Bien Phu](#), near [Laos](#), where their supply lines were long and his short. A siege ended in French surrender on May 7, 1954, and ironically, the next day delegates from nine countries met at Geneva to begin talks to end the war.

Having suffered over 90,000 casualties on top of the disasters of World War II, the French were sick of fighting. Diplomatic deadlock ended when Pierre Mendes-France, dedicated to ending the war, became premier and accepted the [Geneva Accords](#). These meant a cease-fire, a temporary division of Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel, and nationwide elections to be held in 1956. The French era in Vietnam had officially ended.

Sources: Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, 2 vols., 1967; John Cady, *The Roots of French Imperialism in Indochina*, 1954.

Robert W. Sellen

## FRANCO-VIETNAMESE ACCORDS OF 1946

After World War II, with pressure building in [Indochina](#) for independence as well as anti-imperialist sentiment in [France](#), representatives of France, [Tonkin](#), and [Annam](#) signed an agreement on March 6, 1946. The agreement recognized the independence of Tonkin and Annam and admitted them to the French Union, but French troops were not withdrawn. France scheduled elections in [Cochin China](#) to measure public opinion there about unification with Tonkin and Annam. The Franco-Vietnamese Accords of 1946 were followed by the Fontainebleau Conference.

Sources: James J. Cooke, *France 1789-1962*, 1975; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## FREE FIRE ZONES

Free fire zones, officially designated "specified strike zones" after 1965, were described by the Defense Department as "specifically designated areas" which had been cleared "by responsible local Vietnamese authority for firing on specific military targets." They were "known enemy strongholds" and "virtually uninhabited by noncombatants." The use of free fire zones was an attempt to structure the war along conventional military lines, with enemy forces and friendly forces occupying distinct, separate areas. When forces of the enemy had been thus isolated, they would become the targets of massive American air strikes or [artillery](#) fire.

The flaw in the logic of the free fire zone concept was that the isolation of enemy forces was accomplished by definition rather than actual physical separation from friendly inhabitants. Longtime strongholds of the [Vietcong](#) were simply defined as being free of noncombatants. Thus anyone residing in these areas was assumed to be the enemy, regardless of sympathies or noncombatant status. In localities not identifiable as Vietcong strongholds, free fire zones were created by removing noncombatants from the area. Loudspeaker announcements, aerial leaflet drops, and sweeps by infantry units through affected hamlets were techniques used, sometimes in combination, to warn inhabitants to evacuate. Forced relocations to create free fire zones impacted such large numbers of civilians that a senior Agency for International Development official characterized them as "mass movements." Such relocation efforts were rarely effective. Some Vietnamese villagers simply could not read the warning leaflets and others were reluctant to abandon ancestral homes. Nevertheless, once inhabitants had been warned and evacuation efforts made, the affected locality was assumed to be cleared of friendly inhabitants and was designated as a free fire zone. As a military tactic, the use of free fire zones proved only marginally effective. Much more significant was the impact on American public opinion, where it became synonymous with the indiscriminate use of American artillery and [air power](#), and thus helped fuel popular doubts concerning America's role in Vietnam.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Raphael Littauer and Norman Uphoff, eds., *The Air War in Indochina*, 1972.

Sean A. Kelleher

## FREE KHMER (KHMER ISSARAK, KHMER SEREI)

The Khmer Issarak (Free Khmer) were anti-French Cambodian guerrillas formed in the western provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap (Angkor) with Thai encouragement. Although loosely affiliated with the [Vietminh](#), the Khmer Issarak were non-Communist. The significance of the Issarak in opposing French colonialism is debated, but they were considerably weaker than the Laotian [Pathet Lao](#). In 1954 at Geneva, the Vietminh tried vainly to have Pathet Lao and Khmer Issarak delegations seated, but both were excluded because of Soviet and [Chinese](#) pressure.

Toward the end of World War II, at the request of occupying Japanese forces, Prince Sihanouk named Son Ngoc Thanh as foreign minister and then premier. With Japan's defeat he attempted to seize power, only to be arrested and exiled by the French, who restored Sihanouk as the nominal head of state. Son Thanh joined the Khmer Issarak in [Thailand](#), but the Issarak dissolved with Cambodia's independence (see Kampuchea). Son Thanh then formed the Khmer Serei (also meaning "Free Khmer"), an anti-Sihanouk, anti-Communist guerrilla group with operations based in [South Vietnam](#). Throughout the 1960s the Khmer Serei recruited from non-Communist Phnom Penh elites frustrated by Sihanouk's autocratic rule. Sihanouk's popularity in the countryside, however, made the Khmer Serei, like the [Khmer Rouge](#), little more than a nuisance for his regime.

Late in 1969 Serei units in South Vietnam "defected" to Sihanouk's army, part of a [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA) plan to undermine his government, according to Sihanouk. There were contacts between the CIA and the Khmer Serei and American military assistance and training for Khmer Serei troops, but it has not been established that the CIA was behind the defection or Sihanouk's overthrow in 1970. After the coup, [Lon Nol](#) embraced the Khmer Serei, but Son Ngoc Thanh chose initially to remain in the field, receiving Lon Nol's permission to attack Vietcong/National Liberation Front [sanctuaries](#) in eastern Cambodia. Son Ngoc then recruited forces among South Vietnam's Cambodian population. They were trained by [Special Forces](#) in South Vietnam and flown into Cambodia. Better trained than the Cambodian army and a potential threat to Lon Nol, they were committed to major battles until decimated and eventually wiped out.

Sources: William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *End of a War*, 1969; Wilfred Burchett, *The Second Indochina War*, 1970; Ben Kiernan, "How [Pol Pot](#) Came to Power: A History of Communism in Kampuchea, 1930-1975," Ph.D. diss., Monash University, 1983.

Samuel Freeman

## FREE WORLD MILITARY FORCES

The term "Free World Military Forces" was used to describe those allied nations providing assistance to the [Republic of Vietnam](#) between 1959 and 1975. Including the United States, forty nations provided military and/or economic assistance to South Vietnam. The peak [troop](#) commitments from those nations were as follows: 10 from Spain, 30 from Taiwan (see [Chiang Kai-shek](#)), 550 from [New Zealand](#), 1,576 from the [Philippines](#), 7,672 from [Australia](#), 11,568 from [Thailand](#), 48,869 from [South Korea](#), and 540,000 from the United States.

Source: Stanley Robert Larsen and James Lawton Collins, Jr., *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 1975.



## FREEDOM BIRDS

“Freedom Birds” (“big iron birds”) took GIs home to the United States. These were passenger aircraft, most under contract from private charter air services such as World Airways, which ferried troops to and from Vietnam. To Vietnam vets, these “freedom birds” represented everything desirable in life, home, family, friends, safety, and peace. Soldiers with time left in Vietnam looked upon them longingly and painfully. To those going home, they were the most beautiful sight on earth. Passengers bound for Vietnam were usually neatly dressed, quiet, and somber. A sense of dread and impending doom permeated the plane. Soldiers going home usually had a disheveled look and many were still dressed in combat fatigues. But the mood was one of relief and celebration.

The rapid passage home has been seen as a contributing force to post-traumatic stress syndrome. In previous wars soldiers had time during the long ocean voyage home to debrief themselves in conversations with other GIs. This enabled them to deal with their war experiences, and allowed them time to prepare for returning home and resuming civilian life. For some Vietnam veterans the return trip was so quick they literally were in the jungle one day and sitting at home the next, producing profound cultural shock.

Sources: Gloria Emerson, *Winners and Losers*, 1976; Rick Eilert, *For Self and Country*, 1983; John Wheeler, *Touched with Fire*, 1984.

Samuel Freeman

## FRENCH EXPEDITIONARY CORPS

The French Expeditionary Corps was first sent to Vietnam in the 1880s, ostensibly to protect French Catholic missionaries. Although there were isolated uprisings periodically, [France](#) colonized and controlled [Indochina](#) for over sixty years with a few thousand soldiers, 70,000 in all of Indochina when World War II began. In 1940 the French Expeditionary Corps fought a brief, bloody war with [Japan](#), but then sat out the war after France surrendered to Germany. At the war's end, [Great Britain](#) quickly rearmed French forces. Although this upset Vietnamese hoping for independence, they were more concerned about their ancient enemy's presence (the Chinese) in northern Vietnam. Consequently, [Ho Chi Minh](#) permitted 15,000 French troops to enter northern Vietnam to hasten the Chinese withdrawal. France meanwhile moved to reestablish its Indochina colonies.

Relations between Ho Chi Minh and France deteriorated steadily. On December 6, 1946, the French navy bombarded Haiphong harbor and the First Indochina War began. Initially, less than 20,000 French troops confronted fewer than 50,000 [Vietminh](#) guerrillas, but the numbers changed rapidly. French forces increased to 115,000 men in 1947 and 178,000 in 1954 (including about 30,000 Vietnamese who had been integrated into the French Expeditionary Corps). These forces were augmented by 339,000 indigenous forces. Vietminh strength also grew tremendously, to approximately 375,000 by 1954.

In December 1948, General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny was appointed commander in chief of the French Expeditionary Corps and high commissioner in Indochina. He established the [Vietnamese National Army](#) which became the largest part of the [French Union Forces](#). He predicted victory in fifteen months, and in 1950 enjoyed a victory over General [Vo Nguyen Giap](#). Upon de Lattre's death in January 1952, General Raoul Salan became commander in chief. His command was short-lived but significant, for he reoriented French strategy from maintaining static defensive positions to conducting mobile warfare. He was replaced in 1953 by General Henri Navarre (see [Navarre Plan](#)), who was perceived as better able to implement this strategy. Navarre had few hopes of winning and simply hoped to keep [Laos](#) and arrange a negotiated settlement. But when Giap invaded Laos, Navarre overextended himself by committing troops to [Dien Bien Phu](#). Sensing a chance to lure Giap into a pitched battle, Navarre countermanded his mobile warfare strategy and committed the heart of French forces to a remote, poorly defensible valley surrounded by mountains. Contrary to expectations, the Vietminh hauled in heavy [artillery](#) and in 1954 defeated Navarre's French Expeditionary Corps at Dien Bien Phu, destroying the French Empire in Indochina.

Sources: [Bernard Fall](#), *Viet Nam Witness*, 1966, and *Hell in a Very Small Place*, 1966; Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1940-1955*, 1966.

Samuel Freeman

## FRENCH UNION FORCES

As World War II began, [France](#) held all of [Indochina](#) with about 70,000 poorly equipped troops. Neither the numbers nor the equipment had changed much by the beginning of the First Indochina War. Trying first to hold its colonies and then to establish (at least in name) autonomous nations within the French Union, France increased the size of the [French Expeditionary Corps](#) (FEC) and, in 1948, established native armies, the largest of which was the [Vietnamese National Army](#) (VNA). FEC and native forces comprised the French Union Forces.

By the spring of 1954, when General Navarre (see [Navarre Plan](#)) ordered the French stand at [Dien Bien Phu](#), French Union Forces totaled over 517,000 men, with 178,000 being members of the FEC, and the remaining 339,000 being native Indochinese. Building an army of over 300,000 from scratch in a wartime situation was no small task. Since effective combat leadership cannot be quickly produced, most VNA forces were led by French officers. While this greatly improved their fighting qualities, it hindered French efforts to convince the Vietnamese that France had abandoned its colonialist intentions. It also dramatized the problem of building independent governments (assuming France was truly willing to do so, which is debatable at best).

The French developed a plan later echoed by American military strategists. French units tied down in pacification, communication, transportation, and static defense postures would be replaced with newly trained VNA units, producing a twofold benefit. Battle-seasoned French soldiers could then carry the fight to the [Vietminh](#) on a larger and more intense scale, and increasing the presence of the Vietnamese officials among the people would improve the Vietnamese sense of independence and will to resist "Communist aggression."

Lack of time and resources doomed the plan to failure. Furthermore, the better units of the VNA were integrated into the FEC to compensate for its shortage in manpower, again undercutting the illusion of Vietnamese independence. Despite limited time and resources, however, the Vietnamese National Army and Vietnamese units in the FEC accorded themselves well in battle, often demonstrating fighting skills and heroism equal to those of their French comrades.

Sources: [Bernard Fall](#), *Viet-Nam Witness, 1953-66*; *Hell in a Very Small Place*, 1966; *Street Without Joy*, 1961; Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1940-1955*, 1966.

Samuel Freeman

## FULBRIGHT, JAMES WILLIAM

J. William Fulbright was born on April 9, 1905, in Sumner, Missouri. He graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1925 and then attended Oxford University as a Rhodes scholar. Fulbright took a law degree from the George Washington University Law School in 1934, and then taught law at George Washington and the University of Arkansas between 1934 and 1939. Fulbright became president of the University of Arkansas in 1939, and in 1942 was elected to Congress. In 1945 he began a stay in the U.S. Senate which lasted for the next thirty years. In 1959 Fulbright became chairman of the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#). Although he helped [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) shepherd the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) through Congress in 1964, Fulbright soon became an outspoken critic of U.S. policy in Vietnam. Convinced that there was no such thing as "monolithic communism," Fulbright accused Johnson of confusing Communist aggression with nationalism in Vietnam and urged an American [withdrawal](#). Throughout 1967 and 1968 Fulbright held public hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, giving critics of American policy in South-east Asia a high-level forum for expressing their views. Fulbright was defeated in the Arkansas Democrat primary for the Senate in 1974 and returned to the private practice of law.

Sources: Tristram Coffin, *Senator Fulbright: Portrait of a Public Philosopher*, 1966; J. William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power*, 1966; *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985.

## I CORPS

Also known as "Eye" Corps, I Corps was one of the four major military and administrative units of the South Vietnamese government in the 1960s and early 1970s. In particular, I Corps was the Central Vietnam Lowlands administrative unit and consisted of the five northernmost provinces: [Quang Tri](#), Thua Thien, Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai. The headquarters of I Corps was located in [Da Nang](#). The major cities in I Corps were [Hue](#), Quang Tri City, Da Nang, and Chu Lai. During the Vietnam War, the major military units of the [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) were the [1st Airborne Division](#), [1st Division](#), 2nd Division, 3rd Division, and the 20th Tank [Regiment](#). I Corps was also known as Military Region 1. During the course of the Vietnam War, the following U.S. military units fought in I Corps: [9th Marine Amphibious Brigade](#), [Third Marine Division](#), [III Marine Amphibious Force](#), [1st Marine Division](#), [Americal Division](#), [XXIV Corps](#), [1st Cavalry Division \(Airmobile\)](#), [101st Airborne Division](#), First Brigade, [Fifth Infantry Division](#), and the [82nd Airborne Division](#).

Sources: Harvey H. Smith, et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## I FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

Because of the increasing commitment of U.S. combat units in 1965, [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) created a provisional field force in [II Corps](#) on August 1, 1965. It was known as Task Force ALPHA. Field Force, Vietnam grew out of Task Force ALPHA, and it was renamed I Field Force Vietnam on March 15, 1966. It was a corps-level military organization, with operational control over U.S. and Allied forces in II Corps, but it did not carry the corps name because it was functioning inside an existing South Vietnamese corps zone. I Field Force Vietnam was headquartered at [Nha Trang](#). It left Vietnam on April 30, 1971, and was replaced by the Second Regional Assistance Command. The following individuals commanded I Field Force Vietnam: Lt. General Stanley R. Larsen (March 1966 to March 1968); Lt. General William R. Peers (March 1968 to March 1969); Lt. General Charles Corcoran (March 1969 to March 1970); Lt. General Arthur Collins, Jr. (March 1970 to January 1971); and Major General Charles P. Brown (January 1971 to April 1971).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## IV CORPS

IV Corps was the southernmost of the four major military and administrative units of [South Vietnam](#) in the 1960s and early 1970s. Its headquarters were located at [Can Tho](#) in the [Mekong Delta](#). Also known as Military Region 4 (MR 4), IV Corps was the fourth allied tactical combat zone. It consisted of the following provinces: Chau Doc, Kien Phong, Kien Tuong, Hau Nghia, Kien Giang, An Giang, Vinh Long, Dinh Tuong, Long An, Chuong Thien, Phong Dinh, Vinh Binh, Kien Hoa, Go Cong, An Xuyen, Bac Lieu, and Ba Xuyen. The 7th and 9th [ARVN Divisions](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) played prominent roles in IV Corps military activities. The United States [Ninth Infantry Division](#) operated widely throughout IV Corps, attacking [Vietcong](#) units in their strongholds in the [Plain of Reeds](#), the U Minh Forest, and the Seven Mountains areas.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.





## **G**

“GUNS AND BUTTER”

GALBRAITH, JOHN KENNETH

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GENEVA ACCORDS OF 1954

GENOVESE, EUGENE DOMINICK

GIA LONG

GO TELL THE SPARTANS

GOING AFTER CACCIATO

GOLDBERG, ARTHUR JOSEPH

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GRAVEL, MIKE

GREAT BRITAIN

GREAT SOCIETY

GREENE, WALLACE MARTIN, JR.

GROUP

GRUENING, ERNEST HENRY

GUAM CONFERENCE OF 1967

GULF OF TONKIN INCIDENT (1964)

GULF OF TONKIN RESOLUTION

GUNSHIPS

THE GREEN BERETS

THE GREEN BERETS



## **``GUNS AND BUTTER''**

The term ``guns and butter" was used frequently during the Vietnam War to refer to the problem of financing domestic reform programs while conducting an expensive war. President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)'s major preoccupation was his [Great Society](#) plan to extend the net of social welfare assistance to every needy group in American society while eliminating racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination. But the attempt to maintain government spending on behalf of Great Society reforms, when combined with the enormous cost of the Vietnam War, contributed to the severe inflationary cycle of the 1970s and early 1980s. Between 1965 and 1968, when the Vietnam War assumed larger and larger dimensions, defense spending, measured in constant dollars, increased by 43 percent while government transfer payments to individuals grew by 39 percent. That was ``guns and butter" policy. The unemployment rate fell to 3.8 percent in 1966, while the rate of inflation went from 1.7 to 2.9 percent. By 1969 the unemployment rate had dropped again, this time to 3.6 percent, but the inflation rate had gone to 5.4 percent. To deal with rising prices, Congress enacted a 10 percent income tax surcharge in 1968, but the \$6 billion in savings was offset by lenient monetary policies. The money supply grew by 2.8 percent in 1966 but by 6.4 percent in 1967 and 7.3 percent in 1968. By then the inflation problem was set in place.

President [Richard Nixon](#) came into the White House in 1969 committed to reducing inflation, but he too was baffled by the problem. Defense spending as a percentage of the gross national product began to subside, from 9.5 in 1968 to 5.0 percent in 1978, but the reduction was replaced by concomitant increases in spending for Medicare, Social Security, retirement, and unemployment programs. In August 1971, President Nixon took desperate measures to control inflation by imposing wage and price restrictions and devaluing the dollar. But over the next two years, the value of the dollar dropped by more than 25 percent, increasing the prices of American imports as well as the inflation rate. The wage and price controls were ineffective. The Arab oil embargo of 1973 and subsequent dramatic increases in the price of OPEC oil only exacerbated the problem, creating the spiraling prices of the 1970s.

Source: Kenneth Bacon, ``Vietnam's Legacy," *Wall Street Journal*, April 30, 1985.

## GALBRAITH, JOHN KENNETH

John Kenneth Galbraith was born on October 15, 1908, on a farm near Iona Station, Ontario, [Canada](#). He graduated from the University of Toronto in 1931 and received a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from the University of California at Berkeley in 1934. Galbraith began teaching at Harvard in 1934, and has remained there except for a stint at Princeton (1939-40), government work during World War II, and the editorial board of *Fortune* magazine (1943-48). He was also U.S. ambassador to India from 1961 to 1963. A prolific writer, Galbraith is the author of *The Affluent Society* (1958), *The New Industrial State* (1967), and *Money* (1977), among other books. A vigorous opponent of the war in Vietnam, Galbraith wrote *A Moderate's View of Vietnam* in 1966, arguing an enclave policy of [withdrawal](#) to the coastal and urban areas which the United States could hold with ease. Once those regions were secure, the United States should open negotiations with [Ho Chi Minh](#). In 1967 Galbraith repeated those ideas in his book *How to Get Out of Vietnam*. Also in 1967, Galbraith became the chairman of Americans for Democratic Action, and lobbied against the war from that forum. He endorsed the presidential candidacy of Senator [Eugene McCarthy](#) in 1968.

Sources: John Kenneth Galbraith, *A Life in Our Times: Memoirs*, 1981; John S. Gamba, *John Kenneth Galbraith*, 1975.

Kim Younghaus

## **GAVIN, JAMES**

James Gavin was born on March 22, 1907, in New York City. He enlisted in the United States Army in 1924 but the next year was allowed to enroll at West Point, where he graduated in 1929. Gavin rose through the ranks and during World War II won a Silver Star, became an expert in [airborne](#) warfare, and earned the rank of lieutenant general. In 1961 President [John F. Kennedy](#) named Gavin ambassador to [France](#), a post he held until 1963. During the Vietnam War, Gavin became one of the few American military figures who voiced real misgivings about U.S. policy there. In 1966 Gavin testified before the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#) and urged the Johnson administration to adopt the "enclave strategy", stop escalating the war and confine American troops to easily defensible positions in the major cities and coastal locations. In 1968 Gavin published a book, *Crisis Now*, and maintained illusions he could seek the presidency, but those hopes remained impossible. He continued to urge a de-escalation of the conflict.

Sources: *Who's Who in America, 1982-1983*, 1:1174, 1982; James Gavin, *Crisis Now*, 1968; Thomas Powers, *Vietnam, The War at Home*, 1984.

## GENEVA ACCORDS OF 1954

After the defeat of French forces at the Battle of [Dien Bien Phu](#) in 1954, an international convention met in Geneva, Switzerland, between May 8 and July 21, 1954, to determine the political future of [Indochina](#). Delegates from the United States, the [Soviet Union](#), the [People's Republic of China](#), [Great Britain](#), [France](#), India, the State of [Vietnam](#), the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#), [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) attended the meetings. For a time the conference tried to work out some method of reuniting North and [South Korea](#), but all efforts failed. What the conference did manage to do was draft a number of complicated political arrangements for Vietnam. The American delegation was headed by [W. Bedell Smith](#).

The accords divided Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel into two countries: South Vietnam (Republic of Vietnam) and North Vietnam (Democratic Republic of Vietnam). With the division in place, the Geneva Accords imposed a cease-fire throughout Vietnam as well as cease-fire provisions for the peaceful withdrawal of French forces from North Vietnam and [Vietminh](#) forces from South Vietnam. New foreign [troop](#) placements were prohibited throughout Vietnam, and all troops were to be withdrawn from Laos and Cambodia. Finally, provisions were made for free elections in both North and South Vietnam in 1956, with the goal of reunification and elimination of the artificial barrier at the seventeenth parallel. An International Supervisory Commission composed of representatives from India, [Canada](#), and Poland was established to monitor compliance with the accords. Although the United States did not sign the accords, it did agree with them and promised to avoid the use of military force in the area and to support the principle of self-determination throughout Indochina. South Vietnamese representatives also neglected to sign the accords but nevertheless expressed public support for its major provisions. By not signing the agreement, the United States had the advantage of appearing supportive without being bound by its provisions. Two years after the Geneva Conference, when it appeared that the followers of [Ho Chi Minh](#) had majority support in North as well as South Vietnam, the United States scuttled the free elections and threw all of its economic and military support behind the South Vietnamese regime.

Sources: Robert F. Randle, *Geneva 1954*, 1969; Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*, 1983.

## GENOVESE, EUGENE DOMINICK

Eugene Genovese was born on May 19, 1930, in Brooklyn, New York. He received a B.A. from Brooklyn College in 1955 and the M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1956 and 1959. Genovese taught history at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute from 1958 to 1963. He joined the faculty of Rutgers University in 1963 and published his first book, *The Political Economy of Slavery*, in 1965. Known as a "neo-Marxist," Genovese came to national political attention in 1967 and 1968 when he protested American involvement in the Vietnam War and described the [Vietcong](#) as a nationalistically inspired people trying to liberate their homeland from foreign domination. The ensuing controversy caused Genovese political problems at Rutgers, and he accepted a position at Sir George Williams University in Montreal in 1967. In 1969 he joined the faculty of the University of Rochester. He subsequently became one of the most well-known American historians, not just because of his politics but because of the quality of his research and writing. Genovese's books *The World the Slaveholders Made* (1969) and *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974) helped reshape the way American historians viewed slavery and the South.

Source: *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985.

## GIA LONG

Born in 1762 as Nguyen Phuc Anh, he became emperor of Vietnam in 1802 and adopted the name of Gia Long. With the help of French missionary Pigneau de Behaine, Nguyen Anh escaped Vietnam during the [Tay Son Rebellion](#) and was the only surviving heir to the [Nguyen](#) throne. In 1787, Nguyen Anh secured French assistance in crushing the Tay Son Rebellion. In return he promised unrestricted trade for the French in [Cochin China](#). After years of struggle, Nguyen Anh's forces defeated the Tay Son and seized control of Vietnam in 1802. Nguyen Anh then adopted the name Gia Long and established the Nguyen dynasty, which lasted until the abdication of [Bao Dai](#) in 1955. Gia Long moved the capital of Vietnam from [Hanoi](#) to [Hue](#), constructed public granaries and a working postal system, repaired the Old Mandarin Road, and brought [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) under control as a vassal state. Gia Long died in 1820.

Sources: *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary*, 1983; Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, 1958.



## GO TELL THE SPARTANS

Based on Daniel Ford's novel, *Incident at Muc Wa*, *Go Tell the Spartans* is perhaps the best film yet on the Vietnam War. Set in 1964 when the U.S. effort was still "advisory," it captures significant issues of the war honestly and accurately. Unlike [The Deer Hunter](#) and [Apocalypse Now](#), *Go Tell the Spartans* presents the racism of American involvement without being racist. Rather than some film producer's imaginings of what the war was like, it presents a view Vietnam veterans, especially advisers, can relate to as truthful. The film opens with a [Vietcong](#) suspect enduring water torture at a [Regional Forces-Popular Forces](#) (RF/PF) base camp. Against his better judgment, the senior American adviser is ordered to occupy a former French position at Muc Wa where over 300 French soldiers had been killed by the [Vietminh](#) in 1953. The film then centers on the RF-PF forces and their American advisers who quickly are besieged and overrun. The significant issues captured include American contempt for the French; the role of civilians as Vietcong sympathizers; the patriotic naivete of American forces; the arrogance of senior U.S. officers; the way in which ground was taken one day and given up the next; the emphasis on [psychological operations](#), intelligence reports, and high-tech warfare; the sober realization of some experienced American officers and NCOs who were totally frustrated by the war; the corruption and incompetence of South Vietnamese officials; the mixed quality of South Vietnamese forces; the brutality and heroism of both South Vietnamese and American forces; and the sheer terror of night combat. Released in 1978, *Go Tell the Spartans* starred Burt Lancaster as Major Asa Barker, the commander of a Military Advisory and Assistance Group in Penang, [South Vietnam](#).

Source: *Magill's Survey of Cinema. English Language Films*, 1981.

Samuel Freeman

## GOING AFTER CACCIATO

*Going After Cacciato* is the title of Tim O'Brien's 1978 Vietnam War novel. The central character is Specialist Fourth Class Paul Berlin, who leads a cast of soldiers and Vietnamese civilians (Doc Peret, Sarkin Aung Wan, Corson, Oscar Johnson, Eddie Lazutti, and Stink Harris) on a surrealistic pursuit of Private Cacciato, who leaves their base camp in Quang Ngai Province and goes AWOL. Cacciato then leads his pursuers on a trancelike trek across the Laotian border, through Burma, India, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Austria, East and [West Germany](#), and [France](#) into Paris. On the way they expose the absurdity of the war.

Sources: Tim O'Brien, *Going after Cacciato*, 1978; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## GOLDBERG, ARTHUR JOSEPH

As U.S. ambassador to the United Nations (UN) from July 1965 to April 1968, Goldberg believed the Vietnam War could end only through negotiations, not continued application of force. Born in 1908 in Chicago, he worked his way through Northwestern's undergraduate and law schools and began practicing corporate and labor law in 1929. After service in the OSS during World War II, Goldberg became general counsel of the United Steelworkers and the CIO (the AFL-CIO after the 1955 merger) until tapped by [President Kennedy](#) to serve as secretary of labor in 1961.

Kennedy appointed him to the Supreme Court the following year, and Goldberg voted with the Warren Court's "liberal" bloc until his lifelong interest in foreign affairs and concern with the direction of the war persuaded him to accept [President Johnson](#)'s offer of the UN post in July 1965. Uninformed by the White House on many critical decisions and thus often operating at odds with Johnson's Vietnam policy, Ambassador Goldberg focused his attention on finding a way to begin peace talks between Washington and [Hanoi](#). Although he failed to win administration accommodation to his views in that effort, Goldberg did participate in the March 1968 sessions of the "[Wise Old Men](#)," who reassessed Vietnam policy, recommended a bombing halt, and persuaded Johnson to announce a de-escalation at the end of the month.

Goldberg left the administration in April 1968, and Johnson responded with a cold letter that failed to praise the ambassador for his UN efforts. Goldberg then publicly broke with U.S. policy and later spoke out vigorously at the October 1969 [Moratorium Day](#) demonstrations in Washington and other rallies.

Sources: [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; *New York Times*, 1964-1975; *Guide to the U.S. Supreme Court*, 1979.

Dudley Acker

## **GOLDWATER, BARRY MORRIS**

Barry M. Goldwater was born in Phoenix, Arizona, on January 1, 1909. He attended the University of Arizona for a year after leaving high school but then worked in the family department store business. Goldwater saw active duty with the Army Air Corps as a pilot during World War II in the Asian theater. A conservative Republican, Goldwater was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1952, and in 1964 he won the Republican nomination for president. It was an inauspicious time for conservative Republicans, and [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) defeated Goldwater in a landslide. During the election, Goldwater had adopted a very ``hawkish" position on the U.S. role in Vietnam, and throughout the course of the war he argued that the United States should be willing to make a major military commitment, whatever it took, short of nuclear weapons, to support American soldiers in the field or should withdraw from the conflict. Because of the presidential nomination, Goldwater did not run for reelection to the Senate in 1964, but he was reelected in 1968, 1974, and 1980. During his Senate career, Goldwater was a vigorous supporter of a strong military effort in Vietnam and the government of South Vietnam. In the closing stages of the conflict, Goldwater called for large-scale bombing of North Vietnam and increased financial assistance to South Vietnam. In 1986, Barry Goldwater decided not to seek reelection, and he retired from public life in 1987.

Source: Barry M. Goldwater, *With No Apologies: The Personal and Political Memoirs of United States Senator Barry Morris Goldwater*, 1979.

## GRAVEL, MIKE

Mike Gravel was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, on May 13, 1930. He spent one year at American International College before entering the United States Army in 1951, where he served in Germany and [France](#). Gravel graduated from Columbia University in 1956 with a degree in economics and moved to Alaska. He won a seat in the Alaska House of Representatives in 1962, and he defeated Senator [Ernest Gruening](#), one of the earliest critics of the Vietnam War, in the Democratic primary. Ironically, *Time* called Gravel "hawkish" in the campaign. Gravel won the general election and eventually became an increasingly outspoken critic of the Vietnam War with the reputation as a Senate maverick. In 1971 Gravel tried unsuccessfully to read the [Pentagon Papers](#) in the Senate chamber. Then, on June 29, 1971, Gravel convened a late session of the Building and Grounds subcommittee which he chaired. For the next three hours he read from the Pentagon Papers, sometimes crying and sobbing. Many senators opposed his actions. Subsequently, he arranged with Beacon Press to publish *The Senator Gravel Edition of the Pentagon Papers* in four volumes. Gravel also made public a copy of National Security Study Memorandum No. 1, which [Daniel Ellsberg](#) had provided him.

Gravel's opposition to the war continued. He opposed extension of the [draft](#) and advocated equal air time from the media to counter the Nixon administration's position on the war. He worked to organize a War No More group. Gravel criticized [Vietnamization](#) as "a plan to keep on our involvement for decades until we win." In 1972 Gravel tried unsuccessfully to have the Senate vote on a declaration of war against North Vietnam and to persuade the Senate to publish, in the *Congressional Record*, a secret [Nixon](#) administration study of U.S. bombing effectiveness in Vietnam. Gravel won reelection in 1974, but he lost the senatorial primary in 1980 to Clark Gruening, Ernest's grandson.

Sources: *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1789-1971, 1972*; *New York Times*, November 7, 1980.

James Hindman

## GREAT BRITAIN

Ever since 1945 the British have adopted a policy of relative noninvolvement with [Indochina](#). They were preoccupied with a contraction of their own responsibilities east of the Suez Canal; were bogged down in a [counterinsurgency](#) effort in Malaysia; were undergoing substantial reductions in defense expenditures because of economic problems; were entertaining hopes of expanding trade with Communist-bloc nations; and were dealing with a powerful left-wing movement at home which resented military adventures abroad. All these problems precluded active British intervention in the problems of Vietnam.

In 1945, in order to free American troops for the anticipated invasion of [Japan](#), the British took the Japanese surrender in Indochina, disarmed the enemy, and reestablished the prewar supremacy of the French. The British commander, Major General Douglas Gracey, actually used, however, a combined force of British and Japanese troops to fight the [Vietminh](#), who were preparing to resist any reimposition of Western control over Vietnam. Still, on March 5, 1946, the British disengaged from the area. Eight years later, when President [Dwight Eisenhower](#) sought British support for an American air strike at [Dien Bien Phu](#), Prime Minister Winston Churchill refused, pragmatically arguing that air strikes would accomplish little since most of Indochina was already under Vietminh control. He preferred a diplomatic solution.

In 1954, Great Britain cochaired the Geneva Conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)) on Vietnam, where they supported the American proposal for a division of Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel, with reunification elections to be held in two years. Privately, the British hoped, like the Americans, that the seventeenth parallel would become a recognized and permanent international boundary, with the South remaining non-Communist, out of the control of the Vietminh. When it appeared obvious that such elections would endorse the demands of [Ho Chi Minh](#) and the Vietminh, Britain supported the U.S. decision to stall and delay those elections.

As the American involvement escalated during the [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) administration, Prime Minister Harold Wilson refused all American requests for military support. The British sense that the United States would not prevail against the [Vietcong](#) persisted. Sensitive to the "special relationship" that Britain had with the United States in the postwar era, but also harassed by strongly leftist elements in his own Labor party who vocally condemned the war, Wilson maintained a delicate balance between 1964 and 1970. His government gave verbal support to American policy in Southeast Asia generally, while privately calling for an end to the bombing of North Vietnam and a negotiated settlement. Wilson's conservative successor, Edward Heath, continued the policy of limited support but no formal participation.

Britain did serve, however, as an important conduit for contact between the United States and the [Soviet Union](#). Harold Wilson consulted frequently with Soviet leaders. The United States frequently used the British government as a sounding board, and to either convey negotiating positions to or to try to bring pressure on North Vietnam through the Soviet Union. Such contacts availed little because the United States greatly exaggerated the amount of influence the Soviet Union had with the North Vietnamese.

Sources: Harold Wilson, *A Personal Record: The Labour Government, 1964-1970*, 1971; Max Beloff, *The Future of British Foreign Policy*, 1969; J. H. Weiner and J. H. Plumb, *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire, 1689-1971. A Documentary History*, 1972; George Rosie, *The British in Vietnam: How the Twenty-five Years War Began*, 1970.

Gary M. Bell

## GREAT SOCIETY

The term "Great Society" became the historical description of the domestic reforms of the [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) administration. In his 1964 State of the Union address, Johnson declared a "war on poverty," and in an address at the University of Michigan in May 1964, Johnson spoke of "the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society but upward to the Great Society." The Great Society, he argued, "rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed." The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the antipoverty campaign of the mid-1960s, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968 were all part of the Great Society. Eventually, the Great Society reforms, which were Johnson's favorites, ran up against the demands of the Vietnam War, which Johnson hated. His decision to continue funding domestic reforms along with increased military funding without a tax increase fueled inflation and made him even more politically vulnerable. Lyndon Johnson's Great Society died in the jungles of Vietnam.

Sources: Lawrence S. Wittner, *Cold War America. From Hiroshima to Watergate*, 1974; Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, 1976.

## GREENE, WALLACE MARTIN, JR.

During his tour as commandant of the [Marine Corps](#) (1964-68), Greene became a strong public advocate of U.S. policy in Vietnam. Born in Vermont in 1907, he attended the University of Vermont for a year before entering Annapolis and taking a Marine Corps commission in 1930. In the thirties he served aboard ship, on Guam, and in [China](#), then advanced rapidly as a staff officer in the Pacific, receiving the Legion of Merit for planning the Marshall Islands invasions in 1944. After the war he served as assistant chief of staff, [Fleet Marine Force, Pacific Command](#) (1948-50), then on the staff of the Marine Corps Schools for two years before graduating from the National War College in 1953. Greene next served on the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)) for two years, becoming assistant commander of the Second Marine Division in 1955 and commander of Parris Island and Camp Lejeune in 1957. When [President Kennedy](#) selected him to succeed David M. Shoup in 1963, Greene had just completed four years as chief of staff of the Marine Corps.

With his troops committed to defensive tactics around [Da Nang](#), [Phu Bai](#), and Chu Lai in the late spring of 1965, Greene publicly pushed for an expanded combat role, one in which marines would not be "sitting around on their diddybox." Thereafter Greene spoke optimistically of U.S. prospects in Vietnam, promoting the [Combined Action Platoons](#), yet acknowledging that pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) would take about a decade to accomplish. He retired in January 1968, on the eve of the [Tet Offensive](#).

Sources: Robert Moskin, *The United States Marine Corps Story*, 1982; Allen R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, 1980.

Dudley Acker



## GROUP

A group in the United States Army is a system of command controlling several [battalions](#). Subordinate to a [brigade](#), a group is usually part of support commands. Most commonly they are commanded by a colonel.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## GRUENING, ERNEST HENRY

Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1959 when Alaska became a state, Gruening entered the Senate with a diverse background. Born in New York in 1887, he studied medicine but spent much of his career as a journalist, working as an editor and writer for a number of publications, including the *Nation* magazine. A major interest was Latin America, and he crusaded against U.S. military intervention and what he saw as financial exploitation in Central and South America. In the mid-1930s, he turned to government service, eventually being appointed governor of Alaska by President [Franklin Roosevelt](#). He became a leader of the Alaskan statehood movement.

In the Senate, Gruening, a liberal Democrat, was one of the first to question U.S. involvement in Vietnam. In a speech on March 10, 1964, Gruening deplored the waste of American lives and resources "in seeking vainly in this remote jungle to shore up self-serving corrupt dynasties or their self-imposed successors, and a people that has demonstrated that it has no will to save itself." He said that "all Vietnam is not worth the life of a single American boy" and that the loss of any American lives in Vietnam would some day "be denounced as a crime." Later that year he joined Senator [Wayne Morse](#) in casting the only votes against the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#), which Gruening said subverted the Constitution by giving the president "warmaking powers in the absence of a declaration of war." He remained in the Senate through 1968 and consistently opposed appropriations to support the war. He blamed his defeat by [Mike Gravel](#) in the 1968 Democratic primary on his opposition to the war. Ironically, as a Senator, Gravel eventually became an outspoken opponent of the war. After leaving the Senate, Gruening coauthored a book, *Vietnam Folly*, calling for an "end of the folly of America's intervention and the return by the United States to principles which it has long cherished." Gruening died on June 26, 1974.

Sources: Joseph C. Goulden, *Truth Is the First Casualty*, 1969; Ernest Gruening and Herbert B. Beaser, *Vietnam Folly*, 1968; *New York Times*, June 27, 1974.

Hoyt Purvis

## GUAM CONFERENCE OF 1967

In 1967 President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) decided to hold a high-level conference on Guam. Guam was secure yet near [Saigon](#) symbolized American Pacific interests, and had represented American power because of the [B-52s](#) stationed there. Johnson, [Secretary of State Dean Rusk](#), [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#), and a number of military advisers and reporters made the 16,000-mile trip to the March 20-21, 1967, conference. Ambassador [Henry Cabot Lodge](#), Premier [Nguyen Cao Ky](#), and President [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) came from Saigon. They met at the Officers' Club on Nimitz Hill.

The president called the meeting for several reasons. He wanted to demonstrate American resolve in continuing the war effort and to introduce new personnel to the South Vietnamese leaders. In particular, [Ellsworth Bunker](#) would replace Lodge as ambassador; Eugene Locke, a presidential friend and ambassador to Pakistan, would become Bunker's assistant; [Robert Komer](#) would become the new deputy for [Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support](#) to direct the pacification effort (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)); and General [Creighton W. Abrams](#) would become [William Westmoreland](#)'s deputy and eventual successor. At the conference, Westmoreland presented his request for 200,000 more troops, but the president, pressured by McNamara to be cautious, agreed to only 55,000 new troops. Ky and Thieu brought the new South Vietnamese constitution, just completed by the Constituent Assembly, to satisfy Johnson that they were making progress toward democracy. Ky also called for increased bombing [sorties](#) against [sanctuaries](#) and supply routes in [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). The president refused, and the Guam Conference became little more than a public relations event.

Source: *New York Times*, March 21-23, 1967.

James Hindman

## GULF OF TONKIN INCIDENT (1964)

By August 1964, the United States [Navy](#) was supporting [South Vietnam](#)'s fight against [North Vietnam](#) in two programs. Operations Plan (OPLAN) 34 involved South Vietnamese naval and [marine](#) forces raiding North Vietnamese coastal installations with American advice and logistical support. [Operation DeSoto](#) involved American naval vessels patrolling international waters off the coast of North Vietnam to observe the North Vietnamese Navy and probe the North Vietnamese radar capabilities by electronic surveillance. The destroyer [USS Maddox](#), patrolling 28 miles off the North Vietnamese coast as part of DeSoto, came under attack by three North Vietnamese torpedo boats on August 2. An OPLAN 34 raid against the torpedo boat base at Loc Chao had taken place on the night of July 31, and this probably precipitated the attack on the American destroyer. The *Maddox* fired warning shots, but the torpedo boats continued attacking by launching two torpedoes. These were avoided and fire from the destroyer damaged one of the torpedo boats. Four Vought F-8E Crusaders, on patrol from the carrier [USS Ticonderoga](#), came to assist the *Maddox*. The destroyer [division](#) commander on board the *Maddox* ordered the aircraft to attack the now-retiring torpedo boats. Several strafing runs with 20mm cannons and rocket attacks with 5-inch Zuni rockets resulted in the sinking of the already-damaged torpedo boat. The destroyer [USS C. Turner Joy](#) joined the *Maddox* and the carrier *USS Constellation* proceeded to the area from Hong Kong. The two destroyers retired to an area 100 miles off the coast, and combat air patrols began.

On the evening of August 4, in very poor weather conditions, the *Maddox* identified five high-speed radar contacts as North Vietnamese torpedo boats. The details of the engagement are somewhat confused, but American naval personnel were convinced they were being attacked, reporting several torpedo wakes while maneuvering in the darkness. The *Ticonderoga* sent two Douglas [A-1 Sky-raiders](#) to assist, and between the aircraft and destroyers two torpedo boats were reported destroyed and two damaged. [President Johnson](#) ordered retaliatory air strikes against four North Vietnamese torpedo boat bases on August 5. Aircraft from the *Ticonderoga* and *Constellation* destroyed twenty-five boats and severely damaged the support facilities. The boats destroyed amounted to one-half of the total North Vietnamese torpedo boat strength. Two American aircraft were shot down by anti-aircraft fire and two were damaged. An [A-4](#) pilot became the first American prisoner of war in North Vietnam. On August 7, 1964, both houses of Congress passed the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#).

Sources: Tom Carhart, *Battles and Campaigns in Vietnam*, 1984; *Jane's Fighting Ships 1976-77*, 1978; Joseph C. Goulden, *Truth Is the First Casualty: The Gulf of Tonkin Affair, Illusion and Reality*, 1969.

Charles Angel

## GULF OF TONKIN RESOLUTION

On August 4, 1964, the [USS Maddox](#) and its companion destroyer, the [USS C. Turner Joy](#), were ordered to the Gulf of [Tonkin](#) for electronic surveillance of [North Vietnam](#). At 9:12 P.M. the Combat Information Center (CIC) reported the detection of fast-closing targets, apparently the repeat of an attack two days before by three North Vietnamese torpedo boats. The sonar man reported that torpedoes were in the water. At that time the *C. Turner Joy* opened fire, but the *Maddox* found no target, not even the *C. Turner Joy*. Before midnight the *Maddox* was ordered to open fire, but Patrick N. Parks, standing in the main gun director, refused to do so until he heard from the *C. Turner Joy*. The *C. Turner Joy* turned out to be the proposed target of the *Maddox*.

The attack by the North Vietnamese boats on the *Maddox* on August 2, 1964, and the supposed engagement between the *Maddox*, *C. Turner Joy*, and North Vietnamese vessels on August 4, 1964, marked the turning point in the Vietnam War. In retaliation U.S. bombers swept over North Vietnam for the first time, attacking patrol-boat bases and large oil-storage depots.

President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) found the [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#) politically useful because it justified a large-scale American attack on North Vietnam, boosted South Vietnamese morale, and rallied support back at home. On August 7, 1964, Congress passed a resolution stating that "the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." The resolution also gave the president authority to provide military assistance to any member or protocol nation of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty. The power of the resolution would expire when the president had decided that the security of the area was reasonably assured. It passed by a 416-0 vote in the House and 88-2 in the Senate. President Johnson then used the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution as his congressional authority to conduct the war in Vietnam. Six years later President [Richard Nixon](#) used the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to justify the invasion of [Laos](#) (see [Lam Son 719](#)) and [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)). In the ensuing political uproar during 1970, Congress repealed the Resolution.

Sources: Joseph C. Goulden, *Truth Is the First Casualty: The Gulf of Tonkin Affair, Illusion and Reality*, 1969; Eugene Windchy, *A Documentary of the Tonkin Gulf on August 2 and August 4, 1964 and Their Consequences*, 1971.

Terry Martin

## GUNSHIPS

During the Vietnam War, the United States Air Force used gunships to attack North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) supply lines as well as to provide close air support for American and [ARVN](#) forces (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam). The air force converted three aircraft into fixed-wing gunships: C-47 Gooneybird aircraft were equipped with 7.62mm Gatling machine guns and redesignated [AC-47](#), also known as ``Puff the Magic Dragon"; AC-119 Flying Boxcars were also equipped with 7.62mm Gatling guns; and [C-130](#) Hercules planes were converted to [AC-130](#) gunships by the addition of 7.62mm Gatling guns, Vulcan Gatling guns, and 40mm Bofors cannons.

Sources: William W. Momyer, *Airpower in Three Wars*, 1978; Jack S. Ballard, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia: Fixed Wing Gunships, 1962-1972*, 1982. GVN See Republic of Vietnam

## THE GREEN BERETS

Written in 1965 when the Vietnam War was just underway at its escalated level, but released in 1968 when the [antiwar movement](#) was at its peak, *The Green Berets* starred John Wayne as the Green Beret (see [Special Forces](#)) colonel, David Janssen as a jaded journalist, and Jim Hutton as the naive, big-hearted American GI out to save the world. The film was loaded with World War II cliches, with the [Vietcong](#) portrayed as universal savages and the Americans and South Vietnamese characterized as the epitome of goodness and mercy. Of all the films of the Vietnam era, none was a better reflection of U.S. policies in 1965, at the beginning of the conflict.

Source: *Magill's Survey of Cinema. English Language Films*, 1981.

## THE GREEN BERETS

Robin Moore's 1965 novel *The Green Berets* was a naive but temporarily popular novel about the American war effort in [Vietnam](#). In the book, U.S. [Special Forces](#) troops appear as the "good guys" out to rescue South Vietnam from its own incompetence and the immoral aggression of the [Vietcong](#) and the North Vietnamese. South Vietnamese army officers appear cowardly and venal and [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) troops unreliable and quick to desert when facing combat. The Vietcong and North Vietnamese are depicted as uniformly venal and evil, bent on torture, murder, and atrocity. The book also celebrates the genius of American technology and the virtues of American democracy and capitalism. In short, *The Green Berets* is a "World War II" novel about the Vietnam war. By 1966, as the [antiwar movement](#) gained momentum in the United States, Robin Moore's novel quickly lost credibility, becoming almost a ludicrous caricature of U.S. policy in Vietnam.

Sources: Robin Moore, *The Green Berets*, 1965; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.





## H

``HEARTS AND MINDS" (Phrase)

``HELICOPTER VALLEY"

``HOT PURSUIT" POLICY

HAI VAN PASS

HAIG, ALEXANDER MEIGS, JR.

HAIPHONG HARBOR, MINING OF

HALBERSTAM, DAVID

HALPERIN, MORTON

HAMBURGER HILL

HAMLET EVALUATION SURVEY

HANOI

HANOI HANNAH

HANOI HILTON

HARKINS, PAUL DONAL

HARRIMAN, WILLIAM AVERELL

HARTKE, VANCE

HATFIELD, MARK ODUM

HATFIELD-McGOVERN AMENDMENT

HAYDEN, THOMAS EMMETT

HEARTS AND MINDS

HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS

HELICOPTER WAR

HELMS, RICHARD McGARRAH

HIGH NATIONAL COUNCIL

HILSMAN, ROGER

HILSMAN-FORRESTAL REPORT

HMONG

HO CHI MINH

HO CHI MINH CAMPAIGN (1975)

HO CHI MINH CITY

HO CHI MINH TRAIL

HO THI THIEN

HOA HAO

HOANG VAN HOAN

HOFFMAN, ABBIE

HONOLULU CONFERENCE OF 1965

HONOLULU CONFERENCE OF 1966

HOOPES, TOWNSEND

HOP TAC

HUE

HUE, BATTLE OF (1968)

HUE, BATTLE OF (1975)

HUMPHREY, HUBERT HORATIO

HUYNH PHU SO

HUYNH TAN PHAT



## ``HEARTS AND MINDS" (Phrase)

In 1965 President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) paraphrased John Adam's description of the American Revolution: ``The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people." About [Vietnam](#), Johnson said: ``So we must be ready to fight in Vietnam, but the ultimate victory will depend on the [hearts and minds](#) of the people who actually live out there." Eventually, however, the United States did not win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people, and the war became a conflict over the hearts and minds of the American people.

Military apologists argued that the war was lost because Washington misperceived it as a guerrilla/civil war rather than conventional war instigated, directed, and ultimately fought by North Vietnam. To them the emphasis on pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) was misplaced, resulting in misallocation of resources away from fighting the war, inappropriate strategy aimed at ferreting out guerrilla bands when main-force, hard-core [North Vietnamese Army](#) units were the real problem, allowing invading forces [sanctuaries](#) which guaranteed they could never be defeated, and a media focus which caused Americans to misunderstand and lose patience with the war. According to Harry G. Summers, the war was not in ``the hearts and minds of the people but the guns and bullets of the North Vietnamese Army."

Most observers, however, accepted the counterarguments of military and pacification professionals like William Corson (*The Betrayal*, 1968) and Cincinnatus (*Self-Destruction*, 1981), who argued that ``every strike that levels a village or cuts a road or kills innocent civilians contributes to the ultimate victory even if the guerrillas lose both ground and men. For all such military operations, by their very nature and destructiveness, alienate the people among whom they occur." That sentiment was shared by people like [CIA](#) director [William Colby](#) and pacification expert [Robert Komer](#). Robert Taber (*The War of the Flea*, 1965) said there ``is only one way of defeating an insurgent people who will not surrender, and that is extermination. There is only one way to control a territory that harbours resistance, and that is to turn it into a desert. Where these means cannot, for whatever reason, be used, the war is lost."

But unwillingness to understand, much less respect, either pacification or the Vietnamese people, permeated the American command structure. American military personnel were either paternalistic or racist in their attitudes toward the Vietnamese; if U.S.-ARVN military violence did not turn the Vietnamese peasants against the United States, those attitudes surely did. Ultimately the war became a battle for the American people's ``hearts and minds." The Vietnamese could refuse defeat. They understood that Americans would tire of a war they did not and could not understand, that eventually enough body bags would return, that there were limits to the resources the United States could squander in Vietnam. When that day came, the Americans would leave, just as had the [Chinese](#) and French before them.

Sources: Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counter-insurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972.

Samuel Freeman

## ``HELICOPTER VALLEY''

``Helicopter Valley" was a nickname given to the Song Ngan Valley in 1966. Located in [Quang Tri](#) Province just south of the [Demilitarized Zone](#), Song Ngan Valley became famous on July 15, 1966, when a [squadron](#) of CH-46 helicopters carried the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines of the [Third Marine Division](#) as part of [Operation Hastings](#) to stop North Vietnamese [infiltration](#) of [South Vietnam](#). The third wave of CH-46s fell into a disaster when two of them collided and crashed. Another CH-46, desperately trying to avoid the collision, crashed into the jungle. North Vietnamese snipers then destroyed a fourth CH-46. Panic-stricken marines trying to escape the crashed helicopters were slashed to death by the whirling blades. Among marines, the Song Ngan Valley carried the name ``Helicopter Valley" after those incidents on July 15, 1966.

Sources: Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience: American Takes Over, 1965-1967*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975.

## **``HOT PURSUIT" POLICY**

In 1965, when the war in Vietnam escalated, the North Vietnamese increased the [infiltration](#) of men and supplies along the Sihanouk Trail out of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) and the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) out of [Laos](#). American military officers in Vietnam proposed a blockade of Sihanoukville (Phnom Penh) and military assaults on North Vietnamese and [Vietcong sanctuaries](#) inside Cambodia. They also wanted approval to impose the ``hot pursuit" policy, allowing American and South Vietnamese military units to follow retreating enemy forces across the border into Cambodia. At the time the Cambodian government, under the direction of [Norodom Sihanouk](#), was officially neutral, and the U.S. State Department was reluctant to widen the conflict. Consequently, President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) did not approve the Sihanoukville blockade, the attack on the sanctuaries, or the ``hot pursuit" policy. The debate became a moot question, however, in 1970 when President [Richard M. Nixon](#) approved the massive bombing (see [Operation Menu](#)) and military ``incursion" into Cambodia (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) to attack Vietcong and North Vietnamese sanctuaries.

Sources: Terrence Maitland and Peter McInerney, *The Vietnam Experience: A Contagion of War*, 1983; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979.

## HAI VAN PASS

Highway 1 (see ["Street Without Joy"](#)), the main supply route along the north-south axis in South Vietnam, connected the port cities of Chu Lai and [Da Nang](#) with [Hue](#), [Quang Tri](#), and the areas south of the [Demilitarized Zone](#). Highway 1 ran through the [Hai Van Pass](#) at the boundary between Quang Nam and Thua Tien provinces. The supply line was critical to the American war effort, and over the years the army invested considerable effort in keeping it open, particularly when bad weather made aerial resupply of American troops impossible.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.



## HAIG, ALEXANDER MEIGS, JR.

Alexander Meigs Haig, Jr., was born on December 2, 1924. He graduated from West Point in 1947, and for a time in 1948 he worked on General [Douglas MacArthur](#)'s staff in Tokyo. There he learned a lifelong disdain for journalists and for civilian authority. After [Korea](#), Haig spent a decade in obscure army posts, and in 1961 he earned a master's degree in international relations at Georgetown University. The theme of his master's thesis was "the role of the military man in the making of national security policy." It advocated a military czar permanently at the president's side advising on military challenges.

In 1963 Haig was chosen by Joseph Califano to work as military assistant to Secretary of the Army [Cyrus R. Vance](#). When Vance was appointed deputy [secretary of defense](#) under [Robert S. McNamara](#) in 1964, Haig remained with him, becoming deputy special assistant to both the secretary and deputy secretary of defense. He became McNamara's right hand, responsible for liaison between his office and the president's office. In 1964 McNamara and his aides were steadily involved in plans for covert raids against [North Vietnam](#) and in readying U.S. escalation. He was an advocate of strong military presence in [South Vietnam](#).

Haig arrived in Vietnam in July 1966 as G-3, an operations planning officer for the [1st Infantry Division](#) at Lai Khe just north of [Saigon](#). While there he was awarded three Distinguished Flying Crosses. As commander of the First [Battalion](#) of the 26th Infantry Regiment, he led a surprise assault on [Ben Suc](#), a [Vietcong](#) refuge in the [Iron Triangle](#). In June 1967 Haig came home, was promoted to colonel, and received command of a cadet regiment at West Point. Late in 1968 he got a call from [Henry Kissinger](#) to join the White House staff as his military adviser on the [National Security Council](#). Among other duties, he screened all intelligence information to the president. Although few people knew his name, insiders began to recognize Haig as one of the most important people in Washington, D.C. By 1970 he had acquired direct access to President [Richard M. Nixon](#) as well as the authority to conduct presidential briefings in Kissinger's absence. On September 7, 1972, Nixon promoted Haig over the heads of 240 senior officers to four-star general rank. At the same time he was designated vice-chief of staff of the United States Army.

Haig played a central part in the final settlement with [Hanoi](#) by convincing Nixon that his survival in office was more important than how Vietnam came out. In the peace negotiations of October 1972, Kissinger and Haig fought a war of telegrams over the settlement. Haig thought Kissinger was going too far and giving up too much. Haig advocated the 1972 Christmas bombings (see [Operation Linebacker II](#)) of Hanoi and Haiphong and personally delivered the ultimatum to [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) to accept the peace agreement. In May 1973 Haig became permanent assistant to President Nixon. His power was so extensive during the [Watergate](#) crisis that Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski called him the country's 37 1/2 th president.

Remarkably, Haig emerged from Watergate unscathed. Journalist Jules Witcover described his actions in getting Nixon to resign as a bloodless presidential coup. Haig continued as a [national security adviser](#) to President [Gerald Ford](#) and then returned to power in Washington as [secretary of state](#) in the first Reagan administration. In 1986 Haig was giving serious consideration to making a run for the Republican presidential nomination in the election of 1988.

Source: Roger Morris, *Haig: The General's Progress*, 1982.

Frances Frenzel

## HAIPHONG HARBOR, MINING OF

Haiphong is the major port and third largest city in [North Vietnam](#). The bulk of North Vietnam's imports arrive through the port of Haiphong, which is connected by railroad with [Hanoi](#). During the Vietnam War, Haiphong was a major supply depot and was heavily bombed from 1965 until 1968, when bombing was curtailed by [President Johnson](#). During the attacks, much of the population was evacuated and the industry dispersed.

In 1972, the [Nixon](#) administration sparked a major controversy when the president ordered the renewal of bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong (April 16) and the [mining of Haiphong Harbor](#) as well as other harbors and inland waterways in North Vietnam (May 9). Also, U.S. naval forces intensified raids against coastal installations and put into effect a naval blockade of the North Vietnamese coastline. In a televised speech to the nation on May 8, 1972, Nixon justified his escalation of the air and sea war as necessary to cut off the flow of supplies to North Vietnamese troops fighting in the South and to protect the lives of American forces still in Vietnam. In addition, Nixon contended that the raids and the minings were intended to pressure the North Vietnamese government into resuming serious negotiations to achieve peace in Vietnam.

In Congress, most Republican conservatives defended the president's actions, but moderate Republicans joined with the Democratic majority's criticism of the escalation. Resolutions were introduced to end all U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia (see [War Powers Resolution, 1973](#)). Across the country, Nixon's actions revived the dormant [antiwar movement](#), and protest demonstrations were renewed.

Source: *Facts on File*, April-May 1972.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## HALBERSTAM, DAVID

As a reporter for the *New York Times*, Halberstam won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of Vietnam, where he was a correspondent, 1962-64. He was a penetrating critic of the war, but in the early stages of American military involvement he said that Vietnam was a legitimate part of America's global commitment and as "a strategic country in a key area, it is perhaps one of only five or six nations in the world that are truly vital to U.S. interests." He said, "We want stability for these people, whereas the Communists actively promote inconstancy. So, we cannot abandon our efforts to help these people." However, he insisted that Americans should understand the difficult and complex nature of the struggle in Vietnam, and he told the truth by American officials. These were the themes of his book, *The Making of a Quagmire*, published in 1965. Halberstam and some of his colleagues reported on the deteriorating military situation and the problems facing the South Vietnamese government. Halberstam was criticized for his reporting of these developments in Vietnam and along with other journalists was subjected to pressure from both Washington and the Vietnamese government. [President Kennedy](#) suggested to *Times* publisher Arthur O. Sulzberger in October 1963 that Halberstam should be removed from the Vietnam assignment because he was "too close to the story." Sulzberger refused, although Halberstam did leave Vietnam in 1964.

Born in New York in 1934, Halberstam was a Harvard graduate who joined the *Times* in 1960. In 1967 he left the *Times*. He wrote for *Harper's* magazine, and later wrote several acclaimed books including *The Best and the Brightest*, a critique of American policy in Vietnam and of American policymakers.

Sources: David Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire*, 1965, and *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972.

Hoyt Purvis

## HALPERIN, MORTON

Morton Halperin was born in Brooklyn in 1938. He graduated from Columbia University in 1958 and earned a Ph.D. in political science from Yale in 1961. After working for the Center for International Affairs at Harvard between 1960 and 1966, Halperin went to work for the [secretary of defense](#). The next year he became deputy assistant secretary of defense. Halperin was widely recognized as an expert in arms control, having written a number of books on the subject, including *Nuclear Weapons and Limited War*, 1960; *Strategy and Arms Control*, 1961; *A Proposal for a Ban on the Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 1961; *Arms Control and Inadvertent General War*, 1962; and *Limited War in the Nuclear Age*, 1963. Halperin quickly emerged as a critic of American policy in Vietnam, especially such domestic political imperatives as fear of appearing soft on communism, which brought about the escalation of the war. He also observed that secrecy hampered full discussion of controversial policies and possible consequences, which led [Richard Nixon](#) into the 1970 invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) and the fire storm of protest following it. Halperin attributed the unrestrained use of herbicides and other chemical substances in Vietnam to the failure of policymakers to be precise in describing the limitations to be imposed on the use of such chemicals, as well as the tendency of those responding to the pressures of war to make maximum use of any weapon available.

In 1969 Halperin became a senior staff member in the [National Security Council](#) and a senior fellow of the Brookings Institute. Since 1974, Halperin has continued in his role as a critic of policy-making in Washington. He has concentrated on the growing discrepancy between the administration's desire that controversial policies and decisions be kept from the public in the name of national security and the public's right to know about such policies.

Sources: *Contemporary Authors*, vols. 9-12, 1974; *American Men of Science: The Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 7, 1968; Morton H. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 1974.

Joanna D. Cowden

## HAMBURGER HILL

Hamburger Hill was the nickname for Dong Ap Bia, a mountain in the [A Shau Valley](#) area of [South Vietnam](#), southwest of [Hue](#) near the Laotian border. In May of 1969, units of the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN) and the [U.S. 101st Airborne Division](#) fought against soldiers of the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) in [Operation Apache Snow](#). The battle of Dong Ap Bia lasted from May 10 to May 20. It was atypical of the combat in the Vietnam War since it involved large [troop](#) units on both sides and because the enemy did not use the tactic of maneuver but instead chose to defend his positions on Dong Ap Bia. The result was a very bloody battle with high [casualties](#) sustained by all units, thus prompting American troops to call the objective "Hamburger Hill."

While the enemy's tactics were atypical, the United States characteristically emphasized firepower, including heavy [artillery](#), [napalm](#), and [B-52 "Arc Light"](#) air strikes. However, the enemy's defensive skills against this tactic, together with his tenacity, meant that eventually his positions had to be assaulted by infantry, and the result was fierce combat, often hand to hand. After eleven days, the enemy retreated to [sanctuaries](#) in [Laos](#). One week later, Hamburger Hill was abandoned by the victorious American troops. This was a normal consequence of battle in Vietnam, especially in areas like the A Shau Valley which were remote and sparsely populated. The basic strategy of both sides was attrition (see [War of attrition](#)), not occupation of captured territory.

The battle of Hamburger Hill was similar to other engagements during the war. Enemy losses were much higher than American casualties, the enemy resolved the battle by retreating without pursuit by American or ARVN forces, and the battlefield was abandoned shortly after the cessation of hostilities. However, its timing made it newsworthy, and it attracted considerable media attention. In 1969, the new president, [Richard Nixon](#), was implementing [Vietnamization](#), a policy to reduce American ground combat involvement (and casualties) and shift that responsibility to the ARVN. Hamburger Hill, reported extensively by the print and broadcast media, seemed to contradict the intent of Vietnamization. It also came to symbolize the frustration of achieving an overwhelming battlefield success without any indication that the war being won. To many, this frustration suggested that such battles were discrete, mutually exclusive, isolated events which were unrelated to any ultimate policy goal. Hamburger Hill became the subject of intense public debate, focusing on the decision to capture Ap Bia regardless of the casualties and irrespective of its marginal significance in terms of the reasons why the United States was in Vietnam.

Sources: Samuel Lipsman et al., *The Vietnam Experience: Fighting for Time*, 1983; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

Stafford T. Thomas

## HAMLET EVALUATION SURVEY

Developed by [Robert Komer](#) in 1967, the Hamlet Evaluation Survey was an elaborate, computerized system for measuring the number of South Vietnamese citizens living in areas "controlled" by the [Republic of Vietnam](#). Using eighteen political, economic, and military variables, the Hamlet Evaluation Survey classified villages into one of five categories, depending on the depth of their loyalty to [Saigon](#). At the end of 1967, according to the Hamlet Evaluation Survey, more than two-thirds of the people of South Vietnam lived in villages loyal to the Republic of Vietnam. Just one more episode in the futile American pacification efforts (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)), the Hamlet Evaluation Survey was hopelessly optimistic and naive, and the [Tet Offensive](#) in February 1968 exposed its gross inaccuracies.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986.

## HANOI

Located in the Red River Delta about 75 miles inland from the South China Sea, Hanoi is the capital of the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#). It was also the capital of French [Indochina](#). An industrial and transportation center, Hanoi was a graceful city, influenced by French architecture with spacious tree-lined boulevards. Its population in 1970 had reached 1,100,000 people.

Hanoi was the center of the post-World War II Vietnamese independence movement. [Ho Chi Minh](#) proclaimed the Provisional Government of the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) there on August 29, 1945, and three days later he proclaimed Vietnamese independence. Ironically, 500,000 people watched Ho quote the U.S. Declaration of Independence with American military personnel on the reviewing stand, American military aircraft flying overhead, and a band playing "The Star-Spangled Banner." In December 1946, after the French had returned in force, Ho Chi Minh and the [Vietminh](#) blew up Hanoi's power station and attacked French outposts throughout the city. [France](#) controlled Hanoi throughout the war, but as it progressed, French influence was increasingly confined to a small area around the city and in Haiphong. After the Battle of [Dien Bien Phu](#) and the [Geneva Accords in 1954](#) the Vietminh regained control of Hanoi, making it the capital of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Beginning in 1965 the United States launched massive bombing campaigns against Hanoi, attacking fuel storage facilities and transportation centers, especially the Paul Doumer Bridge and the rail yards across the Red River. In 1967 the United States began air strikes against steel factories, power plants, and other industrial targets. Most industries as well as 800,000 of the city's population were relocated to rural areas. Hanoi was heavily bombed in 1972 in punishment for the [Eastertide Offensive](#). During the Christmas bombing of 1972 (see [Operation Linebacker II](#)), in which [Richard Nixon](#) and [Henry Kissinger](#) forced North Vietnamese leaders to fulfill the October [Paris Peace Accords](#), 36,000 tons of bombs were dropped on the city, killing 2,000 civilians and destroying the Bach Mai Hospital.

Sources: Paul Burbage et al., *The Battle for the Skies over North Vietnam, 1964-1972*, 1976; Lou Drendel, *Air War over Southeast Asia*, 1984; Danny J. Whitefield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976.

Samuel Freeman

## HANOI HANNAH

In the tradition of Tokyo Rose, Hanoi Hannah was a North Vietnamese radio announcer broadcasting pro-Communist propaganda into [South Vietnam](#) and hoping to destroy the morale of American troops there. Most U.S. soldiers reacted with contempt or amusement to her broadcasts, and even prided themselves on having had their units mentioned in her programs. Later in the war, by emphasizing and exaggerating American [casualties](#) and reporting the antiwar demonstrations back in the United States, Hannah probably helped some soldiers begin to question why they were risking their lives. She particularly singled out [black soldiers](#), attempting to exacerbate racial animosities and convince them that they were being killed for the advantage of white men.

Source: Terrence Maitland and Peter McInerney, *The Vietnam Experience. A Contagion of War*, 1983.

Samuel Freeman



## HANOI HILTON

One of numerous prisons which ultimately housed over 700 American [prisoners of war](#) (POWs) between August 1964 and February 1973, the Hanoi Hilton (Hoa Lo Prison) was built by the French near the center of [Hanoi](#). Sections of the Hilton were dubbed "New Guy Village," "Heartbreak Hotel," "Little Vegas," and "Camp Unity." These sections were further subdivided and named. It is an imposing facility, occupying a city block. Walls are 4 feet thick, 20 feet high, and extended another 5 feet by electrified strands of barbed wire. Shards of glass are embedded on the wall's top. Other prisons located in or near Hanoi included the Zoo, Alcatraz, the Plantation, and the Powerplant. The Briarpatch, Camp Faith, and Camp Hope ([Son Tay](#)) were located within about 35 miles of Hanoi.

[Jeremiah Denton](#)'s cell in New Guy Village consisted of "two solid concrete beds with metal-and-wood stocks at the foot of each. The one amenity was a small honey bucket (a pail that served as a toilet). The concrete bunks were about 3 1/2 feet high and 2 1/2 feet apart. The cell was 9 feet by 8 feet. The door had a small peephole and was flanked by windows which had been covered over by a thin layer of concrete." Sanitation was poor. Cells were infested with insects and rodents. The food, by normal standards, was not fit to eat. Medical treatment was poor to nonexistent and was provided only when a captive's condition became serious or the captive became cooperative.

The North Vietnamese constantly utilized various methods to break captives psychologically, primarily to elicit confessions or information of propaganda value. Captives were not permitted to organize with a recognized chain of command as POWs generally do. Efforts were made to isolate prisoners and prohibit communications. Consequently, captives developed unobtrusive communication networks employing Morse and "tap" codes. Transmission methods included whistling softly, scratching sounds, even the cadence of sweeping with a broom. As communications networks and chains of command were established and ultimately discovered, prisoners were moved to different units and even to different prisons to break them up or punish the uncooperative. Prisoners were subjected to torture, but not for military information until later in the war. Sometimes this occurred in their cells, but the Hilton and other prisons also had rooms especially for interrogation and torture. Torture took many forms, from various deprivations such as not being permitted to bathe, to beatings, extended darkness, isolation, shackling (often in contorted positions), and psychological torture.

While U.S. commanders were concerned that prisons inadvertently might be hit during the 1972 Christmas bombing (see [Operation Linebacker II](#)), prisoners welcomed the bombing and its attendant risks. As a settlement neared, conditions at the Hilton and other prisons improved markedly. Captives were given new clothes, were permitted to organize and to bathe and exercise regularly, and were given much-improved medical attention and food.

Sources: Jeremiah Denton, *When Hell Was in Session*, 1982; Benjamin F. Schemmer, *The Raid*, 1976.

Samuel Freeman

## HARKINS, PAUL DONAL

Paul D. Harkins was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on May 15, 1904. After graduating from West Point in 1929, Harkins took a cavalry assignment, served as deputy chief of staff of George Patton's Third Army in World War II, and then was chief of staff of the Eighth Army in [Korea](#). General Paul Harkins served as the first commander of [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV). He occupied that post between February 1962 and June 1964. Harkins was a strong supporter of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), although the South Vietnamese president usually ignored his advice. Harkin's opposition to the coup that eventually toppled the Diem regime put him at odds with U.S. State Department officials in [Saigon](#), most notably Ambassador [Henry Cabot Lodge](#).

In the two decades after his departure from Vietnam, Harkins was criticized for his overly optimistic reports to Washington regarding the military and political situation there. This occasionally brought him into conflict with American military officers in the field, who often held much more pessimistic views of the South Vietnamese situation. Harkins retired from active duty in 1964 when General [William Westmoreland](#) replaced him at MACV. Harkins died on August 21, 1984.

Sources: *New York Times*, August 22, 1984; [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; George S. Eckhardt, *Command and Control, 1950-1969*, 1974.

Sean A. Kelleher

## HARRIMAN, WILLIAM AVERELL

William Averell Harriman was born in New York City on November 15, 1891, to one of America's most well-known families. After graduating from Yale in 1913, Harriman went to work for the Union Pacific Railroad. In 1917 he organized the Merchant Shipbuilding Company, made a fortune during World War I, and by the mid-1920s owned the largest merchant fleet in the country. He became chairman of the board of the Illinois Central Railroad in 1931 and the Union Pacific Railroad in 1932. During World War II Harriman represented the Lend Lease program to the British and the Soviets, and he became ambassador to the [Soviet Union](#) in 1943. He served briefly as ambassador to [Great Britain](#) in 1946 before being named secretary of commerce in President [Harry S. Truman](#)'s cabinet. In 1948 Harriman was named as the official U.S. representative in Europe for the Marshall Plan. He was the U.S. representative to NATO in 1951, elected governor of New York in 1954, and during the Kennedy administration served as an ambassador-at-large and assistant [secretary of state](#) for Far Eastern affairs. Between 1963 and 1965, Harriman was under secretary of state for political affairs.

In 1962 Harriman had played a key role in negotiating the settlement in [Laos](#), and he had serious doubts about the efficacy of any military solution in Vietnam. Harriman had been a supporter of the [containment](#) policy in Europe, but he saw Asia in different terms. By 1963 Harriman was privately condemning the corruption of the [Diem](#) regime and urging [Kennedy](#) to disassociate the United States from him. President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) appointed Harriman an ambassador-at-large in 1965 with responsibility for Southeast Asia. Harriman traveled throughout the world in 1965 and 1966 trying to gather support for the American war effort in Vietnam and trying to work out the details for peace talks. By that time his own faith in the war was dead. Early in 1968 Harriman took an active part in the "[Wise Old Men](#)" group which advised President Johnson to negotiate a settlement to the war and withdraw American troops. In May 1968, when the [Paris peace talks](#) began, Harriman went there as the chief American negotiator. He remained in Paris until [Henry Cabot Lodge](#) replaced him in January 1969. Throughout the [Nixon](#) administration, Harriman urged American fidelity to a strict [withdrawal](#) timetable. W. Averell Harriman died on July 26, 1986.

Sources: Lee H. Burke, *Ambassador at Large: Diplomat Extraordinary*, 1972; *New York Times*, July 27, 1986; Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, 1986.

## HARTKE, VANCE

Vance Hartke was born in Stendal, Indiana, on May 31, 1919. He took his undergraduate degree from Evansville College and a law degree from Indiana University, and between 1948 and 1958 he practiced law in Evansville. Hartke served as mayor of Evansville between 1956 and 1958, and he entered the U.S. Senate as a Democrat in 1958, where he served until 1976. Hartke was an avid supporter of [Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society](#) programs, and the president counted him as one of his most loyal followers in Congress until early 1966, when Hartke began questioning American involvement in Vietnam. In January 1966, when Hartke signed a letter to the president with a number of his colleagues, asking Johnson to not resume the bombing of [North Vietnam](#) and to work toward a diplomatic settlement, the president was enraged. He publicly criticized Hartke and actively worked to limit his patronage opportunities. Johnson also saw to it that several of Hartke's followers were fired from government jobs. It mattered little, and Hartke continued to question the depth of the American involvement in Southeast Asia. Hartke left the Senate in 1976 and moved to Virginia.

Sources: *Who's Who in American Politics, 1985-1986*, 1986; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## HATFIELD, MARK ODUM

Mark Hatfield was born in Dalles, Oregon, on July 12, 1922. He graduated from Willamette University in 1943 and took a master's degree from Stanford in 1948. Hatfield then taught political science at Willamette between 1950 and 1956. He was a state legislator in Oregon from 1951 to 1957, [secretary of state](#) from 1957 to 1959, and governor of Oregon from 1959 to 1967. Hatfield won election to the U.S. Senate as a Republican in 1966. Hatfield's career in the Senate was marked by a vigorous opposition to the Vietnam War. By 1967 he was criticizing the scale of the American military effort in [Indochina](#), and he also became a frequent critic of the [Nixon](#) administration's handling of the war. In Hatfield's opinion, Nixon and [Kissinger](#) were unnecessarily lengthening the American stay there. When Nixon authorized the invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)), Hatfield spoke militantly against it and sponsored, along with Senator [George McGovern](#), a Senate amendment cutting off funds for the Vietnam War after December 31, 1971. The amendment never passed. Hatfield also opposed the military [draft](#) and called for the establishment of a voluntary army.

Sources: *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985; Mark Hatfield, *Conflict and Conscience*, 1971; Mark Hatfield, *Amnesty: The Unsettled Question of Vietnam*, 1973

## HATFIELD-McGOVERN AMENDMENT

Late in April 1970, President [Richard Nixon](#) had approved a combined American-South Vietnamese invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) to attack [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese [sanctuaries](#) there. To many Americans the invasion, Nixon called it an "incursion", seemed a dangerous escalation of the war, and widespread protest demonstrations erupted across the country. Especially violent confrontations between students and National Guard troops occurred at [Kent State University](#) in Ohio and Jackson State University in Mississippi. During the first week of May more than 100,000 protesters gathered in Washington, D.C., to denounce the invasion. Outraged at not being consulted about the invasion, the Senate symbolically protested by terminating the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) in June 1970. Senator [George McGovern](#) of South Dakota and Senator [Mark Hatfield](#) of Oregon jointly sponsored an amendment requiring a total American [withdrawal](#) from [South Vietnam](#) by the end of 1971. Although the Hatfield-McGovern Amendment failed to pass in the Senate, it was an indication of the frustration large numbers of Americans felt about the war.

Sources: George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979.

## HAYDEN, THOMAS EMMETT

Thomas Hayden was born on December 12, 1940, in Royal Oak, Michigan, the only child of Catholic parents in a conservative working-class neighborhood. In December 1961, as a University of Michigan student, Hayden had helped found the [Students for a Democratic Society](#) (SDS) and drafted the Port Huron Statement: "We are the people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to a world we inherit." At first SDS was not much more to the left than the liberal wing of the Democratic party. But under the pressure of the civil rights movement and opposition to the Vietnam War, Hayden's politics gradually became more and more radical. By the fall of 1965 SDS was organizing against the draft and was accused of sabotaging the war effort. In 1966 and 1967 SDS escalated its campus demonstrations and protest marches. Hayden met with North Vietnamese representatives in Czechoslovakia in 1967, where the release of American [prisoners of war](#) (POWs) was discussed. He later flew to [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) and escorted three released prisoners home.

In 1968, Hayden joined Rennie Davis in planning the National Mobilization Committee's anti-Vietnam demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in 1968. The protesters were assaulted by the Chicago police, but Hayden was later arrested and became one of the "Chicago 7" defendants charged with conspiracy. Although he was convicted, the decision was later overturned on appeal. After the trial, Hayden joined actress [Jane Fonda](#) on the antiwar circuit, and they were married in January 1973. After that Hayden began to change his radical image and entered California politics. He ran a surprisingly close race against Senator John Tunney in the senatorial primary in 1976, and in 1979 he and Fonda established the Campaign for Economic Democracy, a movement designed to secure popular control over major corporations. Dubbed the "Mork and Mindy" of the left in a column by George Will, they made appearances dressed conservatively and toned down their rhetoric from the militancy of the 1960s. Hayden won a seat in the California state legislature in 1980, and explained his political evolution by saying: "The radical or reformer sets a climate. The politician inherits the constituency that the reformer created. My problem is to be both."

Sources: Charles Moritz, "Tom Hayden," *Current Biography*, 1976; Tom Hayden, *The American Future: New Visions Beyond Old Frontiers*, 1980; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the Vietnam War, 1963-1975*, 1984.

Frances Frenzel

## HEARTS AND MINDS

An Academy Award winner for Best Documentary in 1974, *Hearts and Minds* was a controversial film examining U.S. involvement in Vietnam. By interviewing American policymakers, Vietnamese leaders, veterans, and Vietnamese peasants, the film looks at the war in terms of American culture, the World War II experience, and global politics. In one sense the film is balanced, devoting equal time to the war's supporters and critics. [Harry S. Truman](#), [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#), [John F. Kennedy](#), [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), [Richard M. Nixon](#), and [William Westmoreland](#) present rationales supporting the war, while [Clark Clifford](#), [Daniel Ellsberg](#), and [J. William Fulbright](#) oppose it. [Navy](#) lieutenant and POW (1966-73) George Coker (fifty-five bombing missions) explains the war in terms of Communist aggression, and former fighter-bomber pilot Captain Randy Floyd (ninety-eight bombing missions) explains it in terms of human beings. Other veterans, including paraplegic Robert Mueller and double amputee William Marshall, explain their views before, during, and after Vietnam.

In another sense, the film was not balanced. Graphic war footage includes the most famous and damning of the war. Colonel [Nguyen Ngoc Loan](#), [Saigon](#) chief of police, is shown summarily executing a [Vietcong](#) suspect during the 1968 [Tet Offensive](#). A young girl, Kim Phuc, her burns clearly visible, is shown running down a road nude, having torn off her burning clothes after the pagoda in which she had taken refuge was napalmed. While there are scenes of hamlets being bombed and put to flame by GIs as villagers beg for mercy, of Vietnamese being tortured, of disabled and mutilated Vietnamese and Americans, of Vietnamese recounting the destruction of their homes and loss of loved ones due to American bombardment, there are few scenes of Vietcong/North Vietnamese Army violence, and virtually none of the injuries they inflicted on the civilian population. Critics of the film were outraged by what they saw as blatant bias. After footage in which a Vietnamese family demonstrably mourns the death of an [ARVN](#) soldier (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam), with his son crying and hugging his picture and his mother attempting to crawl into the grave with him, General William Westmoreland is shown saying "The Oriental doesn't put the same high price on life as does the Westerner. Life is plentiful; life is cheap in the Orient. And as the philosophy of the Orient expresses itself, life is not important." Those who praised the film, however, felt its spirit matched the nature of the American war effort in Vietnam. There is thought-provoking irony footage in celebrations of our own war for independence, or a minister before the "big game" praying for victory with a high school football team, or Colonel George S. Patton III's account of a memorial service for fallen comrades in which he concludes that his men are "a bloody good bunch of killers."

Source: "Hearts and Minds," *Variety*, May 15, 1974.

Samuel Freeman



## HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS

Early U.S. helicopter operation in Vietnam met limited resistance from enemy small arms fire, causing the U.S. Army to begin arming helicopters in an attempt to suppress ground fire. A .30 caliber machine gun was mounted in the forward door of CH-21s to give them the ability to suppress ground fire during landing operations. As the weapon had a limited arc of fire and the [CH-21](#) suffered from poor maneuverability, this attempt was not very successful. The army then decided to arm the new UH-1As and organized a test unit, the Utility Tactical Transport Helicopter Company. Fifteen UH-1As were equipped with two .30 caliber machine guns and sixteen 2.75-inch rockets and sent to [Thailand](#) for training. In November 1962, this unit was assigned to [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#) in Vietnam, where it began flying in support of U.S. Army CH-21 units.

Originally designated as "escorts," these helicopters were to pioneer the helicopter gunship role in Vietnam. As this role expanded, the term "escort" was dropped in favor of "gunship" or the nickname given to them by GIs, "hog." The [UH-1s](#) continued to provide most of the [gunships](#) used in Vietnam, although other helicopters also were used in this role. In a typical airmobile assault, gunships would make passes over landing zones to soften them up and draw enemy fire before the slicks carrying troops came in.

As enemy ground weapons improved, the need for increased firepower from helicopter gunships became apparent. More sophisticated rocket packs, .50 caliber machine guns, and the M-75 grenade launcher became standard equipment for the UH-1s; and the [CH-47](#), capable of carrying more weight, was turned into a gunship, using G.E. miniguns capable of firing 2,000 rounds per minute of 7.62mm shells either through the side windows or through the rear doors. As the need for increased firepower was recognized, the [1st Cavalry Division](#) received three heavily modified CH-47s. These "Go-Go Birds" were fitted with a grenade launcher capable of firing 200 rounds per minute of 40mm high explosive in the nose, rocket pods and cannon mounted on side sponsons, and .50 caliber machine guns firing through windows and the rear cargo hatch. In response to [Vietcong](#) use of .50 caliber machine guns as anti-aircraft weapons, a number of UH-1s were fitted with M24A 20mm cannons. These cannons enabled the UH-1s to stay out of range of enemy ground fire, while delivering 2,000 rounds per minute of fire.

The UH-1 provided the basic frame for the first helicopter designed as a gunship, the [AH-1G Cobra](#). Using the basic components of the UH-1 allowed the army to develop this gunship in only six months. Cobras began serving in Vietnam in 1967. Heavily armed with a variety of weapons and equipped with sophisticated, new "sight-guided" aiming systems, the Cobra proved a highly effective gunship. Cannons, grenade launchers, or machine guns could be mounted in turrets, giving them the capability of swinging through a 230-degree arc. The weapons were aimed by the gunner "looking-in" the target, with the turret swinging to follow his head.

Overall, helicopter gunships proved their worth in Vietnam, providing ground forces with close support cover in a way fixed-wing aircraft could not.

Sources: *Jane's All the World's Aircraft: 1970-71*, 1971; Jim Mesko, *Airmobile: The Helicopter War in Vietnam*, 1985.

Nolan J. Argyle

## HELICOPTER WAR

The helicopter became the primary symbol of the U.S. military presence in Vietnam. No other weapon system attained the high degree of visibility or identification with the war that the helicopter did. The ubiquitous "Huey" ([UH-1](#)) emerged as the unofficial symbol of U.S. involvement.

Helicopters were first used in Vietnam by the French, mainly for medical evacuation. The French had determined to begin using large numbers of helicopters for [troop](#) movements to offset the superior mobility of the [Vietminh](#), but the French defeat at [Dien Bien Phu](#) ended those plans.

American combat involvement in Vietnam started and ended with helicopters. In December of 1961 the 8th and 57th Transportation Companies arrived in Vietnam. Flying the Piasecki H-21 (later the Vertol and then Boeing-Vertol [CH-21](#)), these units flew combat missions supporting the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN), thus becoming the first U.S. troops to officially serve in a direct combat role. These units were followed by a U.S. Marine helicopter [squadron](#) flying CH-34s and by a U.S. Army medical detachment using UH-1s for medical evacuation (see [medevac](#)). In the fall of 1962, fifteen armed UH-1s arrived in Vietnam to serve as the first of the helicopter [gunships](#) of the war.

The first major offensive operation using American helicopters occurred on January 2, 1963, when ten CH-21s, escorted by five Huey gunships, were used to place ARVN forces in a ring around [Ap Bac](#) in an attempt to trap and eliminate a major enemy unit. Lacking fixed-wing air cover, the units took heavy losses, including the loss of five helicopters. The enemy forces were able to withdraw from Ap Bac successfully. Thus the first airmobile assault of the Vietnam War was a failure. Lessons were drawn from this failure, including the need to coordinate airmobile assaults with bombing and strafing runs by fixed-wing aircraft. As [helicopter gunships](#) improved, the need for fixed-wing support declined.

Faced with early failure in the attempt to use a new concept of airmobile fighting, the U.S. Army established a test [division](#) to work out effective techniques. The division was established at Ft. Benning, Georgia, as the 11th Air Assault Division. This division constantly exchanged personnel with units in Vietnam in an attempt to analyze and perfect airmobile techniques. In 1965 one of these units in Vietnam, the [173rd Airborne Brigade](#), teamed with a number of helicopter units in launching a series of airmobile assaults which were seen as highly successful. By October of 1965, the 11th Air Assault Division, now combined with major elements of the 2nd Infantry Division and redesignated the [1st Cavalry Division \(Airmobile\)](#) was in place at An Khe in South Vietnam's [Central Highlands](#). They constructed the world's largest helipad (known as the "golf course" as it always had at least eighteen holes in it from rocket and mortar attacks), and the U.S. Army was ready to launch the helicopter war in earnest.

In November 1965 the 1st Cavalry fought its first major battles with the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA). The NVA launched an attack designed to draw out ARVN forces and ambush them in the Central Highlands. The NVA then planned to drive across the center of South Vietnam, cutting the country in half. First Cavalry forces, supporting the ARVN units, engaged the enemy in a series of battles known as the [Battle of Ia Drang Valley](#). NVA attempts to isolate American and ARVN units and hit them with superior forces were constantly thwarted by the 1st Cavalry's ability to move units rapidly with helicopters. At the end of the campaign, the NVA had lost 1,800 troops while the 1st Cavalry lost 240 men and four helicopters. The pattern of conflict in the helicopter war had been established.

By the late 1960s the U.S. Army had 4,000 aircraft serving in Vietnam, including 3,600 helicopters. These were organized into four types of units. Airmobile divisions, starting with the 1st Cavalry Division and joined in 1968 by the converted 101st Airborne, were fully equipped with their own helicopters under their direct control. Regular infantry divisions had organic aviation units attached to them, normally of [battalion](#) strength. A number of helicopter companies were assigned directly to [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) and a number of other helicopter units were assigned

directly to special units such as engineer, signal, or support groups.

[Operation Delaware](#), conducted in the [A Shau Valley](#) in 1966, represented a turning point in the helicopter war. This was the biggest airmobile operation to date, and was seen by U.S. forces as a major success. However, they lost more aircraft than expected, and it appeared that the NVA had, in a little more than a year, begun to adapt their tactics to fit within the helicopter war. In 1971 the United States was involved in the last major airmobile offensive operation of the war in [Lam Son 719](#), an attempt to clear the NVA from an area extending from [Khe Sanh](#) into [Laos](#). Ground forces were provided by the ARVN, with U.S. support limited primarily to helicopters. Lam Son 719 failed to meet any of its objectives, with ARVN troops bogging down in heavy fighting.

The last major involvement of U.S. forces in Vietnam was defensive, and involved helicopter gunships. In the spring of 1972, the NVA launched major assaults supported by heavy armor, including T-54 tanks. A major factor in a successful ARVN defense was the presence of U.S. helicopter gunships armed with antitank weapons (see [M-72](#)), including TOW missiles.

In 1975, South Vietnam collapsed. Americans witnessed the panic, as they had witnessed much of the helicopter war, on their [television](#) screens. Graphic images of hovering U.S. helicopters evacuating personnel from the American embassy, and of other helicopters, both U.S. and ARVN, crashing into the sea after dropping their passengers on ships, represented the end of American involvement in South Vietnam. A [CH-53](#) involved in the evacuation crashed into the sea, killing two U.S. marines, the last U.S. [casualties](#) of the Vietnam War.

American combat involvement in Vietnam began and ended with helicopters. Early attempts using U.S. helicopters and ARVN troops proved unsatisfactory; the same combination at the end of the war, as represented in Lam Son 719, proved equally ineffective. Yet the helicopter war concept of airmobile units did prove its value, and remains a key component of American military strategy.

Sources: *The Encyclopedia of Air Warfare*, 1974; Jim Mesko, *Airmobile: The Helicopter War in Vietnam*, 1985.

Nolan J. Argyle

## HELMS, RICHARD McGARRAH

Richard Helms was born in St. Davids, Pennsylvania, on March 30, 1913. After graduating from Williams College in 1935, he became a staff correspondent for UPI and joined the *Indianapolis Times* in 1937. Helms stayed with the *Times* until 1942, when he was assigned by the United States [Navy](#) to work with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). After the war Helms stayed on with the OSS when it became the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA). During the years of the Vietnam War between 1965 and 1973, Helms was deputy director and then director of the CIA. When the war reached its late stages in the early 1970s, Helms came under siege from critics protesting clandestine CIA activities in [Indochina](#), secret armies, assassination squads, sponsored coup d'etats, and domestic surveillance. As a result of congressional hearings, new legislation required the CIA to secure presidential approval of all covert operations, surrender documents to public scrutiny as long as it did not compromise agents in the field, stop surveillance of Americans abroad unless national security required it, and cease all domestic surveillance. Helms was forced to appear before a number of House and Senate committees in the mid-1970s as the legislation was evolving. Between 1973 and 1976, he also served as ambassador to Iran.

Sources: *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985; Thomas W. Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets*, 1979; [Morton H. Halperin](#) et al., *The Lawless State: The Crimes of the U.S. Intelligence Agencies*, 1976; John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986.

## HIGH NATIONAL COUNCIL

Between November 1963, with the assassination of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), and [Nguyen Van Thieu's](#) rise to power in June 1965, a succession of civilian and military governments assumed power in [Saigon](#). In September 1964, a military regime headed by General [Nguyen Khanh](#) appointed a seventeen-member High National Council, representing a variety of political groups, to [draft](#) a new constitution. The constitution was ready on October 20, 1964, and the High National Council appointed [Phan Khac Suu](#) as chief of state and [Tran Van Huong](#) as prime minister. [Buddhist](#) groups immediately began demonstrating against the High National Council; and on December 18, thirty young generals, led by Nguyen Khanh, formed an Armed Forces Council, dissolved the High National Council, and in January 1965 dismissed Prime Minister Huong.

Source: Harvey H. Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967.

## HILSMAN, ROGER

Roger Hilsman was born in Waco, Texas, on November 23, 1919. He graduated from West Point in 1943 and joined the Office of Strategic Services working behind Japanese lines in Asia. After the war Hilsman stayed with the [Central Intelligence Agency](#), and in 1951 received a Ph.D. in international relations from Yale. Between 1950 and 1953 Hilsman worked on NATO development in Europe, spent the years between 1953 and 1956 with the Center for International Studies at Princeton, and then joined the Library of Congress. He wrote widely on foreign affairs, and his books *Strategic Intelligence and National Decisions* (1956) and *Alliance Policy in the Cold War* (1959) made him an influential figure in Washington. In 1961 Hilsman became director of the bureau of intelligence and research for the Department of State. As early as 1961 Hilsman was warning policymakers that military action alone would not solve guerrilla wars in under-developed countries; that popular support gained through economic development and political reform was indispensable. In 1963 Hilsman was promoted to assistant [secretary of state](#) for Far Eastern affairs. Along with [Michael Forrestal](#), Hilsman went to Vietnam on a fact-finding mission in 1963, and their [Hilsman-Forrestal Report](#) concluded that the American commitment in Vietnam would be a difficult and long-term problem. Hilsman also urged [John Kennedy](#) to exploit the growing rift between the [Soviet Union](#) and [China](#) by seeking a normalization of relations with the [People's Republic of China](#).

After the assassination of President Kennedy, Hilsman resigned from the government to resume his academic career, teaching at Columbia University. In 1967, he published a well-received account of foreign policy during the Kennedy administration, *To Move a Nation*. A major contention was that Kennedy intended, after the election of 1964, to work for the neutralization of Vietnam, as had already been done in [Laos](#), and thus extricate the United States from that quagmire.

Sources: *Current Biography*, 1964, pp. 194-196; *Current Authors*, 1969; Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 1967.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## HILSMAN-FORRESTAL REPORT

Early in 1963, concerned about contradictory reports about Vietnam coming from military officials and journalists, [President John F. Kennedy](#) dispatched State Department Far East expert [Roger Hilsman](#) and White House staffer [Michael Forrestal](#) to Vietnam on a fact-finding mission. In their report, they argued that American policies in Southeast Asia should be continued, but they argued that the [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) was weakened by severe corruption and morale problems, that [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) was becoming increasingly isolated from the Vietnamese masses, and that the American commitment there would be longer than originally anticipated. The overall tone of the report, however, was optimistic and contributed to the escalation of the American effort in Vietnam.

Source: George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986.

## HMONG

The Hmong, also known as Meo or Miao, were Laotian tribal people living in the mountains of [North Vietnam](#) and [Laos](#). They constituted about 15 percent of the Laotian population in the early 1970s, totaling more than 300,000 people. Speaking a Sino-Tibetan dialect, the Hmong were relatively late arrivals to Laos and Vietnam, migrating from [China](#) in the nineteenth century. Over the years the Vietnamese and the French were in frequent conflict with them, and the Hmong were often recruited by all sides in the Vietnamese conflict. During the 1960s and 1970s, the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) raised a Hmong army, led by General Vang Pao, to attack the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) as it passed through Laos, and over the years they sustained heavy [casualties](#). After the end of the Vietnam War, large numbers of Hmong immigrated to the United States, settling in the western states.

Sources: George Kahin, "Minorities in the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#)," *Asian Survey* 12 (July 1972); Donald P. Whitaker, *Area Handbook for Laos*, 1972; John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986.



## HO CHI MINH

Ho Chi Minh was born as Nguyen Sinh Cung on May 19, 1890, in Nghe An Province of central Vietnam. His father, Nguyen Sinh Sac, had achieved mandarin status through diligent study but abandoned his family to become an itinerant teacher. Ho attended school in [Hue](#), where his lifelong quest for Vietnamese independence was first launched. Moving south in 1909, Ho Chi Minh, now calling himself Van Ba, taught school in a number of villages, worked in [Saigon](#), and in 1911 signed on aboard a French freighter. In 1912 Ho left Vietnam and did not return for thirty years. He sailed around the world for three years, and lived one year in the United States, Brooklyn. Known as Nguyen Tat Thanh, Ho then moved to London and from there to Paris, where he became a founding member of the French Communist party in 1920. By then Ho Chi Minh was speaking and writing avidly on his major ideological theory, that anticolonial nationalism and socioeconomic revolution were inseparable.

Suspicious of the Vietnamese nationalist among them, French security forces began tracking Ho Chi Minh's movements, and in 1924 he moved to Moscow, met the leaders of the [Soviet Union](#), studied for several months at the University of Oriental Workers, and then moved on to Canton. In southern [China](#) Ho Chi Minh organized the [Thanh Nien Cach Menh Dong Chi Hoi](#) (Revolutionary Youth League) to campaign for Vietnamese independence, and in 1930 the Indochinese Communist party (see [Lao Dong party](#)). Throughout the 1930s Ho Chi Minh wandered widely throughout the world, spending time in China, the Soviet Union, [Thailand](#), and Asia. When the [Japanese](#) invaded [Indochina](#) in 1940, Ho Chi Minh began allying himself with the Allied powers; Japanese domination of Vietnam, in his mind, was no better than the French Empire. Assuming the name Ho Chi Minh, he returned to Vietnam in May 1941 and established the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (League for Vietnamese Independence), or the [Vietminh](#). During World War II Ho cultivated his relationship with the United States, especially with OSS agents fighting against the Japanese in Indochina; and when the war ended in 1945, Ho was widely recognized as the most prominent native leader in Vietnam. He declared Vietnamese independence on September 2, 1945, using language from the U.S. Declaration of Independence to punctuate his proclamation. When the French returned to Vietnam in 1946, Ho was prepared to work out an arrangement for Vietnamese independence within a French union, somewhat like the [British Commonwealth](#), but his plans never materialized and broke down at the [Fontainebleau Conference](#) in May 1946, when Ho traveled to Paris. By late 1946 the Vietminh were at war with French forces. Ho Chi Minh formed the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) in 1950, quickly won recognition from most Soviet-bloc countries, and finally won true independence in May 1954 when [Vo Nguyen Giap](#) and the Vietminh defeated the French at [Dien Bien Phu](#).

Between 1954 and 1960, Ho Chi Minh consolidated his power in the north and waited to see if the government of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in [South Vietnam](#) would collapse. When American military and economic assistance sustained the Diem regime, Ho organized the National Liberation Front, or [Vietcong](#), in 1960, began construction of the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) through [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) into South Vietnam, and began providing money and supplies to the [Pathet Lao](#) in Laos and the [Khmer Rouge](#) in Cambodia. Absolutely indefatigable in his drive for Vietnamese unification and independence, and often brutal in his implementation of revolution, Ho Chi Minh was the "father of his country." He died on September 2, 1969, and Vietcong and [North Vietnamese Army](#) troops memorialized him in May 1975 when they invaded Saigon and renamed it [Ho Chi Minh City](#).

Sources: [David Halberstam](#), *Ho*, 1971; Charles Fenn, *Ho Chi Minh: A Biographical Introduction*, 1973; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## HO CHI MINH CAMPAIGN (1975)

Under the direction of General [Van Tien Dung](#), the [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#) was the final assault on [Saigon](#) between April 26 and April 30, 1975. During late March and early April, Dung moved eighteen [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) [divisions](#) into place within a 40-mile radius of Saigon. Poised due east of Saigon were the 3rd, 304th, 325th, and 324B divisions, with the objective of taking out the [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) 1st Airborne Brigade at Ba Ria and the 951st ARVN Ranger Group and 4th Airborne Brigade near Long Thanh. Northeast of Saigon, Dung placed the 6th, 7th, and 314th divisions and assigned them the assault on [Bien Hoa](#). To the north, the 320B, 312th, and 338th divisions were assigned the conquest of the ARVN 5th Division at Ben Cat and the ARVN 9th Ranger Brigade at Lai Thieu. Northwest of Saigon, Dung had the 70th, 316th, 320th, and 968th divisions ready to pounce on ARVN 25th Division at Trang Bang and Cu Chi. In the west, the 3rd, 5th, 9th, and 16th North Vietnamese divisions were charged with an assault on the ARVN 22nd Division at Tan An and Ben Luc and with a direct attack on the ARVN 7th and 8th Ranger brigades outside of Saigon. In the southwest, the NVA 8th Division prepared to attack the ARVN 7th Division at [My Tho](#). Dung's attack plan worked flawlessly. The fighting was intense, but ARVN units kept falling back into an increasingly tight circle around Saigon. On April 29 the city was coming under intense [artillery](#) barrages, and NVA units had entered the outskirts of the city. The last Americans were evacuated on April 30, and the North Vietnamese took control of Saigon. The Ho Chi Minh Campaign, and the war, was over.

Sources: Alan Dawson, *55 Days: The Fall of South Vietnam*, 1977; David Butler, *The Fall of Saigon: Scenes from the Sudden End of a Long War*, 1985.

## HO CHI MINH CITY

When they finally overran [South Vietnam](#) in 1975, North Vietnamese took control of [Saigon](#) and quickly renamed it Ho Chi Minh City, in honor of [Ho Chi Minh](#), the father of Vietnamese nationalism, who had died in 1969.

Source: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## HO CHI MINH TRAIL

In May 1959 the Communist leadership in [Hanoi](#) decided the time had come to step up guerrilla efforts(see [Vietcong](#)) in [South Vietnam](#), and they formed Group 559 to investigate enlarging the traditional series of trails through the mountains and jungles from the panhandle of [North Vietnam](#) into [Laos](#), southward into [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), and then emptying into South Vietnam. In time Hanoi intended to use the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail to take control of the war in the south and to conquer South Vietnam. By 1964 the Ho Chi Minh Trail remained primitive, requiring a physically arduous, exhausting trip, and it was incapable of handling large numbers of troops. It took more than a month of hard marching to cover its several hundred miles.

When the United States commenced its vast logistical buildup in 1964, North Vietnam began expanding the trail and increasing its capacity, and that effort continued until the final North Vietnamese victory in 1975. Within a year, the Ho Chi Minh Trail became a well-marked series of jungle roads, capable of handling heavy trucks and other vehicles, replete with necessary support facilities, mostly built underground to escape American detection and air strikes. There were hospitals with sanitary operating rooms, fuel storage tanks, and vast supply caches. While the north's logistical capability remained limited, [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) [divisions](#) required less than fifteen tons of supplies each day.

By 1967 the entire trail system became a key to the war's progress. North Vietnam was moving more than 20,000 troops a month. United States Army [Special Forces](#) operated advance camps near the trail outlets in the south; CIA-recruited [Hmong](#) tribesmen sought to cut the trail in the north; and thousands of [sorties](#) by a variety of aircraft sought to interdict the flow of men and materiel, though all without much success. A 1971 South Vietnamese Army invasion up Route 9 into Laos to cut the trail was a failure, resulting in rout of the troops. By 1975 the trail contained major fuel pipelines, and it was able to support more than a dozen full NVA divisions, an amazing feat.

Sources: James Clay Thompson, *Rolling Thunder*, 1980; Ralph Littauer and Norman Uphoff, eds., *The Air War in [Indochina](#)*, 1972; Jon M. Van Dyke, *North Vietnam's Strategy for Survival*, 1972.

Charles Dobbs

## HO THI THIEN

Born in 1908 in [Nha Trang](#), Ho Thi Thien gained international attention on May 30, 1966, when she committed suicide in front of the United Buddhist Church in [Saigon](#). Ho Thi Thien was a Buddhist nun protesting the political corruption and anti-Buddhist posture (see [Buddhism](#)) of the regime of [Nguyen Cao Ky](#).

Source: *New York Times*, May 30, 1966.

## HOA HAO

The Hoa Hao movement, a major but independent [Buddhist](#) sect prominent in the [Mekong Delta](#), was founded in 1919 by [Huynh Phu So](#). After a sickly youth, he entered a monastery in 1939; when he received what he termed a miraculous cure, he founded the sect. The movement had strong anti-French overtones, which the Japanese exploited between 1940 and 1945. A variant of Theravada [Buddhism](#), the Hoa Hao emphasized the importance of faith as opposed to experience, prayer four times daily, and veneration of Buddha, ancestors, and national heroes. By the late 1940s and 1950s, the Hoa Hao had more than one million followers and were a force to be reckoned with in [South Vietnam](#), the only political movement with roots in the Vietnamese peasantry sufficient to rival Communist influence. In April 1947, Communist guerrillas (see [Vietcong](#)) among the [Vietminh](#) assassinated Huynh Phu So, and leadership of the movement shifted to Ba Cut, a powerful man who directed the Hoa Hao army in South Vietnam.

But it was just that Hoa Hao independence, particularly its military strength and independent army, which bothered other political elements in South Vietnam. The anti-Communist government of South Vietnam, like the Communist Vietminh, resented the independence of the Hoa Hao, and in 1955 they launched a military campaign against them. After extensive resistance, the Hoa Hao were subdued and conquered, and Ba Cut was arrested in April 1956 and executed in July. The Hoa Hao remained a strong religious presence in South Vietnam, but their status as an independent military power was over.

Source: Bernard B. Fall, "The Political Religious Sects of Vietnam," *Pacific Affairs* 28 (1958), 235-53.

## HOANG VAN HOAN

Hoang Van Hoan was born in Nghe An Province in central Vietnam in 1905, and joined the Vietnam Youth Revolutionary League in 1926. Under pressure from the French, he fled to [China](#) and became a founding member of the [Lao Dong party](#) in 1930. Hoan was active in the [Vietminh](#) after World War II and served as ambassador to the [People's Republic of China](#) for several years in the 1950s. In 1958 Hoang Van Hoan became vice president of the National Assembly Standing Committee of the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#). Between 1951 and 1982 Van Hoan was also a member of the Central Committee and Politburo of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Sources: [Central Intelligence Agency](#), *Who's Who in North Vietnam*, 1969; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## HOFFMAN, ABBIE

Abbie Hoffman was born on November 30, 1936, at Worcester, Massachusetts. He graduated from Brandeis University in 1959 with a degree in psychology, studied for a time at the University of California at Berkeley, and began his political activism in 1960 protesting capital punishment. Between 1963 and 1965, Hoffman was active in the civil rights movement, and in 1964 he joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and worked actively in Mississippi and Georgia. By late 1965, when he became active in the [antiwar movement](#), Hoffman's personality was characterized by a need to be noticed, frenetic activity, a missionary-martyr complex, a large ego, frequent use of LSD and marijuana, and a commitment to the counterculture. He rejected mainstream values, preached revolution, and hoped to discredit American values through ridicule, outrageous behavior, and black humor.

By 1967 Hoffman was living on the Lower East Side of New York City working against the Vietnam War. He claimed to have serious goals but hoped to have fun achieving them. For example, he created pandemonium on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange by throwing dollar bills from the balcony and seeing brokers scramble after them. He combined farce with seriousness in his antiwar activities, on one occasion publicly trying to "exorcise" the Pentagon of its evil spirits. Early in 1968 Hoffman participated in the occupation of Columbia University and, in August, played an important role in organizing the demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. While in Chicago, Hoffman joined with Ed Sanders, [Jerry Rubin](#), and Paul Krassner in founding the Youth International party, "Yippies", in an attempt to fuse the hippie and antiwar movements. The Yippies sponsored songs, speeches, a "nude-in" in Chicago, and nominated a pig named Pigasus as their presidential candidate. Hoffman was arrested at the Chicago airport for carrying a pocket knife. In 1969, Hoffman became one of the famous "Chicago 7" because of his arrest on charges of conspiring to disrupt the Democratic convention. Although he was acquitted on those charges, he was convicted of contempt for his disruptive courtroom behavior. Eventually even those charges were dropped.

Hoffman joined the campus lecture circuit, speaking against the war, but in 1973 police arrested him for selling cocaine to undercover agents. Hoffman jumped bail, went underground, dyed his hair, and underwent plastic surgery. His antiwar protests ended. Hoffman turned himself in to the authorities in 1980, entering a work release program in 1981. After his release from the program, Hoffman went on the campus lecture circuit, averaging seventy speeches a year. In 1986, he was working for Radio Free USA and writing a book, *Steal This Urine Test*, a manual on how to tamper with drug test equipment. Late in November 1986, he was arrested for protesting [Central Intelligence Agency](#) employment recruitment on the campus of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; "Hoffman Survives," *USA Today*, November 28, 1986; Mitchell Cohen and Dennis Hale, eds., *The New Student Left: An Anthology*, 1966.

James Hindman



## HONOLULU CONFERENCE OF 1965

Late in April 1965, with the military and political situation in [South Vietnam](#) deteriorating, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)), [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#), Ambassador to South Vietnam [Maxwell Taylor](#), and Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs [William Bundy](#) met in Honolulu to develop a strategy for escalation of the American involvement in [Indochina](#). As a result of the conference, President [Lyndon Johnson](#) agreed to use American combat forces to supplement the South Vietnamese army. He decided to send approximately 40,000 additional American soldiers. They would be used in the "enclave strategy," which restricted their operations to within 50 miles of their base area. No troops would be sent to the [Central Highlands](#). Along with these nine United States [Marine](#) and Army battalions, [Australia](#) agreed to send one battalion and [South Korea](#) three. The possibility of future troop commitments was left open, as was the option of invading the Central Highlands. The commitment of large contingents of ground troops was a turning point in the war, a shift away from [counterinsurgency](#) and an air war over the North to a large-scale ground war in the South.

Source: Edward W. Knappman, ed., *U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia*, 1974.

Gloria F. Collins

## HONOLULU CONFERENCE OF 1966

President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) announced on February 4, 1966, that he would consult with representatives of [South Vietnam](#) in Honolulu, Hawaii. The president was accompanied to the conference (February 6-8) by [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#), Ambassador to South Vietnam [Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.](#), General [William Westmoreland](#), and Special Adviser General [Maxwell Taylor](#). At the conference, Johnson and his associates met with [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) and [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), South Vietnam's top leaders. The American press argued that Johnson's decision to hold the conference was designed to counter Senator [J. William Fulbright](#)'s announcement on February 3, 1966, that the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#) would open hearings on U.S. policies in Southeast Asia. At the conference, Johnson assured Ky and Thieu that American resolve was firm, but that the U.S. commitment would be politically easier to sustain if the South Vietnamese could reform their own government. During the conference they also discussed economic questions, the resumption of bombing of North Vietnam, and the possibility of the [People's Republic of China](#) entering the war. At the end of the meeting the participants released the Declaration of Honolulu, a joint communique in which both governments promised to work for peace, political reform, refugee resettlement, economic growth, and control of inflation. It also called for defeat of the [Vietcong](#) and self-determination for the people of South Vietnam.

Source: Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

Gloria Collins

## HOOPES, TOWNSEND

Townsend Hoopes was born on April 28, 1992, in Duluth, Minnesota. He graduated from Yale in 1944. During the 1950s Hoopes was a consultant with the State Department, and in January 1965 President [Lyndon Johnson](#) appointed Hoopes assistant [secretary of defense](#). In October 1967 Hoopes became under secretary of the U.S. Air Force. When Secretary of Defense [Robert S. McNamara](#) resigned in February 1968 and was replaced by [Clark Clifford](#), Hoopes gained influence and eventually helped convince Clifford that the Vietnam War was unwinnable and that the United States should disengage as quickly as possible. Hoopes helped supply information for the well-known *New York Times* story of March 12, 1968, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)) were asking for another 206,000 troops and that administration officials were dismayed. In 1969 Hoopes recounted the period in *The Limits of Intervention*.

Source: Townsend Hoopes, *The Limits of Intervention*, 1969.

Charles Dobbs

## HOP TAC

Hop Tac was the nickname for the short-lived pacification program (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) General [William Westmoreland](#) tried to implement around [Saigon](#) in 1964. Shortly after arriving in [South Vietnam](#) and during his first year there, Westmoreland tried to pacify the guerrilla-held provinces around Saigon. The idea was to use South Vietnamese troops to move out from Saigon, eliminating all [Vietcong](#) and distributing American supplies to win the loyalties of the peasants. The French had earlier tried a similar policy, called *quadrillage*, which involved pacifying small quadrants of rural areas at a time and hoping to maintain their loyalties. Westmoreland's program was the first in a long string of American failures at guerrilla pacification. [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) soldiers frequently deserted to escape confrontation with the Vietcong, especially after they had left the [II Corps](#) area where their families lived. The South Vietnamese also failed to deliver the supplies which might have convinced the peasantry to remain loyal. Westmoreland abandoned Hop Tac in mid-1965 after losing all his faith in the abilities of South Vietnamese troops.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986.

## HUE

First built by Emperor [Gia Long](#) early in the nineteenth century, Hue was the imperial capital of Vietnam between 1802 and 1945. It is located on Highway 1 (see "[Street Without Joy](#)"), about 420 miles south of [Hanoi](#) and 670 miles north of [Saigon](#). Hue was an independent municipality under the [Republic of Vietnam](#) and had a population of more than 205,000 when the war ended in 1975. The city suffered extensive damage during the [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968 but remains today a cultural center for all of Vietnam.

Sources: Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, 1958, and *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## HUE, BATTLE OF (1968)

For the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese, [Hue](#) was a city with tremendous historical significance. Formerly the imperial capital of a united Vietnam, the center of Vietnamese cultural and religious life, and capital of Thua Thien Province, Hue became an important symbol in the struggle for dominance of [Indochina](#). It was also a difficult city to defend. Isolated by the Annamese mountain chain and bordered by [Laos](#) to the west and the [Demilitarized Zone](#) to the north, Hue was without access to a major port for resupply. Still, before the [Tet Offensive](#), Hue was considered secure for South Vietnam. That all ended on January 31, 1968.

At 3:40 A.M. that morning [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) [artillery](#) began pounding the city. Elements of the NVA 6th [Regiment](#) simultaneously attacked [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) headquarters in Hue and [ARVN 1st Division](#) headquarters. Other NVA troops blockaded Highway 1 (see "[Street Without Joy](#)") north and south of the city and attacked several hundred other sites in the city. By daylight, the Vietcong flag was flying atop the Imperial Citadel of the [Nguyen](#) emperors. Hue had fallen to the Communists.

The American and [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN) counterattack on Hue began almost immediately, with huge volumes of artillery, [naval bombardment](#), and air strikes reducing much of Hue to rubble while elements of the [1st Air Cavalry Division](#), the [101st Airborne Division](#), the ARVN 1st Division, the [U.S. 1st Marines](#), and ARVN Rangers and Marines engaged in house-to-house, hand-to-hand combat with NVA troops and Vietcong. The Imperial Citadel was not recaptured from the Communists until February 24, 1968. Hue had been devastated. More than 50 percent of the city had been totally destroyed, and 116,000 people of a total population of 140,000 had been rendered homeless. Nearly 6,000 civilians were dead or missing, and several thousand more were assassinated outright during the Vietcong occupation. The NVA and Vietcong suffered 5,000 dead; the United States, 216 dead and 1,364 seriously wounded; and ARVN, 384 dead and 1,830 seriously wounded. Like the [Tet Offensive](#) in general, the battle for Hue was a tactical defeat for the Communists as well as a strategic victory. In taking control of the city, if only for several weeks, they had proven that MACV predictions of an imminent Communist collapse were totally groundless, undermining American faith in the credibility of political and military leaders. Hue in particular, and Tet in general, was indeed the turning point in the war.

Sources: Clark Dougan and Steven Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: Nineteen Sixty-Eight*, 1983; Don Oberdorfer, *Tet!*, 1971; James R. Bullington, "And Here See Hue!," *Foreign Service Journal* (November 1968), pp. 18-21, 48-49; Keith W. Nolan, *The Battle for Hue: Tet, 1968*, 1973.

## HUE, BATTLE OF (1975)

In March 1975, on the eve of the North Vietnamese assault on [South Vietnam](#), [Hue](#) was defended by the 369th Marine Brigade to the west, the [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) [1st Division](#) and 15th Ranger Group to the South, and the 14th Ranger Group to the north. The ARVN commander of [I Corps](#) was Lt. General Ngo Quang Truong. [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) troops in the B-4 Front Group and elements of the 341st Division were poised by March 19 at the My Chanh River north of Hue, while the NVA 325C and 324B [divisions](#) were preparing to descend out of the [Central Highlands](#) to attack the ARVN 1st Division and 15th Ranger Group. NVA [artillery](#) attacks were increasing in intensity throughout March, and large numbers of [refugees](#) were fleeing the city, heading south along Highway 1 (see "[Street Without Joy](#)") toward [Da Nang](#).

On March 20, 1975, confusing orders reached General Truong from South Vietnam President [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), which Truong interpreted as a demand for sacrificing the defense of Hue in order to hold the line at Da Nang. At the same time, the NVA General Staff ordered a drive to cut Highway 1 and isolate Hue. The 324B and 325C divisions drove through the ARVN 1st Division and 15th Ranger Group by March 23, cutting Hue off from Da Nang. On March 24, General Truong began evacuating ARVN forces from Hue. NVA troops entered the city the same day.

Sources: Clark Dougan and David Fulghum, *The Vietnam Experience: The Fall of the South*, 1985; [Van Tien Dung](#), *Our Great Spring Victory*, 1977; Alan Dawson, *55 Days: The Fall of South Vietnam*, 1977.

## HUMPHREY, HUBERT HORATIO

Born in 1911 in Wallace, South Dakota, Hubert Humphrey worked as a pharmacist before graduating magna cum laude in 1939 from the University of Minnesota. In 1941 Humphrey received a master's degree from Louisiana State University, and then he returned and taught for a year at the University of Minnesota. He began his public career as head of the Minnesota Branch of the Federal War Production Administration (1941-43), assistant regional director of the War Manpower Progress Commission (1943), and teacher in the Army Air Force training program at Macalester College in Minneapolis (1943-44). As a Democrat rooted in agrarian populism and small-town bourgeoisie, Humphrey was an unsuccessful candidate for mayor of Minneapolis in 1943, but in 1944 he worked to merge the state's Democratic and Farm Labor parties. Political success followed. After a stint as [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#)'s Minnesota campaign manager in 1944, Humphrey was elected mayor of Minneapolis on the Democratic-Farm Labor ticket. He was reelected in 1947 by the largest plurality in city history.

Humphrey entered the national scene at the Democratic presidential nominating convention of 1948 in Philadelphia by leading the successful effort for a strong civil rights plank in the party platform. That fall Humphrey was elected to the U.S. Senate, defeating incumbent Republican Joseph H. Ball. Although somewhat brash and indefatigable in his advocacy of civil rights, Humphrey entered the Senate's inner circle, especially after his reelection in 1954 and 1960. His Senate career was devoted to the causes of civil rights, medicare, and pro-labor legislation. Humphrey had been a founding member of the Americans for Democratic Action and served as its president in 1949 and 1950, so his liberal credentials were impeccable.

As an advocate of [containment](#), Humphrey was an early and ardent supporter of American intervention in Vietnam. He accepted the [domino theory](#) and believed the United States must take a stand in Southeast Asia if communism was not to spread across the globe. Humphrey accepted a spot on [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)'s 1964 presidential ticket, and as vice president one of his prime duties was to marshal support for the increased direct involvement of U.S. armed forces in Vietnam. As the escalation continued between 1965 and 1968, Humphrey was continuously heckled as he became one of the few administration spokesmen willing to publicly defend the war effort.

Increasing domestic discontent over the war led to rival presidential bids by Democratic Senators [Robert F. Kennedy](#) and [Eugene McCarthy](#) in 1968, both of whom challenged Johnson for the nomination. Johnson's [withdrawal](#) from the contest in March 1968 surprised the nation, including Vice President Humphrey, who fell heir to Johnson's formidable political support within the party. Shunning the open primaries, Humphrey built up support among the urban party machines and state party organizations, and after the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy and the disruptive nominating [convention](#) in Chicago, Humphrey was the Democratic candidate. Burdened by his association with a failing war policy, subject to intensive harassment on the campaign trail yet loyal to the president who was ultimately responsible for his candidacy, Humphrey finally made a last-minute effort in the campaign to distance himself from Johnson's war policy by calling for a negotiated settlement. Humphrey's moderate change of heart was one of many factors which narrowed the race with Republican candidate [Richard M. Nixon](#) and third-party candidate George Wallace. Although a decided winner in the electoral vote, Nixon's victory margin in 1968 was only 43.4 percent of the popular vote to 42.7 percent for Humphrey and 13.5 percent for Wallace.

In 1970 Humphrey was reelected to the U.S. Senate. A short-lived effort to promote a 1972 presidential candidacy received no significant support within the party. Reelected to the Senate in 1976, Humphrey's main goal was full-employment legislation which designated the government as the employer of last resort. In a 1974 interview Humphrey commented on U.S. policy in Vietnam. He noted that very often big powers ``miscalculate overestimating our power to control events. Power tends to be a substitute for judgment and wisdom." Humphrey died of cancer on January 13, 1978.



Sources: *New York Times*, January 14, 1978; George Donth, *Leaders in Profile: The United States Senate*, 1975; Carl Solberg, *Hubert Humphrey: A Political Biography*, 1984.

David Bernstein

## HUYNH PHU SO

Born in the [Mekong Delta](#) village of [Hoa Hao](#) in 1919, Huynh Phu So had a youth besieged by illness until he entered a monastery in 1939 where he experienced what he termed a miraculous cure. Using his considerable oratorical skills as well as expertise in herbal medicine and acupuncture, Huynh Phu So founded a new [Buddhist](#) sect, the Hoa Hao. He quickly converted thousands of peasants south of [Saigon](#), stressing the importance of inner experience and the irrelevancy of external evidence. Each member of the Hoa Hao was expected to pray four times daily to Buddha, ancestors, and national heroes. Worried about his growing influence, the French arrested and imprisoned him in a mental hospital in 1940, where he converted his physician and a number of staff people. The French intended to exile him to [Laos](#), but by then the Japanese had taken over [Indochina](#), and Huynh Phu So was placed under house arrest in Saigon. The [Japanese](#) allowed him to see disciples and continue to direct his religious work. By then Huynh Phu So had an army of nearly 50,000. After World War II, Huynh Phu So established the Dan Xa, or Social Democratic party, and the Hoa Hao had become a powerful political-religious sect in southern Vietnam. The movement continued to grow, and by the mid-1950s the Hoa Hao and [Cao Dai](#) were very influential in the Mekong Delta, with strong sympathies among perhaps half the area's six million people. In April 1947, [Vietminh](#) guerrillas killed Huynh Phu So. No comparable leader appeared among the Hoa Hao to replace him.

Sources: [Bernard Fall](#), "The Political Religious Sects of Vietnam," *Pacific Affairs* 28 (1955), 235-53; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## HUYNH TAN PHAT

Huynh Tan Phat was born in 1913 just outside of [My Tho](#) in Dinh Tuong Province. He went to school at [Hanoi](#) University and became actively involved in anti-French nationalism. During the years of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#)'s reign over the [Republic of Vietnam](#), Huynh Tan Phat became active in the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)), becoming its secretary-general in 1964. In 1969 he became president of the [Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam](#).

Source: Danny J. Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976.



I

IA DRANG VALLEY, BATTLE OF (1965)

INCIDENT AT MUC WA

INDOCHINA

INFILTRATION

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF CONTROL AND SUPERVISION

IRON TRIANGLE (WAR ZONE D)



## IA DRANG VALLEY, BATTLE OF (1965)

The battle of the Ia Drang Valley began with a North Vietnamese attack on the [Special Forces](#) camp at Plei Me in the [Central Highlands](#) on October 19, 1965. The brand-new [1st Cavalry Division](#), responsible for the security of the Central Highlands and the critical Highway 19 which ran through them toward the coast, was ordered to the relief of Plei Me, even though the division had not yet finished developing its airmobile tactics. The operation was code-named Silver Bayonet. Using airmobility, the division's 1st Brigade was able to fly over a North Vietnamese ambush and relieve the Special Forces camp. The [North Vietnamese Army](#) troops deployed in the ambush now had to flee back toward their base camps near the Cambodian border in the Chu Phong mountains. In their retreat they were harried constantly from the air by the 1st Cavalry Division.

In early November the division's 3rd Brigade began a "search and destroy" operation intended to break up the North Vietnamese concentration and destroy the NVA forces in the Ia Drang Valley and the nearby mountains. On November 14 the 1st Battalion of the 7th Cavalry unwittingly landed in the midst of a large body of North Vietnamese troops, bringing on an intense and bloody two-day battle. Fighting was so fierce that relief forces had to land a considerable distance from the action, and for the first time American ground forces were directly supported by [B-52](#) strikes. The 2nd Battalion of the 7th Cavalry was ambushed while moving toward the scene of the original fighting, bringing on another daylong battle in which some American units, cut off and surrounded, were almost wiped out. The rest of the American forces managed to hang on to their positions with the assistance of air strikes and [artillery](#) fire. On November 18, the North Vietnamese broke off the action and withdrew. The 1st Cavalry Division returned to its base at An Khe on November 26. In the fighting, the division lost some 300 men killed. North Vietnamese dead totaled some 1,770 in the entire campaign.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Thomas D. Boettcher, *Vietnam: The Valor and the Sorrow*, 1985; John Albright et al., *Seven Firefights in Vietnam*, 1970.

Robert S. Browning III

## INCIDENT AT MUC WA

*Incident at Muc Wa* was the title of Daniel Ford's 1967 novel on the Vietnam War. The book centers on Corporal Stephen Courcey, a demolitions expert who has just arrived in Vietnam. Along with several other American soldiers, he establishes an outpost at Muc Wa. The novel proceeds to expose the absurdities of the war through tragicomedy. Courcey's girlfriend from the states shows up at Muc Wa as a war correspondent, but she is unable to meet him because he is off in the jungles with a visiting general and army captain who are trying to earn their Combat Infantry Badges. The novel provides a caricature of stupid officers fighting a war for the wrong reasons. In the end, the troops at Muc Wa fight off a [Vietcong](#) attack, and the Vietcong, in Ford's words, finally "exfiltrate" the area. In the end, Courcey is killed in action.

Sources: Daniel Ford, *Incident at Muc Wa*, 1967; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Vietnam Experience*, 1982.



## INDOCHINA

“Indochina” is the name Westerners have traditionally applied to parts of Southeast Asia, including [Vietnam](#), [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), and [Laos](#). Under French rule its area was about 288,000 square miles, 10 percent larger than Texas. A spine of mountains runs from northwest to southeast from northwest to southeast from the [Chinese](#) border to the sea near [Nha Trang](#), with peaks rising from 8,524 feet north of [Pleiku](#) to 10,308 feet near China. Interspersed with plateaus, mountains also run from the coast at Nha Trang southwesterly to within 100 miles of [Saigon](#). Cambodia is largely a basin, surrounded on the north by the Dangrek Range, on the southwest by the Cardamom and Elephant ranges, and on the east by Vietnam’s highlands and the [Mekong Delta](#). The north’s significant river valley is that of the Song Koi, or Red. The Mekong River, which rises in China, flows southward through Laos, then forms the Laotian-Thai border, and finally flows through Cambodia and southern Vietnam to the South China Sea south of [Ho Chi Minh City](#) (Saigon). Light soil in the hills is easily eroded, but the river valleys are highly fertile. Traditional culture came to terms with the environment of heat, monsoon, and disease, depending upon pigs, forest trees, rice, and [water buffalo](#) to help in cultivation.

Paleolithic man was present in northern Vietnam over 10,000 years ago, neolithic man overspread the entire region from about 8000 to 5000 B.C., and a bronze age culture ranged from coastal Indochina to Indonesia from about 500 to 300 B.C. The people who were Proto-Vietnamese formed a kingdom known variously as Vat Lang and Au Loc, perhaps as early as 500 B.C., and this was conquered by Han Dynasty Chinese by 111 B.C. With brief moments of independence, it remained Chinese until A.D. 940, having come to be known as Nam-Viet. Despite a brief Ming Dynasty reconquest from 1407 to 1427, Vietnam emerged as a permanently independent entity. [Buddhism](#) had become an increasing influence, though [Confucianism](#) from China remained significant, especially for the mandarin rulers.

Indian influence had entered the southern part of Indochina by A.D. 100, being fairly strong in the kingdom of [Champa](#), established about that time. With internal troubles in India by the end of the sixth century A.D., the [Khmers](#) emerged as the strongest people in southern Indochina, with monumental architecture on the Indian model in the reign of Isarnavarman I (616-635). During the ninth century the Khmers established themselves near Tonle Sap (the “great lake”), founding Angkor and the empire that bore its name. Angkor endured repeated attacks by Champa and [Thailand](#), gradually decaying. The city itself was taken and looted by a Thai army in 1431, effectively ending the Khmer Empire. By this time Hinayana Buddhism was replacing the original god-king cult with its imported elements of the Hindu cult of Shiva. The Khmer collapse liberated the region now known as Laos, most of which Angkor had controlled. The new kingdom of Lan Xang appeared, which had to fight off Burmese attacks and where Thai influence became dominant by the end of the eighteenth century.

By this time Vietnam, with increasing population based on successful rice culture, had completed its own conquest of the coastal region, which was won, slice by slice, from Champa and then Cambodia, the less imposing successor to Angkor. Vietnam reduced Cambodia to a vassal state, exacting tribute, and dividing it into three residencies, each under a Vietnamese proconsul. There was attempted [Vietnamization](#) of Cambodian culture, the monarchy was in effect abolished, and total conquest was prevented only by the imposition of French control of the region. (For that era, see [France](#).) Vietnamese influence did not control more mountainous and Thai-influenced Laos, and especially in the mountains, there remained tribes of other ethnic groups, ranging from the Sino-Tibetan [Meo](#) to the Malay [Chams](#).

The population of Indochina at the end of the French era in 1954 was about 26,800,000, of whom some 21,000,000 were Vietnamese, 3,000,000 Cambodians, 1,000,000 Moi and Kha, 600,000 Laotians, 600,000 Chinese, 300,000 Man and Meo, 200,000 Muong, 100,000 Cham, and 40,000 Europeans. Sources: Bernard Philippe Groslier, *Indochina*, 1966; John F. Cody, “The French Colonial Regime in Vietnam,” *Current History* 50 (1966), 72-78, 115; Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1940-1955*, 1966.

Robert W. Sellen

## INFILTRATION

Throughout the years of the Vietnam War, one of the major U.S. challenges was stopping the infiltration of men and supplies into [South Vietnam](#) by the North Vietnamese. Between 1959 and 1975, [North Vietnam](#) sent supplies and reinforcements to the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese soldiers by three means: along the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) down through the Laotian panhandle to the eastern border of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) and then along smaller branches into the [A Shau Valley](#), [Ja Drang Valley](#), and [War Zone C](#); from Sihanoukville in neutral Cambodia by truck to bases along the Cambodian and Laotian border; and by small ships and junks down the coast of the South China Sea and then upriver in various regions of the [Republic of Vietnam](#). After 1970, when [Lon Nol](#) deposed Prince [Sihanouk](#) and realigned Cambodia with the United States, that infiltration route through Sihanoukville was shut off. Nevertheless, despite the elimination of that route and the application of enormous American firepower along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the South China Sea, North Vietnam still managed to ship supplies. Between 1959 and 1964, North Vietnam infiltrated more than 30,000 personnel into South Vietnam, and that number increased to 36,000 in 1965, 92,000 in 1966, and 101,000 in 1967. By 1968 North Vietnam was able to send more than 10,000 troops a month into South Vietnam, and enough food to feed them and ammunition to equip them, along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and through the American blockade of the South China Sea.

Source: William E. LeGro, *Vietnam from Ceasefire to Capitulation*, 1981.

## INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF CONTROL AND SUPERVISION

One of the provisions of the Paris Accords of 1973 was establishment of a four-nation International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS). It replaced the International Control Commission (ICC), a three-country body established by the [Geneva Conference of 1954](#). The ICC was composed of [Canada](#), India, and Poland. The Paris Accords provided for those three nations to continue on the new ICCS, but India declined and was replaced by Indonesia. Hungary became the fourth member. Canada withdrew in August 1973 when she realized the North Vietnamese were still intent on taking over [South Vietnam](#). Iran then became the fourth member. The ICCS headquarters were located near [Saigon](#) at [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#). It had no power and became the butt of jokes among the Americans, South Vietnamese, and North Vietnamese vying for control in Southeast Asia.

Sources: Walter Scott Dillard, *Sixty Days to Peace*, 1982; Ramesh Thakur, *Peace-keeping in Vietnam: Canada, India, Poland, and the International Commission*, 1984.

## IRON TRIANGLE (WAR ZONE D)

The Iron Triangle was a National Liberation Front (NLF; see [Vietcong](#)) stronghold 20 miles northwest of [Saigon](#) which had been built by the [Vietminh](#) twenty years before in the war against French colonialism. Serving as a supply depot and staging area with a vast underground complex including command headquarters, dining halls, hospital rooms, munitions factories, and living quarters, it was never cleared by the French, nor was it successfully neutralized by the United States or [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam). Located between Saigon, Tay Ninh, and Song Be cities, the Triangle comprised about 125 square miles and included portions of [Bien Hoa](#), Binh Duong, Phuoc Long, Long Khanh, and Hau Nghia provinces. It was generally bounded by the Saigon River, the Song (river) Thi Thinh north of Bien Hoa, and the Than Dien Forest in Binh Duong Province. The area was heavily forested, consisting of jungle and rubber plantations and containing a few small villages and hamlets, the most strategic being [Ben Suc](#), which had been under NLF control since 1964.

In January 1967 the United States and ARVN mounted the war's first major combined operation and the first U.S. [corps](#)-size operation. [Operation Cedar Falls](#) deployed 32,000 troops against the Triangle. Its "[search and destroy](#)" objective was to engage and eliminate enemy forces, destroy base camps and supplies, remove all noncombatants along with possessions and livestock to strategic hamlets, and completely destroy four principal villages. Extensive underground complexes were found, and large quantities of supplies and papers were captured. The complete U.S. arsenal was employed, intensive bombing, flamethrowers, chemical warfare (defoliants and the first authorized major use of CS, or tear, gas), and land-clearing Rome plows. Units participating in Cedar Falls included the [173rd Airborne Brigade](#), the [196th](#) and [199th Infantry brigades](#), elements of the [1st](#) and [25th Infantry divisions](#), the [11th Armored Cavalry Regiment](#), and the ARVN 5th Ranger [Group](#).

There was little fighting as the NLF fled to [sanctuaries](#) in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) until the operation was finished. However, the destruction, chronicled in Jonathan Schell's *The Village of Ben Suc*, was considerable. About 7,000 [refugees](#) were created and the region was made uninhabitable to anyone other than NLF-NVA forces. The operation's magnitude increased NLF utilization of Cambodian sanctuaries; however, they did return to rebuild camps which became springboards for the assault on Saigon during the [Tet Offensive](#), 1968. Subsequent operations against the Iron Triangle included Uniontown, Atlas Wedge, and Toan Thang.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Shelby Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman



## J

JAPAN

JASON STUDY

JAVITS, JACOB KOPPEL

JOHNS HOPKINS SPEECH

JOHNSON, HAROLD KEITH

JOHNSON, LYNDON BAINES

JOINT GENERAL STAFF





## JAPAN

Japan played several important roles in the Vietnam conflict. Historically, the original drive for Vietnamese independence received substantial impetus from Japanese occupation during World War II. When Japan conquered [Indochina](#) in 1941, it chose to leave French bureaucrats in nominal control, belying Japanese wartime propaganda of "Asia for the Asians" and greatly reinforcing Vietnamese [anticolonialism](#). Supported with U.S. supplies and advice, the [Vietminh](#) had fought against Japanese occupation forces, becoming popular heroes in the process and the de facto government in the countryside. When the French returned to power in 1946, the Vietminh simply turned their nationalist energies against them. Japan's rhetoric and occupation policies had accelerated the movement for Vietnamese independence.

Japan also served as a primary rationale for U.S. intervention in Vietnam after the French debacle at [Dien Bien Phu](#) in 1954. China had become a Communist state in 1949; the Korean War had seemingly demonstrated the expansionist nature of communism between 1950 and 1953; and a [containment](#)-oriented American foreign policy worried about Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. If Vietnam fell to communism, the United States argued, a sequence of disastrous events would follow: both Japan and the United States would lose access to Indochina's natural resources; Japanese economic expansion would be curtailed since Indochinese markets would be closed; and Japan would be forced into an accommodation with both the [Soviet Union](#) and the [People's Republic of China](#). Japan was the United States's closest ally in Asia and had to be protected through American intervention in Vietnam. Finally, the United States had to prove to the Soviet Union, the Chinese, and the other nations of the world its commitment to stopping communism.

During the war itself, Japan played only a peripheral role. Despite the U.S.-Japanese security treaty of 1960, Japan resisted American blandishments to become more involved in the conflict. They viewed the American commitment in Vietnam as excessive and ultimately as a dangerous mistake. Japan's role in the conflict was confined to playing host to the [Seventh Fleet](#) and various U.S. air wings, and permitting U.S. personnel to find necessary hospitalization and rest and recreation. Potent leftist elements periodically provoked domestic turmoil over such issues as hospitalized American soldiers in Japan conveying virulent tropical diseases to Japanese civilians or the dangers of expanding airports, especially at Narita, which could then be used for American air operations against Vietnam. The leftists were never successful, however, in convincing the Japanese public that the United States was engaged in a racist war in Vietnam. Japan also adopted a conservative posture for fear of inciting her Communist neighbors in North Korea and China. Finally, Japan wanted to maintain commerce with North Vietnam. It was the presence of Japanese ships in Haiphong which restrained initial American plans to bomb and mine the harbor.

The irony, of course, is that the Vietnam War may actually have hastened the Japanese accommodation with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. With Vietnam monopolizing U.S. diplomatic interests, with the articulation of the [Nixon Doctrine](#) in 1969, and with the shock of not being consulted about [Henry Kissinger](#)'s secret initiatives to the People's Republic of China, Japan felt free, even compelled, to adopt a more independent diplomatic course in Asia. Although Japan remains solidly pro-Western, she is more wary about her relations with the United States and more independent in her dealings with the major powers. Sources: Stanley Robert Larsen and James Lawton Collins, Jr., *Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 1975; Frank Gibney, *Japan: The Fragile Superpower*, 1975; Edwin O. Reischauer, *Japan: Story of a Nation*, 1974; John K. Emmerson, *Arms, Yen and Power*, 1971.

Gary M. Bell

## JASON STUDY

By the spring of 1966, [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#) was beginning to have serious misgivings about the nature of the war in Vietnam. Two of his closest civilian aides, [John McNaughton](#) and Adam Yarmolinsky, began searching for alternatives to the war, and in the summer of 1966, with the assistance of the Institute of Defense Analysis, a think tank, they organized a conference of perhaps fifty leading scholars at Wellesley, Massachusetts. They met there throughout the summer of 1966, and their collective report came to be known as the Jason Study. The major conclusion of the report was that American air strikes on Vietnam were having little effect and might even be counterproductive. Because much of [North Vietnam](#) was a subsistence, agricultural economy, air strikes did not sufficiently disrupt economic affairs. The flow of supplies into South Vietnam was not materially affected by air strikes, and the [People's Republic of China](#) and the [Soviet Union](#) quickly replaced any supplies lost. Worse still, the volume of supplies making their way into the south had actually increased since the bombing began, and the morale of the North Vietnamese had measurably stiffened. The Jason Study confirmed many of McNamara's growing suspicions about the war and converted him into an advocate of negotiation and an end to the bombing of North Vietnam.

Source: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## JAVITS, JACOB KOPPEL

Jacob Javits was born in New York City on May 18, 1904. He took a law degree from New York University in 1927, practiced law privately, and served in the United States Army during World War II. In 1946 Javits was elected to Congress, and he won a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1956. A liberal Republican, Javits became a leading Republican critic of the Vietnam War. He supported both the [Cooper-Church Amendment](#) and the [Hatfield-McGovern Amendment](#), and in 1970 he sponsored legislation to restrict the ability of the president to conduct war without congressional authorization. It was passed over [Richard Nixon's](#) veto in 1973 and was known as the [War Powers Resolution](#). In 1980 Javits lost the Republican primary in New York. Since then he has suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease. Sources: Jacob Javits, *Who Makes War: The President versus Congress*, 1973; *Biographical Directory of American Congresses*, 1971.

## JOHNS HOPKINS SPEECH

On April 7, 1966, amidst widespread opposition to the Vietnam War, President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) delivered a speech at Johns Hopkins University and offered to hold "unconditional discussions" with the North Vietnamese about ending the conflict. Johnson also held out the proverbial diplomatic "carrot," offering a billion-dollar economic development program for the [Mekong Delta](#). The only hitch in the offer, of course, was Johnson's insistence that the United States would not negotiate with the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)) and was committed to the existence of a non-Communist, independent [South Vietnam](#).

Sources: George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; *New York Times*, April 8, 1966.

Dudley Acker

## **JOHNSON, HAROLD KEITH**

Harold Keith Johnson was born on February 22, 1912, in Bowesmont, North Dakota. He graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1933, and spent all of World War II in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp after participating in the Bataan death march. Johnson saw active duty in the Korean War. He rose up through army ranks until July 6, 1964, when he was appointed army chief of staff. Johnson retired from the army in 1968 and died on September 24, 1983.

Source: *New York Times*, September 25, 1983.

## **JOHNSON, LYNDON BAINES**

Lyndon Baines Johnson was born on August 27, 1908, in the Hill Country of central Texas and was raised in Johnson City. He attended Southwest State Teachers College, took a year off to teach school in Cotulla, Texas, and then graduated in 1930. Johnson taught school briefly in Houston before becoming assistant to the newly elected congressman from the Fourteenth District in Texas, Richard M. Kleberg. As a congressional aide, Johnson excelled at meeting and cultivating people, especially Congressman Sam T. Rayburn, the dean of the Texas delegation. After serving two years as the state director of the National Youth Administration, Johnson won his own seat in Congress, and served there until 1949. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1948 in an election marked for its bitterness and fraud. Johnson became majority leader of the Senate in 1955 and earned a formidable reputation as a legislative strategist. After failing to win the Democratic presidential nomination in 1960, Johnson accepted a position as running mate with [John F. Kennedy](#), and he became vice president of the United States in 1961. When Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, Johnson became the thirty-sixth president of the United States.

As president, Johnson earned impeccable liberal credentials for his support of civil rights and antipoverty programs, but his [Great Society](#) administration was politically destroyed in the jungles of Southeast Asia. Accepting the official U.S. view of the Vietnam War as one of pure Communist aggression, Johnson ignored anti-Western feelings and the serious flaws of the [Saigon](#) governments, and allowed himself to be trapped into escalation. He limited genuine consultation to "hawks," most of whom also failed to grasp Vietnamese realities, and unlike Kennedy, Johnson did not know how to question their advice. His queries to them were confined to techniques and amounts; he assumed the correctness of American military involvement. Johnson also allowed his goals to escalate from stopping aggression to "winning," presumably by destroying both the enemy's forces and will to continue.

Consequently, he obtained from Congress the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) in August 1964, which authorized him "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression," a virtual blank check. Johnson consistently reacted vigorously to attacks on American personnel or installations, beginning and increasing the bombing of [North Vietnam](#), sending ever more troops into [South Vietnam](#), and allowing them to fight on the ground independently of [ARVN](#) forces (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam). Johnson paid lip service to the idea of a negotiated settlement, but he ignored warnings by such advisers as [George Ball](#), who understood the power of Vietnamese nationalism. By 1968 Johnson had more than 540,000 troops in Vietnam, plus powerful naval forces off the coast and [B-52s](#) bombing from bases in Guam, Okinawa, and [Thailand](#).

The enemy fought on, but Johnson refused to admit that his strategy of [attrition](#) (see war of attrition) was not working. He replaced [Robert McNamara](#) as [secretary of defense](#) when the latter began to turn "dovish." Late in January and early February 1968, the [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) launched the [Tet Offensive](#), hitting Saigon and thirty provincial capitals, and despite heavy [casualties](#), they earned a strategic victory by demoralizing American public opinion. When, after Tet, General [William Westmoreland](#) requested 206,000 more American troops, Johnson asked [Clark Clifford](#), his new secretary of defense, to evaluate the request. Clifford asked Pentagon officials if more troops would guarantee a victory in South Vietnam, and when they hedged their answers, he advised Johnson to seek peace. Johnson was enraged and almost fired Clifford. Stunned by his near defeat at the hands of Senator [Eugene McCarthy](#) in the New Hampshire presidential primary, and depressed about the prospects of Senator [Robert Kennedy](#) of New York seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, Johnson withdrew from the campaign at the end of March and announced a bombing halt and a willingness to seek a negotiated settlement. He then quibbled over such details as a meeting place for peace talks which, when they began in Paris in May, dragged on inconclusively until the end of his term. Johnson left the White House in January 1969 and retired to his Texas ranch, where he died on January 22, 1973.

Sources: Robert W. Sellen, "Old Assumptions versus New Realities: Lyndon Johnson and Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 28 (Spring 1973), 205-229; Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power*, 1982; and Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, 1976.

Robert W. Sellen

## JOINT GENERAL STAFF

The Joint General Staff (JGS) was the South Vietnamese equivalent of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS; see [Chairman, JCS](#)). JGS headquarters were in [Saigon](#). The major difference between the JGS and the JCS was that the JGS had direct operational control over the South Vietnamese forces. United States commanders of the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#), especially Generals [William Westmoreland](#) and [Creighton Abrams](#), cooperated closely with, but did not control, the JGS.

Source: William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 1976.





## K

KAMPUCHEA

KATTENBURG, PAUL

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## KAMPUCHEA

Covering nearly 70,000 square miles in Southeast Asia, Kampuchea (formerly Cambodia) had a 1985 population of 6,180,000. The country is a great basin composed of one gigantic alluvial floodplain formed by numerous streams. Near the center of the basin is a huge, shallow lake called Tonle Sap. It has hundreds of tributaries flowing in, and the lake drains southeast into the Mekong River via a complex system of distributaries. However, when the Mekong floods, the drainage is reversed and the river backs into Tonle Sap. Three-quarters of Kampuchea is heavily forested, and rice is cultivated on 80 percent of the arable land.

Approximately 85 percent of the people are ethnic Khmer. The vast majority of them are small farmers raising rice. About 9 percent of the population are ethnic Vietnamese and 5 percent ethnic [Chinese](#), and both of these groups dominate commerce and industry. Ethnic conflicts between the Khmer and the Vietnamese are fundamental to an understanding of Kampuchean history. Anciently, the Khmer occupied much of the [Mekong Delta](#) in southern Vietnam, but as the ethnic Vietnamese expanded out of northern Vietnam in the sixteenth century, they pushed the Khmer west back into Kampuchea. Both countries were under French rule until 1954, but even after independence the expansionary pressures of the ethnic Vietnamese on the Khmer continued. That pressure precipitated the 1970 coup d'etat, the 1975 triumph of the [Khmer Rouge](#), and the genocidal rage of [Pol Pot](#) in the late 1970s.

Prince [Norodom Sihanouk](#) became head of state in Cambodia in 1954, and he walked a neutralist tightrope between the Vietnamese-backed Khmer Rouge Communists and the American-backed South Vietnamese. His prime minister [Lon Nol](#), however, was bitterly anti-Communist and resented the willingness of Sihanouk to allow [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) troops to occupy [sanctuaries](#) in eastern Cambodia and infiltrate supplies and personnel into [South Vietnam](#) via the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#). Sihanouk tolerated their presence there only because he feared a North Vietnamese invasion and the triumph of the Khmer Rouge if he tried to drive Vietcong and NVA soldiers out. Beginning in 1969 he secretly allowed the United States to begin bombing enemy targets inside Cambodia (see [Operation Menu](#)). In March 1970 Sihanouk traveled to [France](#), and while he was gone Lon Nol engineered a coup d'etat. The National Assembly displaced Sihanouk, and Lon Nol became the new head of state. Lon Nol then tacitly agreed to the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in April 1970. Prince Sihanouk fled to the [People's Republic of China](#) and announced his support for the Khmer Rouge.

In October 1970 Lon Nol abolished the monarchy and proclaimed a republic, but in effect he had become the dictator of Cambodia. His administration was marked by extraordinary corruption and ineptitude, and his 1971 stroke left him unable to maintain control of the government. Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge made steady gains in the countryside. In the spring of 1975 the Khmer Rouge surrounded the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh. Lon Nol fled to Hawaii early in April 1975, and the Khmer Rouge overran the capital later in the month. They then renamed the country Kampuchea, its ancient name.

Pol Pot, the leader of the Khmer Rouge, then declared "Year Zero" and began forcibly depopulating all Kampuchean cities, forcing everyone into rural labor camps and murdering anyone and everyone with ties to the French, Norodom Sihanouk, and Lon Nol. The killings assumed genocidal dimensions, with up to two million people dying between 1975 and 1979. Astonished by the brutality of Pol Pot, worried about the political stability of the regime, and still interested in their ancient quest for dominance of the Khmer people, the Vietnamese went on the march again when soldiers of the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#) invaded Kampuchea in 1979. They drove to the capital and Pol Pot fled back into the jungles, organizing remnants of the Khmer Rouge into a new guerrilla force fighting against the Vietnamese occupation force.

Sources: William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Michael Vickery, *Cambodia, 1975-1982*, 1984; William Shawcross, *The Quality of Mercy. Cambodia, Holocaust, and the Modern Conscience*, 1984; Ben Kiernan, "How Pol Pot Came to

Power," Ph.D. diss., 1986.

Gerald L. Holder

## KATTENBURG, PAUL

Born in Austria in 1922, Paul Kattenburg immigrated to the United States in 1940 and earned degrees at the University of North Carolina (B.S.), Georgetown University (M.A.), and Yale (Ph.D.). Between 1952 and 1956 he served in the State Department as an [Indochina](#) research analyst and between 1963 and 1964 as Vietnam desk officer. At a meeting of the [National Security Council](#) on August 31, 1963, Paul Kattenburg became the first known American official to recommend [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam. He had traveled to [South Vietnam](#) many times on State Department business in the 1950s and early 1960s, and he became convinced that the regime of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) would never survive and that the [Vietcong](#) would eventually prevail. His recommendation was summarily rejected by [Dean Rusk](#) and [Robert McNamara](#), and Kattenburg was quickly cut off from the advisory-decision-making process on Vietnam. After he left public service, Kattenburg became the Charles L. Jacobsen Professor of Public Affairs at the University of South Carolina. Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; *New York Times*, June 25, 1971.

Samuel Freeman

## KATZENBACH, NICHOLAS

Nicholas Katzenbach was born in Philadelphia in 1922. He attended Princeton until joining the army in 1942 and spent most of the war in Italian and German POW camps. When the war was over, he returned to Princeton and was allowed to graduate in 1945 by taking special examinations. Katzenbach then received a law degree from Yale in 1947. A Rhodes scholarship took him to Oxford between 1947 and 1949, and he then returned to the United States to practice law. In 1952 Katzenbach joined the law faculty at Yale, and between 1956 and 1960 he was professor of law at the University of Chicago Law School. With the election of [John F. Kennedy](#) in 1960, Katzenbach came to Washington as an assistant attorney general where he specialized in civil rights issues. He helped draft the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965. Katzenbach's reputation for composure under pressure was enhanced in December 1962 when he negotiated the release of prisoners captured by Cuba during the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

When he became under [secretary of state](#) in 1966, Katzenbach, who had no direct experience with foreign policy, spent his early months reading files and briefs and in discussion with his colleagues. Yet his experience in the Department of State was less successful than in the office of the attorney general. In an early session with the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#), Katzenbach provoked dismay among those who believed that he would continue in the tradition of his predecessor, [George Ball](#), who did not favor the escalation of the war. Katzenbach, when asked by the committee to interpret the 1964 [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#), argued that in its wording, it supported [President Johnson](#)'s right to escalate the war as he saw fit. In this and other situations, Katzenbach's analytical approach and propensity to reconcile opposing viewpoints led his former admirer to see him as a mere functionary, unwilling to argue against a doubtful policy. Katzenbach has been a senior vice president and general counsel for IBM since 1969.

Sources: U. S. Navasky, "No. 2 Man at State is a Cooler-Downer," *New York Times Magazine*, December 24, 1967; *Who's Who in Finance and Industry, 1985-86*, 1985.

Joanna D. Cowden

## KENNAN, GEORGE FROST

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on February 16, 1904, George Kennan attended Princeton University and joined the Foreign Service of the State Department in 1926. He served as U.S. ambassador to the [Soviet Union](#) in the early 1950s and became an expert on Russian affairs. In a 1947 article in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, Kennan became the father of the [containment](#) policy, a foreign policy strategy to keep the Soviet Union behind her 1945 military boundaries. The Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, NATO, Berlin Airlift, and the other regional treaty organizations were all examples of containment. Since 1956 Kennan has worked as a professor of historical studies at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton. Among his many books are *Russia Leaves the War*, *American Diplomacy 1900-1950*, and *Realities of American Foreign Policy*.

By the 1960s, however, Kennan was becoming a minority voice in foreign policy circles because of his conviction that the containment policy was being indiscriminately applied to too many unique situations. In Vietnam, he was convinced that nationalism, not communism, was the moving force behind the rebellion, and from the beginning he opposed U.S. involvement in the war. He argued that it was a mistake for the United States to ally itself with a corrupt regime incapable of winning the confidence of most South Vietnamese. Kennan also harbored serious doubts about whether the United States could administer a military defeat to the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese using only conventional weapons. On February 10, 1966, Kennan testified before the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#), arguing that since the region was not of military or industrial importance, and that since the area would remain philosophically independent of Russian or [Chinese](#) influence, the United States should withdraw as soon as possible.

Sources: George Kennan, *Memoirs, 1950-1963*, 1972; [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972.

Kim Younghaus



## KENNEDY, EDWARD MOORE

Edward Moore Kennedy was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on February 22, 1932. He graduated from Harvard University in 1956 and then took a law degree at the University of Virginia in 1959. In 1962, with his brother [John](#) serving as president of the United States and his other brother Robert serving as attorney general in the Kennedy cabinet, Edward Kennedy won election as a U.S. senator. In the Senate he staked out his own political ground with expertise in labor, judicial, and medical issues, but after the assassination of [Robert Kennedy](#) in 1968, Edward inherited the mantle of his anti-Vietnam commitment. He flirted with a run for the presidency in 1968, and his campaign book *Decisions for a Decade* outspokenly opposed the American commitment in Vietnam, condemned the "search and destroy" strategy, and called for military defense of limited [sanctuaries](#). By 1969 Kennedy was openly critical of the Nixon administration's continuing commitment to the struggle in Vietnam, and he also condemned the "gross corruption" of the government of the [Republic of Vietnam](#). But that year the incident at Chappaquidick Island and the death of Mary Jo Kopeckne all but destroyed Kennedy's presidential chances. He criticized the Nixon administration for the Cambodian invasion (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) in 1970 and began calling for an immediate [withdrawal](#) of American forces from Southeast Asia. Kennedy tried to make presidential runs in the primaries of 1972, 1976, and 1980 but failed in each of them. He was reelected to the Senate in 1968, 1974, 1980, and 1986. Sources: John Galloway, *The Kennedys and Vietnam*, 1971; Edward M. Kennedy, *Decisions for a Decade*, 1968.

## KENNEDY, JOHN FITZGERALD

John F. Kennedy was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, on May 29, 1917. He graduated from Harvard in 1940 and served in the Pacific with the United States [Navy](#) during World War II. He inherited the political mantle of the Kennedy family in Massachusetts, especially after his older brother Joseph was killed in Europe during the war, and in 1946 he was elected to Congress. He won a seat as a Democrat in the U.S. Senate in 1952, came close to winning a spot as Adlai Stevenson's vice presidential running mate in the election of 1956, and in 1960 defeated [Richard Nixon](#) for the presidency.

Kennedy's involvement with Vietnam, in one way or another, had existed well back into the 1950s. He was a relatively typical Cold Warrior, urging [Eisenhower](#) to resist Communist expansion in [Indochina](#). When it was clear the French would withdraw, Kennedy urged Eisenhower to back the government of [Roman Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in South Vietnam. When Kennedy became president in 1961, he asked the United States Army to develop [counterinsurgency](#) forces and General [Maxwell D. Taylor](#) to oversee the program. In 1963 Kennedy announced that "now is the time" and "Vietnam is the place" for a firm stand against Communist aggression. Kennedy also replaced Army Chief of Staff General George Decker with General [Earl Wheeler](#), who was more of a supporter of counterinsurgency tactics.

Believing in the [domino theory](#) and committed to [containment](#) policies, Kennedy was gradually drawn deeply into the Vietnamese quagmire. He ended up following a middle road, primarily because the advice he received from civilian and military advisers was so contradictory. By 1963 there were more than 16,000 U.S. economic and military advisers in South Vietnam and the political and military situation was already deteriorating. Some U.S. officials in Washington and [Saigon](#) urged support for an army coup in Vietnam; some urged stronger backing for Ngo Dinh Diem; a few people like [Chester Cooper](#) urged [withdrawal](#). Kennedy, tired of the manifest corruption of the Diem regime, opted for the coup but was surprised when news came in of Diem's assassination. Years later, Kennedy supporters claimed that he was seriously considering a military withdrawal from Vietnam, but that he was waiting for the end of the 1964 election so Republicans would not be able to accuse him of being soft on communism. Kennedy's critics, as well as [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) loyalists, disagree, arguing that Kennedy was too much of a Cold Warrior to have considered such an option, and that he had steadily escalated the conflict in Indochina throughout his administration. John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963.

Sources: Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, 1965; [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; William J. Rust, *Kennedy in Vietnam*, 1985; Bruce Miroff, *Pragmatic Illusions: The Presidential Politics of John F. Kennedy*, 1976.

Charles Dobbs

## KENNEDY, ROBERT FRANCIS

At age forty-two, while campaigning for the 1968 Democratic presidential nomination, Kennedy was assassinated by Sirhan Sirhan in Los Angeles, dying on June 6, 1968. Born in Boston in 1925, he graduated from Harvard and the University of Virginia Law School. He managed the successful presidential campaign of his brother [John](#) in 1960, and served as attorney general during his brother's presidency and then under President [Lyndon Johnson](#). In 1964 he resigned and was elected to the U.S. Senate from New York. He remained a senator until his death.

In 1962, when his brother was president, Robert Kennedy said, "we are going to win in Vietnam. We will remain here until we do win," although he played a very limited role in Vietnam policy while he was attorney general. He initially supported Johnson administration Vietnam policies; however, as a senator he had increasingly dissented from Johnson's policies, particularly after the resumption of bombing of [North Vietnam](#) in 1966. Nonetheless, Robert Kennedy had refrained from making an open break with Johnson until he announced his candidacy for the presidency on March 16, 1968. He said that he wanted to end the bloodshed in Vietnam. "In private talks and in public I have tried in vain to alter our course in Vietnam before it further saps our spirit and our manpower, further raises the risks of wider war, and further destroys the country and the people it was meant to save." In his campaign he opposed further military escalation in Vietnam and U.S. bombing of the North. However, he did not enter the race until after [Eugene McCarthy](#) had made a strong showing against Lyndon Johnson in the New Hampshire primary. Two weeks later, Johnson said he would not seek reelection. Just before he was murdered, Kennedy had won the California Democratic primary, and was making a strong bid for his party's presidential nomination.

Sources: Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 1978; [David Halberstam](#), *The Unfinished Odyssey of Robert Kennedy*, 1968.

Hoyt Purvis

## KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

After President [Richard M. Nixon](#) announced that American and South Vietnamese soldiers had invaded [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) on April 30, 1970, to eliminate [Vietcong](#) base camps and stop the [infiltration](#) of materiel and personnel from [North Vietnam](#), students across the country demonstrated against the escalation of the war. On May 1, 1970, students at Kent State University in Ohio marched against the war and rioted, shattering windows, lighting fires, and damaging cars. The next night some of them arsoned the ROTC building on campus. When firemen arrived to put out the blaze, some students seized the firehoses and turned them on the firemen. Governor James Rhodes ordered in the National Guard, declared martial law, and announced that campus violence must come to an end. Rhodes felt the rioters were part of a revolutionary group and he ordered that students not be allowed to assemble in groups on the campus until the disturbances were over.

Around noon on May 4, 1970, antiwar protesters staged another rally. Campus police asked them a number of times to disperse, and when they refused, armed guardsmen advanced on them. A group of students began hurling chunks of concrete and rock at the guardsmen, and the guardsmen reacted with tear gas grenades. Apparently one of the guardsmen thought he heard a sniper shot and he opened fire. Others joined him, some of them firing directly into the crowd of students. They fired a total of thirty-five rounds at students approximately sixty feet away. Four students died and fourteen were wounded. The incident triggered hundreds of college protest movements and a march on Washington, D.C., on May 9, 1970. The guardsmen were brought to trial but found not guilty.

Sources: Weldon Brown, *The Last Chopper*, 1976; Clark Dougan and Steven Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: A Nation Divided*, 1984; James Michener, *Kent State: What Happened and Why*, 1971; Richard E. Peterson and John Bilorsky, *May 1970: The Campus Aftermath of Cambodia and Kent State*, 1971.

Gloria Collins

## KHAM DUC AIRLIFT EVACUATION

As early as April 1968 intelligence analysts began to observe signs that the Kham Duc [Special Forces](#) Camp near the Laotian border 50 miles southeast of [Da Nang](#) was being threatened in a way similar to that of the [Khe Sanh](#) base. By early May it appeared that large contingents of [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese units were preparing to attack, and beginning May 10, American commanders reinforced the installation. On May 10-11, 1968, American and Allied forces at Kham Duc found themselves under intense [artillery](#), mortar, and recoilless rifle attacks. Losses on May 10 alone were heavy: fifteen killed, fifty-two wounded, and sixty-four missing in action. As a result of these losses, the prospect of increased activity by the enemy, and the relatively poor defensive potential of the base, General [William Westmoreland](#) ordered the evacuation of Kham Duc.

The evacuation of the garrison at Kham Duc on May 12, 1968, was one of the most spectacular operations of the war. Intermittently through much of the day, United States Army and [Marine](#) helicopters lifted out survivors, while allied air strikes held off the enemy on all sides. While under constant attack early in the morning, a [C-130](#) landed to pick up evacuees. It received heavy damage while on the landing strip and was able to carry out only three passengers because fuel was streaming from the fuselage through shrapnel holes. A C-123 transport, however, was able to make a successful morning pickup of several evacuees. In the early afternoon, three C-130s attempted pickups. Enemy fire destroyed one after it took off with more than 100 civilian passengers; another, crippled in landing, was abandoned. Only the third made a successful landing and evacuation. Then, late in the afternoon, three additional C-130s succeeded in bringing out the last of the garrison. Of the 1,500 survivors of Kham Duc, the United States Air Force flew out more than 500, nearly all in the final crucial minutes before the outpost fell.

One final evacuation mission took place, when a C-130 landed at the now enemy-controlled Kham Duc landing strip to bring in a three-man air force control team. By the time the team realized that all Allied forces had been withdrawn, the C-130 carrying them had already departed. To rescue this team a C-123 landed under heavy fire and successfully removed them.

Source: Alan L. Gropman, *Airpower and the Airlift Evacuation of Kham Duc*, 1979.

Roger D. Launius

## KHE SANH

Khe Sanh is a town in [Quang Tri](#) Province located on Highway 9 between [Laos](#) and [Dong Ha](#). It is just below the [Demilitarized Zone](#) along the Laotian border. For seventy-five days late in 1967 and early in 1968, Khe Sanh was the site of one of the most publicized battles of the Vietnam War, where American and South Vietnamese forces inflicted a major military defeat on [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese forces.

Sources: Moyers S. Shore II, *The Battle for Khe Sanh*, 1969; Bernard C. Nalty, *Air Power and the Fight for Khe Sanh*, 1973.

## KHE SANH, BATTLE OF (1967-68)

Khe Sanh, located 18 miles south of the [Demilitarized Zone](#) and 8 miles east of the Laotian border in [Quang Tri](#) Province, had been a small [Special Forces](#) base since 1962, but General [William Westmoreland](#) in 1965 took note of its strategic significance as well. For him Khe Sanh could be used for clandestine operations into [Laos](#) or a major invasion of Laos, reconnaissance flights over the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#), and as a base for cutting off [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) [infiltration](#) into [South Vietnam](#) along Route 9. When NVA infiltration increased in 1966, Westmoreland had a [Seabee](#) unit extend the airstrip and had the United States Marines send a [battalion](#) (1st Battalion, 3rd Marines) to Khe Sanh. In the spring of 1967 Khe Sanh was garrisoned by the 1st Battalion of the 26th Marines. Intelligence estimates also began pointing a massive increase in traffic along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and American military officials assumed the North Vietnamese were planning a large-scale invasion, with Khe Sanh a key point in the attack.

That was just what the North Vietnamese wanted them to assume. They were actually planning the [Tet Offensive](#) for 1968, and as a preliminary to that offensive they wanted to draw American troops away from the major population centers of South Vietnam to diversionary battles in remote areas. In October and November NVA soldiers attacked the marines at [Con Thien](#) as well as [Loc Ninh](#) and Song Be near [Saigon](#), and [Dak To](#) in the [Central Highlands](#). Late in 1967, military intelligence indicated that the NVA 325C [Division](#) was northwest of Khe Sanh; the 304th Division was southwest; and elements of the 324th and 320th [divisions](#) were close enough to provide reinforcements. In all it appeared that 25,000 to 40,000 NVA regulars were prepared to engage American forces in a head-on military confrontation. In response, General Westmoreland prepared [Operation Niagara](#), an armada of more than 5,000 aircraft and helicopters to pulverize NVA troops in an unprecedented [artillery](#) bombardment. He also had 6,000 U.S. Marines sent in to defend Khe Sanh. The NVA siege of Khe Sanh began on January 21, 1968.

## KHMER KAMPUCHEA KRON

With 700,000 people, the Khmer were one of the largest minority groups in the [Republic of Vietnam](#). Most of them were concentrated in the [Mekong Delta](#) region of southwestern South Vietnam. In the seventeenth century ethnic Vietnamese had expanded out of [Annam](#) into Khmer land and wrested it from them. Ever since, the ethnic and territorial rivalry between the Vietnamese and Khmer of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) has been intense. Kampuchea Kron was the name given to the Khmer areas of southern Vietnam. During the 1950s an armed band of ethnic Cambodian soldiers, known as the Khmer Kampuchea Kron, began fighting against the regime of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), demanding the return of Khmer land to Cambodia. By the early 1960s, U.S. [Special Forces](#) had convinced the Khmer Kampuchea Kron to fight against the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese, and large numbers of the Khmer Kampuchea Kron were incorporated into [Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) military units. After the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, the Khmer Kampuchea Kron often fought as guerrillas against the troops of the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#), whom they viewed as aggressors out to destroy all of Cambodia (Kampuchea).

Sources: Michael Vickery, *Cambodia, 1975-1982*, 1984; Joan L. Schrock et al., *Minority Groups in the Republic of Vietnam*, 1967.



## KHMER ROUGE

Khmer Rouge means "Red Cambodians," and is the term describing the Communist party in [Kampuchea](#) (Cambodia). The Khmer Rouge was first organized by Vietnamese Communists from both [North](#) and [South Vietnam](#), and they waged guerrilla war against the neutral government of Prince [Norodom Sihanouk](#). Until 1969, the North Vietnamese gave only tacit support to the Khmer Rouge because Sihanouk allowed them to ship military equipment and supplies through the Cambodian port at Kompong Som and across the country by truck to Communist bases along the Laotian and Cambodian borders with South Vietnam. But the North Vietnamese were angered when Prince Sihanouk agreed to [Operation Menu](#), the secret U.S. bombing of those bases in 1969. They increased their support of the Khmer Rouge, and substantially increased it in 1970 when General [Lon Nol](#), an American supporter, deposed Sihanouk. Between 1970 and 1975 the Khmer Rouge strengthened its position in Cambodia, isolating Lon Nol's Cambodian army to city fortresses and forcing their surrender in 1975.

Led by [Pol Pot](#), formerly Saloth Sar, the Khmer Rouge then imposed a genocidal reign of terror throughout Cambodia, depopulating the cities in the hope of creating an agrarian utopia, and murdering more than two million people in the process. By that time the Khmer Rouge had become a threat and an embarrassment to the North Vietnamese, and in December 1978, they conquered most of Cambodia, forcing the Khmer Rouge to withdraw to remote jungles to resume their guerrilla activities, this time against their Vietnamese enemies.

Sources: William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Francois Ponchaud, *Cambodia: Year Zero*, 1978; Ben Kiernan, "How Pol Pot Came to Power," Ph.D., diss., 1986; William Shawcross, *The Quality of Mercy: Cambodia, Holocaust, and the Modern Conscience*, 1984.

## KHMERS

The Khmers, an ethnic minority group numbering approximately 700,000 people, are similar in history and culture to the people of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). It was not until the eighteenth century, when Vietnamese control reached the [Mekong Delta](#), that the Khmers became part of Vietnam. They were concentrated northwest of [Saigon](#) around Tay Ninh, southwest of Saigon around Phu Vinh, and throughout An Xuyen Province. While most Vietnamese are faithful to Mahayana [Buddhism](#), the Khmers are Hinayana [Buddhists](#). Taller, darker, and less Mongoloid than the Vietnamese, the Khmers were distinguished in dress by tight, buttoned-down jackets and skirts with a lower end brought forward between the legs and tucked in at the waist. During the 1960s and 1970s, tens of thousands of Khmers escaped the fighting in Vietnam by fleeing across the border into Cambodia. The Vietnamese tended to look down upon the Khmers as a primitive, less civilized people than themselves.

Source: Harvey Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967.

## KHRUSHCHEV, NIKITA

Premier of the [Soviet Union](#) between 1958 and 1964, Nikita Khrushchev was born in 1894 and gradually rose to power in the Communist party after joining it in 1918. Khrushchev was a loyal follower of Josef Stalin, became a member of the Central Committee in 1934, and joined the Politburo in 1939. After Stalin's death in 1953, Khrushchev won a power struggle with Georgy Malenkov and became first secretary of the Communist party. He was ultimately removed as premier in 1964, primarily because of continuing Soviet problems with the [People's Republic of China](#), terrible agricultural harvests, and the apparent diplomatic defeat of the Soviet Union in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Khrushchev was troubled by the increasing American commitment in Vietnam during the early 1960s, but he genuinely did not want to see a major military conflict in Southeast Asia, primarily because he had no idea of what role China would play in it. In 1964, when the North Vietnamese came to Moscow with requests for huge increases in military support, Khrushchev agreed, but only if the North Vietnamese would consider a negotiated settlement with the United States. But when Khrushchev was removed from office in October 1964, all hopes for negotiations died. Khrushchev then lived in obscurity until his death in 1971.

Source: Carl A. Linden, *Khrushchev & the Soviet Leaders, 1957-1964*, 1966.

## KIA

“KIA” was the acronym for “Killed in Action.” Technically, any serviceman or servicewoman who died as a result of wounds sustained in action with enemy forces was classified KIA. This included wounds inflicted in a variety of ways, both conventional (e.g., bullets, [artillery](#) shells, grenades, and mortar rounds) and unconventional (e.g., [booby traps](#) and mines). This classification did not include deaths due to circumstances unrelated to combat, such as traffic accidents, homicides, snake bites, and aircraft crashes due to faulty maintenance. Consequently, while the [Vietnam Memorial](#) “wall” lists the names of over 58,000 American servicemen and servicewomen who died in Southeast Asia between 1959 and 1975, nearly 11,000 were not technically killed in action.

Sources: Ronald J. Glasser, *365 Days*, 1971; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

Stafford T. Thomas

## **KING, MARTIN LUTHER, JR.**

Martin Luther King, Jr., was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. He graduated from Morehouse College in 1948 and the Crozer Theological Seminary in 1951, and then took a Ph.D. in theology from Boston University in 1955. King rocketed into the national consciousness as leader of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 and 1956, and in 1957 he established the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to fight segregation. In 1960 King was one of the founding members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Inspired by the passive disobedience of Mahatma Gandhi in India, King applied those same tactics to the American South, leading demonstrations, sit-ins, boycotts, and protest marches. By 1965, when the Vietnam War escalation began, King was the premier civil rights leader in the United States.

From the very beginning of the conflict in Vietnam, King had serious misgivings about it, seeing it as a misguided effort on the part of the United States which the Third World would interpret as simply another attempt by the white, industrialized West to colonize the rest of the world. King was also disturbed by the effect of the [draft](#) on the black community and the inordinately large numbers of [casualties](#) [black soldiers](#) were sustaining in 1965 and 1966. In 1967, King openly protested the Vietnam War and linked the civil rights and antiwar movements together, a step which earned him the ire of President [Lyndon Johnson](#) and most civil rights leaders. Other civil rights leaders, both black and white, worried that linking the two movements would only dissipate the force of the campaign for equality. But King was convinced that the Vietnam War was diverting financial and emotional resources away from domestic programs and into a futile effort abroad. By 1968 the rest of the country was slowly coming around to King's point of view, but his voice was stilled by an assassin on April 4, 1968.

Sources: Lenwood G. Davis, *I Have a Dream: The Life and Times of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 1973; Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 1982.

## KISSINGER, HENRY ALFRED

Henry A. Kissinger was born in Furth, Germany, on May 27, 1923, and his family emigrated to the United States in 1938, fleeing Nazi persecution of German Jews. He joined the army during World War II and spent time in occupied Germany after the conflict working in the military bureaucracy. Kissinger returned to the United States and pursued his education, eventually receiving a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1954. Specializing in diplomacy, Kissinger wrote his doctoral dissertation on the Congress of Vienna (1815), displaying his appreciation for power politics and his disdain for the moralistic assumptions which, in his opinion, so frequently prevent long-term solutions to nationalistic rivalries. Kissinger taught at Harvard during the 1950s and early 1960s, and during those years he was a leading figure in the rise of "nuclear strategy" among intellectuals who considered thermonuclear weapons a reality which must be coordinated in any realistic defense policy. Kissinger's 1957 book *Nuclear War and Foreign Policy* argued that tactical nuclear weapons could be considered a highly useful tool in defense strategy. Filmmaker Stanley Kubrick used Kissinger as the model for the deranged Dr. Strangelove in his 1964 movie of the same name. Kissinger served as a consultant to both the [Kennedy](#) and [Johnson](#) administrations in the 1960s, and acquired a larger political profile between 1964 and 1968 as a foreign policy aide to Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York, who was unsuccessfully pursuing the presidency. Before his inauguration in January 1969, President [Richard M. Nixon](#) appointed Kissinger special assistant for national security affairs.

From the very beginning, both Kissinger and Nixon took the middle road about Vietnam, realizing that military victory was impossible but refusing to implement a unilateral [withdrawal](#). They wanted to turn the war over to the South Vietnamese while maintaining the international credibility of the United States. [Vietnamization](#), the policy they proposed in June 1969, became the institutional reflection of their middle-of-the-road approach. Simultaneously with a gradual, phased withdrawal of American troops, the United States would hand over war materiel to the South Vietnamese and continue to provide them naval and air support. Kissinger realized that the government of [South Vietnam](#) was notoriously corrupt and probably incapable of defeating the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese, so he intended, through the threat of military escalation and the carrot stick of U.S. economic assistance, to convince [North Vietnam](#) to settle the conflict.

Between 1969 and 1973, Henry Kissinger was the central figure in the diplomatic effort to restore peace in Southeast Asia. He held secret talks with officials from North Vietnam, the National Liberation Front (see Vietcong), the [Soviet Union](#), and the [People's Republic of China](#) between 1969 and 1973 while the official [peace talks](#) were going on in Paris. The negotiations were complicated by the rigidity of both sides: the North Vietnamese insisted on a complete halt of American bombing of North Vietnam, total withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Vietnam, removal of [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) as president of South Vietnam, and participation of the National Liberation Front (NLF) in any new government in South Vietnam. The United States demanded a mutual withdrawal of American and North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam, refused to abandon Nguyen Van Thieu, and insisted that the NLF be excluded from the political process in South Vietnam.

Progress in the peace talks did not really come until 1972. Adept at power politics, Kissinger was intent on exploiting the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the [People's Republic of China](#), and he secretly visited Beijing in July 1971 to prepare for Nixon's famous February 1972 trip there. Similarly, Kissinger pursued a policy of detente with the Soviet Union, which Nixon followed up on with his summit meeting in Moscow in May 1972. By that time pressure to end the war in Vietnam was becoming overwhelming. Both Kissinger and Nixon realized the conflict in Southeast Asia was retarding their efforts to reach an accommodation with China and the Soviet Union; and the [antiwar movement](#) at home, particularly after the invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) in 1970, was demanding an end to the conflict.

In the summer of 1972 the peace talks finally began to yield results, but only because of major modifications in the U.S. negotiating position. Kissinger was dealing head-to-head with [Le Duc](#)

[Tho](#), North Vietnam's negotiator, and in October 1972 they reached an agreement. The United States agreed to halt the bombing of North Vietnam, allow the NLF to participate in the political process in South Vietnam, let [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) troops remain in place in South Vietnam, and withdraw all American troops. The North Vietnamese agreed to a prisoner-of-war exchange and dropped their demand that Nguyen Van Thieu be removed from office in South Vietnam. When the North Vietnamese appeared in November 1972 to be stepping back from their October agreement, Nixon ordered massive bombing of [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong, as well as [mining of Haiphong Harbor](#). In January 1973, Le Duc Tho agreed to uphold the October 1972 settlement. The two nations signed a formal agreement on January 27, 1973.

In September 1973, Nixon named Kissinger the new [secretary of state](#), but by that time the [Watergate](#) scandal had compromised the administration's ability to pursue either its domestic or foreign policy agenda. After Nixon's resignation in August 1974, Kissinger remained in office, serving as secretary of state under President [Gerald Ford](#) and engineering the ill-advised attack on Cambodia in 1975 after the [Mayaguez incident](#). Kissinger left the State Department in January 1977 when President Jimmy Carter and the Democrats assumed the reins of power. Since then Kissinger has lectured and written widely about American foreign policy.

Sources: William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*, 1983; Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1979, and *Years of Upheaval*, 1982.

## KIT CARSON SCOUTS

Kit Carson Scouts were former [Vietcong](#) guerrillas who had ``rallied" to the government, often under the [Chieu Hoi](#) Program, and who were willing to act as scouts for U.S. units. New scouts would be closely watched and regarded with suspicion, for they could not always be trusted. Some ``rallied" only to work for the Vietcong as spies or to lead U.S. units into traps. However, most were very reliable, risking and often losing their lives for the units they served. Consequently, good Kit Carson Scouts were highly prized and treated accordingly by their units. They had familiarity with the terrain and culture, understood Vietcong tactics in establishing ambushes, and could identify [booby traps](#). They also recognized Vietcong base and assembly areas from indicators Americans did not notice. Finally, Kit Carson Scouts were able to identify Vietcong collaborators in villages as well as Vietcong masquerading as civilians.

Source: Peter Goldman and Tony Fuller, *Charlie Company*, 1983.

Samuel Freeman



## KOMER, ROBERT WILLIAM

Robert William Komer was born on February 23, 1922, in Chicago, Illinois. He graduated from Harvard in 1942 and then received an M.B.A. there in 1947 after serving in the army during World War II. Komer joined the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA) in 1947 and remained there until 1960. At the CIA, Komer was a Middle East expert. He was appointed to the [National Security Council](#) in 1960, serving there as a Middle East expert, and in 1965 Komer became a deputy special assistant to President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#). One year later he was promoted to special assistant. Considered by journalist [David Halberstam](#) to be one of "the best and the brightest," Komer invested all his energies in the Vietnam conflict, and became one of the most optimistic advisers on Johnson's staff, always insisting the United States could win the war if only it could secure the support of the Vietnamese people. Komer believed military [counterinsurgency](#) had to be combined with social and economic development, and in May 1967 the president sent him to Vietnam where he was appointed civilian deputy to the commander of the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#). Working directly with General [William Westmoreland](#), Komer established the [Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support](#) (CORDS) program to increase local support for the American war effort. Although Komer believed the ultimate answer in Vietnam was not a military one, his development program failed. After the [Tet Offensive](#), administration officials put more pressure on Komer for results, so he established the [Accelerated Pacification Program](#) and the [Phoenix Program](#), which was a CIA-sponsored program to assassinate [Vietcong](#) and their sympathizers. Komer was appointed ambassador to Turkey in 1968, and he joined the [Rand Corporation](#) as an analyst in 1969. Komer stayed with Rand until 1977, when the Democrats returned to the White House under Jimmy Carter. He was appointed as NATO adviser in 1977 and as under secretary for policy in the Defense Department in 1979. When Ronald Reagan came to the White House in 1981, Komer left government service to become a lecturer at George Washington University.

Sources: David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985; Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986; John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986; Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on US-GVN Performance*, 1972.

## KOREA

During the Vietnam War, the Republic of Korea sent more combat troops to [South Vietnam](#) than any other American ally. A South Korean liaison unit came to Vietnam in the summer of 1964, and between 1965 and late 1966 their [Capital Division](#), Ninth Infantry Division, and Second Marine Brigade arrived. South Koreans concentrated their combat efforts in [II Corps](#). By 1969 there were nearly 49,000 South Koreans fighting in South Vietnam. During the entire war, the South Koreans suffered 4,407 combat deaths. The Capital and Ninth divisions were withdrawn from South Vietnam in March 1973. South Korea's loyalty to the American war effort in South Vietnam, even though most Korean officials did not think the war was politically winnable, was a direct function of the close relationship existing between the two countries since the Korean War (1950-53).

Source: Stanley Robert Larsen and James Lawton Collins, Jr., *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 1981.

## KOSYGIN, ALEKSEI NIKOLAYEVICH

A Soviet politician who assisted the North Vietnamese with weaponry during the 1960s, Kosygin was born in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) on February 20, 1904. After completing his schooling, he volunteered for the Red Army in 1919. In 1921 Kosygin was released from military service and thereupon entered the Leningrad Co-operative Technicum, where he gained firsthand knowledge of the politics of Soviet Russia. Between 1929 and 1935, young Kosygin was a student at the Leningrad-Kirov Textile Institute. During the 1940s he became a protege of Josef Stalin and eventually became a deputy premier. In 1953, however, he was removed from his deputy premiership after Stalin's death. But Khrushchev brought him back, and in 1964 Kosygin was elected chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

In 1965 Kosygin became directly involved in North Vietnam's struggle against the U.S. The Soviet premier departed from Moscow in February 1965 destined for [Hanoi](#). Before his departure from Moscow he had been reluctant to expand Soviet military aid to the North Vietnamese Communists. He tried to pressure the Hanoi leadership into accepting the possibility of negotiations to end the conflict. While Kosygin was in Hanoi, however, the United States launched air attacks upon Dong Hoi (near Hanoi), which prompted the Soviet premier to reconsider his stance on the Vietnamese conflict.

Upon his return to Moscow, Kosygin told reporters that the United States were the aggressors in Vietnam, calling the American bombing of [North Vietnam](#) "Hitlerite." The Soviet premier felt compelled to defend the USSR's "anti-imperialist" image and thus acquiesced to the Hanoi leadership's request for sophisticated military hardware. Within ten days after his return to Moscow, Soviet surface-to-air missiles (SAM) arrived in Hanoi. Kosygin also warned in press releases that the [Soviet Union](#) could not have normal relations with the United States as long as they were involved in aggression in Vietnam. The Soviet Union continued to send more and more weapons to the North Vietnamese as the U.S. commitment to [South Vietnam](#) widened.

By 1967 the [Johnson](#) administration was wearying of the Vietnam War, although not to the extent of abandoning their South Vietnamese allies. A series of letters were exchanged between Johnson and [Ho Chi Minh](#). These proposals were not firmly thought out, except for the idea of negotiations taking place. Lyndon Johnson insisted that only if North Vietnam ended its hostilities in the South would the United States be willing to end the bombing and enter negotiations to bring the war to a close. The Hanoi regime, on the other hand, refused to even consider talks until a bombing halt was in effect. In early February 1967 Kosygin visited London where Prime Minister Harold Wilson tried to get the Soviet premier to bring pressure on Hanoi to negotiate. Before the meeting Johnson had indicated a willingness to compromise; however, now he insisted on a tougher line toward Hanoi. Only if the North ceased its operations in the South would the United States negotiate. Although Kosygin did pass along these proposals, the North Vietnamese remained silent and thus ended what Wilson called a "historic opportunity." Kosygin would not again act as a broker in the conflict and continued to work at his desk in Moscow until his death in late 1980.

Sources: *Current Biography*, November 1965; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; *New York Times*, December 21, 1980; Robin Edmonds, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1962-1973: The Paradox of a Superpower*, 1975; Leif Rosenberger, *The Soviet Union and Vietnam: An Uneasy Alliance*, 1986.

John S. Leiby

## KRULAK, VICTOR

In command of the [Fleet Marine Force, Pacific](#) (FMFPAC) from 1964 to 1968, "Brute" Krulak was responsible for all marine units in the Pacific area. Born in 1913, Krulak graduated from Annapolis in 1934, observed Japanese operations in [China](#) in the late 1930s, and commanded a parachute [battalion](#) in a diversionary attack on Choiseul Island during the Bougainville Campaign in 1943. Wounded and awarded a [Navy](#) Cross for valor, Krulak then served as a [division](#) operations officer on Okinawa and returned to China at the war's end to assist in the Japanese surrender. In Washington in the late 1940s he worked with staffs seeking to preserve [Marine Corps](#) autonomy during the unification battles, and during the Korean War he helped plan the Inchon landing (1950) and later served as chief of staff of the [1st Marine Division](#) until 1951.

From 1962 to 1964, as the special assistant for [counterinsurgency](#) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)), Krulak gained a reputation as the "military's most skilled bureaucratic player in Washington at the time, a figure of immense import in the constant struggle over Vietnam." Diminutive in size (5'4", 134 lbs) but not in military stature, he had no real operational authority as commander of FMFPAC, but his fifty-four visits in country and lengthy staff experience made him a force to reckon with among top commanders and their civilian counterparts in Washington. Krulak's memoir details the conflict of strategies characteristic of the command and political systems that oversaw the war effort.

In 1968 a faction of officers at Marine Headquarters pushed a Krulak nomination for commandant, but the general, along with fellow competitor [Lewis Walt](#), lost this battle to [Leonard F. Chapman](#). Krulak then retired, joined the Copely Newspaper Service, earned a Ph.D. from the University of San Diego (1970), and wrote a weekly syndicated column in addition to numerous articles and two books on international and military affairs.

Sources: [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps*, 1984.

Dudley Acker

## THE KILLING AT NGO THO

*The Killing at Ngo Tho* is the title of Gene D. Moore's 1967 novel about the Vietnam War. The book centers on a Colonel Scott Leonard, who is a military adviser to General Huang Huu-Lac of [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam). Their headquarters is at Ngo Tho, near the Cambodian border (see [Kampuchea](#)). Leonard and Huang have a good working relationship, but when [Vietcong](#) infiltrate the base, Leonard suspects treachery from Huang's staff. Leonard convinces the general to cooperate, and together they locate the traitor and destroy the Vietcong in the base.

Sources: Gene D. Moore, *The Killing at Ngo Tho*, 1967; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## THE KILLING FIELDS

Released in 1984, *The Killing Fields* was directed by David Puttnam and starred Sam Waterson as *New York Times* journalist Sydney Schanberg, John Malkovich as a photojournalist, and Haing Ngor as Dith Pran, Schanberg's Cambodian associate. The film is set in Cambodia (see [Kampuchea](#)) in 1975 when the [Khmer Rouge](#) overran Phnom Penh. Pran chooses to remain behind with Schanberg and then is unable to be evacuated with the foreign journalists. The rest of the film portrays Pran's struggle for survival and eventual escape from [Pol Pot](#)'s genocidal "Year Zero" campaign, in which the Khmer Rouge annihilated up to two million Cambodians. Pran eventually escapes out of Cambodia via [Thailand](#) and the film ends with Pran and Schanberg meeting again in a Thai refugee camp.

Source: Samuel G. Freedman, "The Killing Fields," *New York Times*, October 28, 1984.

## THE KILLING ZONE

Written by William Crawford Woods, *The Killing Zone* was published in 1970. As [David Halberstam](#) wrote in *The Best and the Brightest*, the Vietnam War was a consequence of liberal extremism, the belief that power and technology could achieve military as well as political ends. Vietnam was high-tech warfare, and in the end the United States discovered it had not been enough. In *The Killing Zone*, Woods writes of a training camp where an outdated professional soldier must train new recruits in the new age of warfare. But in the end there is a grisly training camp accident where several young soldiers are accidentally killed when a computer at the base incorrectly orders the use of live rounds in a training exercise. The novel exposes the intellectual arrogance of the programmers, systems analysts, accountants, statisticians, and experts who organized and conducted the Vietnam War.

Sources: William Crawford Woods, *The Killing Zone*, 1970; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.





**L**

"LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL"

LA VANG BASILICA

LAIRD, MELVIN R.

LAM SON

LAM SON 719

LAND REFORM

LANIEL, JOSEPH

LANSDALE, EDWARD GEARY

LAO DONG PARTY

LAOS

LATTRE DE TASSIGNY, JEAN JOSEPH DE

LAVELLE, JOHN DANIEL

LE DUAN

LE DUC THO

LE LOI

LE THANH NGHI

LE VAN VIEN

LEMAY, CURTIS EMERSON

LIPPMANN, WALTER

LOC NINH, BATTLE OF (1967)

LODGE, HENRY CABOT, JR.

LOH-6

LON NOL

LONG BINH

LONG RANGE RECONNAISSANCE PATROLS

LOWENSTEIN, ALLARD KENNETH

LUCE, HENRY ROBINSON

LUONG NGOC QUYEN

LYND, STAUGHTON

LZ

THE LIONHEADS



## **``LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL''**

First used by General [William Westmoreland](#) at a televised press conference on November 17, 1967, to describe the imminent demise of [Vietcong](#) resistance and an end to the war in Southeast Asia, the term ``light at the end of the tunnel'' eventually was converted by journalists into a sarcastic reference to American leadership, both political and military. Between 1967 and 1975 the term was used hundreds of times in magazine and newspaper articles to describe how misguided U.S. policies were and how American officials basically misunderstood the nature of the war. The term had a fitting climax in 1975 when a GI leaving Vietnam at the end of the conflict showed a poster to a United Press cameraman. The poster had a light bulb shining from a tunnel.

Source: David Culbert, ``Johnson and the Media,'' in Robert A. Divine, ed., *Exploring the Johnson Years*, 1981.

## LA VANG BASILICA

The La Vang Basilica was completed in 1900 as a monument to the alleged appearance of the Virgin Mary to a group of persecuted Roman Catholics in 1798. It was located about four miles outside of [Quang Tri](#) City in Quang Tri Province. The basilica was a favorite pilgrimage site for Vietnamese Catholics until its destruction during the [Eastertide Offensive](#) in 1972.

Source: Danny J. Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976.

## LAIRD, MELVIN R.

Born on September 1, 1922, Melvin R. Laird was a Republican congressman from Wisconsin, 1953-69 and [secretary of defense](#) (1969-72) in the [Nixon](#) administration. Melvin Laird was chosen by Nixon as secretary of defense because, as a veteran congressman, he had much influence in the [U.S. Congress](#) which Nixon believed could be used to diminish criticism from that quarter. Laird believed that he should have direct access to the president. Nixon's [national security adviser](#), [Henry Kissinger](#), feared Laird's influence on Nixon and hence did not want the kind of access the secretary desired. Kissinger established an indirect channel between the White House and Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)) to offset some of Laird's power and influence.

Almost from the outset of his tenure as secretary of defense Laird began to lobby for [troop](#) reductions from Vietnam. He believed that Nixon's goodwill on Capitol Hill would run thin unless the president demonstrated his commitment in curtailing U.S. involvement in [South Vietnam](#). And signs of congressional impatience were apparent in the spring of 1969. There was the normal partisan criticism, however; even the Senate Republican whip, Hugh Scott, called for the [withdrawal](#) of large numbers of troops from Vietnam. Nixon, on the other hand, had promised the American public "peace with honor" but could not accept huge troop reductions unless military conditions changed in South Vietnam.

By late 1969, Laird was pressing for a precise timetable of troop reductions so that by the end of 1971 the United States would have only 206,000 men in South Vietnam. Laird's insistence on troop reductions annoyed Kissinger, who worried that his bargaining position was being damaged by Laird. Kissinger went as far as warning Nixon that the South Vietnamese could not yet carry on the war themselves. Kissinger moreover had his assistants concoct or draft a contingency plan to knock the North Vietnamese out of the war. The proposal included massive bombing attacks on [North Vietnam](#). Laird intervened and warned Nixon that if the plan was implemented, domestic opposition to the war would mount, particularly from congressional sources. Nixon shelved the idea although it would be resurrected in the winter of 1972.

Laird meanwhile continued to press for disengagement and coined the term "[Vietnamization](#)." The defense secretary even visited South Vietnam and came away with the conviction that the South Vietnamese could defend themselves. Laird's appraisal was supported by Sir Robert Thompson, the [British](#) guerrilla warfare specialist. As protests mounted against Nixon's Vietnam policy, Laird responded to critics that Vietnamization was the top priority of the administration. Laird avoided conflict and was convinced that the American public was tired of the war. When military officials pressed for massive incursions into [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) in 1970, he urged restraint. He was vetoed, however, by Nixon and Kissinger. Laird would and did advise restraint in the winter of 1972, when Nixon decided on [mining Haiphong Harbor](#) and using [B-52](#) attacks to bring the North Vietnamese to the conference table. Laird decided to leave the Nixon administration at the end of the president's first term.

Sources: *Who's Who in America*, 1984-1985; Allen E. Goodman, *The Lost Peace*, 1978; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Melvin R. Laird, *The [Nixon Doctrine](#)*, 1972.

John S. Leiby

## LAM SON

Lam Son is a small village in Thanh Hoa Province and the birthplace of [Le Loi](#), the famous Vietnamese nationalist who defeated a contingent of invading [Chinese](#) forces in 1428. Le Loi is one of the most famous names in Vietnamese history. During the Vietnam War, [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) forces frequently used Lam Son as a codename to describe their military operations or their phase of joint military operations with U.S. forces. [Operation Lam Son 719](#), for example, was the codename for the 1971 ARVN invasion of [Laos](#). Lam Son 246 was the ARVN phase of [Operation Somerset Plain](#), the [101st Airborne Division](#)'s assault on the [A Shau Valley](#) in 1968. Lam Son 216 was the ARVN portion of [Operation Delaware](#), the 7th Cavalry's attack on the A Shau Valley that same year. Use of the codename Lam Son in ARVN operations was a symbolic act designating South Vietnam as the "true" descendant of Vietnamese nationalism.

Sources: David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 1981; Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, 1958; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## LAM SON 719

Lam Son 719 was the operational name for the disastrous Laotian invasion of February 1971. [Nixon](#) and [Kissinger](#) anticipated heavy [infiltration](#) of men and materiel during the 1971 dry season in preparation for a major [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) offensive during the 1972 elections. Also hoping to test [Vietnamization](#), they proposed a major [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) initiative for 1971. They initially proposed invading [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) or [North Vietnam](#), but General [Creighton Abrams](#) and President [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) favored cutting the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) in [Laos](#) along Route 9.

The invasion proved to be an unmitigated disaster. Planning was confined to a few people in Washington and [Saigon](#), and the invasion units were given minimal notice and planning time. Congressional restrictions prohibited American ground troops in Cambodia and Laos, preventing American advisers from accompanying their units and coordinating [artillery](#), helicopter, and tactical air support. Despite American predictions that four [divisions](#) would be necessary to secure the road from the border to Tchepone (the objective), ARVN committed only two divisions. The NVA had four seasoned divisions in opposition. The terrain was rugged, restricting ground movement and limiting [flight](#) patterns, all to the NVA's advantage. NVA artillery had greater range, and their familiarity with the terrain gave them a fire direction advantage. Finally, the weather was usually rainy, impeding air support and resupply.

ARVN's best units were committed, 1st Infantry, [Airborne](#), [Marines](#), and Rangers. But the NVA was not surprised, and they drew ARVN away from U.S. artillery, lengthening ARVN supply lines and marshaling resources for a counterattack. Seizing the opportunity to annihilate ARVN's best units, the NVA would have succeeded except for massive U.S. air strikes and American helicopter pilots' ability to extract beleaguered units. Lam Son 719 proved the failure of Vietnamization. ARVN's best units suffered 50 percent [casualties](#). Morale plummeted. It became obvious ARVN was hard-pressed to stand alone. The NVA buildup was not stemmed; their 1972 offensive was furious, initially successful and foreshadowed 1975's Final Offensive (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)).

Sources: Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam*, 1984; Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Lam Son 719*, 1981; David Fulghum and Terrence Maitland, *The Vietnam Experience: South Vietnam on Trial*, 1984; Keith William Nolan, *Into Laos. The Story of Dewey Canyon II/Lam Son 719*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman

## LAND REFORM

At the time of the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#), approximately 60 percent of Vietnamese peasants were landless and another 20 percent owned less than two acres of land. The desire to own land or acquire more land was almost universal in [South Vietnam](#). Tenant farmers paid an average of 34 percent of their annual crop to landlords for use of the land. The [Vietcong](#) had made a strong appeal to South Vietnamese peasants by distributing the land of absentee landlords in the early 1950s, but after [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) took over in 1954, landlords regained control of their property. In areas they controlled, the Vietcong redistributed land and gained a stronger following from peasant farmers. Between January 1968 and December 1969, under the direction of President [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), the government of the Republic of Vietnam began a modest land reform program in which 50,000 families received government land. Thieu also prohibited local officials from restoring land to former landlords. On March 26, 1970, the Republic of Vietnam, at Thieu's urging, passed the Land-to-the-Tiller Act which provided for an end to rent payments and the issuing of ownership titles to the peasants currently working the land. The maximum amount of land anyone could own was 37 acres. By 1972, the Land-to-the-Tiller Act had provided land titles to 400,000 formerly landless peasants, and the land they received totaled more than 1,500,000 acres. The number of farm tenants in South Vietnam was reduced from 60 to 34 percent of the population. By 1973 all but 7 percent of the farmers in South Vietnam owned their own land. The Vietcong had for all intents and purposes lost a major issue alienating the peasants from the government of the Republic of Vietnam.

Source: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978.



## LANIEL, JOSEPH

Born in [France](#) in 1889, Joseph Laniel was educated at the Ecole Gerson, Lycee Janson de Sailly, and the University of Paris. Active in the resistance movement during World War II, Laniel founded the Parti Republicain de la Liberte in 1946. Between 1940 and 1948, he served as [secretary of state](#). Elected minister of state in 1952, Laniel rose to become prime minister of France in June 1953, where he presided over the collapse of the French Indochinese empire. A right-wing politician, Laniel tried to implement the [Navarre Plan](#) and accepted \$400 million in American aid toward that end, but the defeat at [Dien Bien Phu](#) ended his dreams. Laniel was firmly committed to [Bao Dai](#) and did not want Vietnam divided, but he had no power to implement his wishes. His government collapsed before the Geneva Accords were completed, and Laniel was replaced as prime minister by Pierre Mendages-France. Laniel died in April 1975.

Sources: *International Who's Who, 1964-1965*, 1965; *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 6, 1976; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## LANSDALE, EDWARD GEARY

Born in 1908 and a graduate of UCLA, Lansdale was an air force officer and agent for the [Central Intelligence Agency](#). Lansdale had been an architect of the successful counterinsurgency and counterinsurgency effort in the [Philippines](#) in the early 1950s. Consequently, he was assigned to Vietnam in 1954, following the Geneva Accords that ended the First Indochinese War between the [Vietminh](#) and [France](#). His initial assignment was to plan, coordinate, and implement a [psychological warfare](#) ("psywar") campaign in [North Vietnam](#) in the 1954-56 period. His campaign was a mixture of successes and failures, but it did contribute to the large exodus of people from North to [South Vietnam](#). Following 1956, Lansdale became a close personal friend of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), the president of the Republic of Vietnam. He also became one of the very few Americans to whom Diem listened. This rapport between Diem and Lansdale was unofficial and bypassed normal channels of diplomatic relations, which resulted in great distrust of Lansdale by various diplomatic, military, and civilian representatives of the U.S. government. However, Lansdale's record in the Philippines, his successes in covert action operations in Vietnam, and his relationship with a recalcitrant and often unresponsive Diem made him a valuable policy conduit for both the [Eisenhower](#) and Kennedy administrations. Lansdale's views on the evolving situation in Vietnam in the 1950s and early 1960s were influential in Washington, even though they often conflicted with other perceptions from Americans in Vietnam who resented Lansdale's presence. Thus, Lansdale is significant because he manifested not only the clandestine, informal relations between the United States and South Vietnam that existed simultaneously and often in contradiction to the overt, official relations, but also the intense contest for influence over policy between the numerous American government agencies functioning in South Vietnam. Lansdale was basically the father of American counterinsurgency programs in Vietnam. Although he was considered a candidate for ambassador to South Vietnam by President [John F. Kennedy](#), the appointment was vetoed by [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#). Between 1965 and 1968 Lansdale served as a special assistant at the U.S. Embassy in [Saigon](#).

Sources: John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986; Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia*, 1972.

Stafford T. Thomas

## LAO DONG PARTY

[Ho Chi Minh](#), although he was a Communist, understood the fragmented nature of Vietnamese society. He had, with his comrades [Le Duc Tho](#), [Pham Van Dong](#), [Le Duan](#), and [Vo Nguyen Giap](#), created the Indochinese Communist party in 1929. The creation of this party, however, did not result in total cohesion among Vietnam's many political leaders. During the 1940s and after World War II, Ho Chi Minh determined that nationalism would be the catalyst to bring about the demise of French rule. He worked tirelessly to mobilize Vietnamese resistance against the French, and after 1941 it was his own [Vietminh](#) which he believed would be the vehicle for ending French dominion in Vietnam.

But as a leader Ho understood by 1952 that neither the exclusive Communist party nor the Vietminh were entirely capable of bringing all of Vietnamese society into union to end French rule. In 1952 he changed the name of the Communist party to the Lao Dong, or Workers' party. At the same time he merged it with the Lien Viet, or the National United Front. Ho believed that by these moves nationalist sentiment would rise throughout Vietnam. Through the apparatus of the Lao Dong party, during the 1950s Ho introduced [land reform](#), education, health care, and other reforms in the provinces held by the Vietminh. Even though he gained additional support among the Vietnamese populace, the demise of the French presence in Vietnam was decided on the battlefield at [Dien Bien Phu](#).

Probably the severest test of the Lao Dong party came during the 1950s in [North Vietnam](#) over the program collectivization. Peasants revolted against this program in several provinces. The Communists, however, crushed each revolt, believing that they were contrived from abroad. Ho Chi Minh urged moderation and even had the leader of the Lao Dong party, [Truong Chinh](#), removed from his post. Le Duan became the new leader or head of the Lao Dong party, which he continued to head until his death in July 1986. Under the tutelage of Le Duan, however, the programs created by the Lao Dong party were cautiously introduced to prevent future rebellions. In reality, the Lao Dong party is the Communist party, which wields great power in contemporary Vietnam.

Sources: George C. Herring, *America's Longest War*, 1986; Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina*, 1961; John T. McAlister, Jr., *Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution*, 1969.

John S. Leiby

## LAOS

Covering 92,429 square miles in mountainous Southeast Asia, Laos is one of the most underdeveloped nations in the Third World. Its population of 3,775,000 people in 1985 were primarily engaged in rice cultivation, and more than 80 percent of them are illiterate. The largest Laotian city is Vientiane, with 138,000 people, but the capital city is Luang Prabang, with a population of 45,000. Approximately 75 percent of the population is ethnic Lao or Kha, and 25 percent consists of tribes of Thais who have spilled over from the Khorant Plateau of eastern [Thailand](#). During the Vietnam War, the country was engaged in a civil war between the Communist-backed [Pathet Lao](#) and the forces of Souvana Phouma, but along with [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) and [South Vietnam](#), Laos fell to the Communists in 1975.

Sources: *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, 1984; Charles A. Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere: American Policy Toward Laos Since 1954*, 1973.

Gerald L. Holder

## LATTRE DE TASSIGNY, JEAN JOSEPH DE

Jean Joseph de Lattre de Tassigny was born in 1889 in the Vendee at Mouilleron-en-Pareds, [France](#). He saw active duty in World War I as well as in Morocco between 1921 and 1926. He was promoted to general in 1939 but was imprisoned by the Germans in 1940. He escaped in 1943 and joined the Fighting French. After the war Tassigny became chief of staff and was the prime mover behind building the [Vietnamese National Army](#). He returned to France in 1951 because of illness and died on January 11, 1952.

Sources: James J. Cooke, *France, 1789-1962*, 1975; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967

## **LAVELLE, JOHN DANIEL**

John D. Lavelle was born on September 9, 1916, in Cleveland, Ohio. He graduated from John Carroll University in 1938 and spent World War II as a pilot in the Army Air Corps. After the war Lavelle rose up through air force ranks and in July 1971 took command of the [Seventh Air Force](#) in [Saigon](#). Late in 1972 Lavelle was forced to testify before both the House and Senate Armed Services committees concerning his activities in 1971 and 1972. Although U.S. pilots were allowed to conduct "protective reaction strikes" against North Vietnamese installations after October 31, 1968, Lavelle was charged with ordering dozens of unauthorized missions against North Vietnam. Lavelle argued before the committees that he was encouraged to carry out secret attacks against North Vietnam by his superiors, but no formal proof of his charges could be found. Because of the secret raids, Lavelle was relieved of his command of the Seventh Air Force in April 1972. He retired from active duty and died on July 10, 1979.

Sources: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; *New York Times*, July 11, 1979.

## LE DUAN

Secretary-general of the [Communist party of Vietnam](#) and noted revolutionary leader in twentieth-century Vietnam, Le Duan was born in [Quang Tri](#) Province in central Vietnam on April 4, 1907, and eventually found his way to [Hanoi](#). Le Duan, as a young man, was a political activist who advocated the end of French colonial rule in [Indochina](#). Because of his anti-French activities, he was imprisoned between 1931 and 1936 and then between 1940 and 1945. He also began to follow the leadership of [Ho Chi Minh](#) and later became one of Ho's most trusted aides.

Because of his faithful service to the [Vietminh](#) movement, Le Duan rose rapidly within the Communist party hierarchy. In 1952 he headed the Vietminh military command in southern Vietnam and ultimately conducted a [war of attrition](#) against the French. With the defeat of the French in 1954, Le Duan was catapulted into prominence and in 1959 was made secretary-general of the [Lao Dong party](#) (Workers' party). And then in 1960 he was named first secretary of the Lao Dong party.

Meanwhile, as a consequence of the [Geneva Conference of 1954](#) Vietnam was divided temporarily into two political entities. Elections were promised but never held. A puppet regime under [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) governed [South Vietnam](#) while Ho Chi Minh, with Le Duan at his side, secured [North Vietnam](#) under the dominance of the Communist party. By 1959 Vietnam once again was involved in conflict but this time between revolutionaries in the south who received aid from the north and the Diem regime which received assistance from the United States.

Le Duan advocated a total war against the Diem regime by the [Vietcong](#). He made a secret trip to the south in 1959 and found that the insurgents faced annihilation unless they resorted to urban and rural terrorism. His report resulted in a redirection of the war in the south. Between 1959 and 1961, the Vietcong, as a consequence of directives from Hanoi, embarked on a massive campaign of terrorism and assassination in the south.

Le Duan continued to exert increasing influence upon the conduct of the war. After a few years of limited guerrilla warfare in the south, Le Duan, along with other members of the Hanoi politburo, decided that in order to achieve victory they would have to adopt a conventional war akin to that which they had waged against the French. He noted in 1965 that whenever they had been offensive in warfare they had succeeded in driving out foreign aggressors, and Le Duan believed this would hold true with the Americans.

As the war progressed and American public opinion faltered, Le Duan became increasingly convinced that he and the Hanoi leadership would prevail in the south. With the end of the [Johnson](#) administration, negotiations were held in Paris to end the conflict. For years both sides bantered around the conference table about the terms of a cease-fire. Meanwhile, Ho Chi Minh's health faltered and on September 2, 1969, he died. Thus the mantle of power passed on to veteran nationalist fighters such as Le Duan, [Pham Van Dong](#), and [Vo Nguyen Giap](#). All of these men believed that the defeat of the United States and South Vietnam was their sacred mission. Le Duan finally realized his dream in 1975 with the fall of [Saigon](#). He died on July 10, 1986.

Sources: *Who's Who in the World*, 1985; Jon M. Van Dyke, *North Vietnam's Strategy for Survival*, 1972; Vo Nguyen Giap, *Big Victory, Big Task*, 1967; *New York Times*, July 11, 1986.

John S. Leiby

## LE DUC THO

Born in 1910 in Nam Ha Province in [Tonkin](#), Le Duc Tho was [North Vietnam](#)'s principal negotiator at the [Paris peace talks](#). The son of a French functionary in the Vietnamese colonial government, Le was educated in French schools before joining the revolution. He spent years in jail and hiding because of his revolutionary activities and helped found both the Indochinese Communist party (see [Lao Dong](#) party) and the [Vietminh](#). During the French [Indochina](#) War he was chief commissar for southern Vietnam and maintained primary responsibility for the region after U.S. intervention ended.



## LE LOI

Le Loi was emperor of Vietnam from 1428 until his death in 1443. Le Loi led the independence movement which successfully expelled the [Chinese](#) in 1428. Le founded the dynasty which ruled Vietnam for more than three centuries until the [Tay Son Rebellion](#) displaced them in the 1770s and 1780s.

Source: Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, 1958.

## LE THANH NGHI

Born in 1915, Le Thanh Nghi turned to anti-French nationalism as a student and was an early member of the [Lao Dong party](#) and the [Vietminh](#). In 1974 he became the deputy premier of the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#), and in 1976 assumed that same position in the new [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#).

Sources: *International Who's Who, 1981-1982, 1982*; *Who's Who in Socialist Countries, 1978*.

## LE VAN VIEN

Before World War II, Le Van Vien, also known as Bay Vien, was an illiterate chauffeur in the employ of the French colonialists. In the chaotic days at the end of the war, he organized a gang of [Saigon](#) river pirates that eventually became known as the [Binh Xuyen](#), which was the name of the neighborhood in [Cholon](#) where Le Van Vien had his headquarters. For two years he collaborated with the [Vietminh](#) against the French. He was, in fact, deputy Vietminh commander for [Cochin China](#) and was responsible for some notorious anti-French [atrocities](#). In a characteristically expedient move, he switched sides in 1947 when the French agreed to recognize his gang as a ``sect" similar to the [Cao Dai](#) and [Hoa Hao](#) religions. They also commissioned him as a colonel and later a general in the [Vietnamese National Army](#). In 1954 Emperor [Bao Dai](#) gave Vien control of the national police.

The source of Le Van Vien's wealth and power was his control of the vice establishment in Saigon and Cholon. His huge gambling complex, the Grande Monde in Cholon, brought in millions of piasters that he shared with Bao Dai. He owned the largest brothel in Asia, the so-called Hall of Mirrors, and had his own opium factory to supply his numerous opium dens. His empire also included Saigon's best department stores, a fleet of riverboats, and many houses and other real estate holdings.

After becoming prime minister in 1954, [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) recognized Le Van Vien as the most immediate threat to his authority, and consequently the prime minister instigated a showdown with the vice lord in April 1955. The national army forced the Binh Xuyen out of Saigon. Le Van Vien escaped to [France](#) and never returned to Vietnam.

Source: [Bernard Fall](#), ``The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam," *Pacific Affairs* 28 (September 1955), 235-53.

David L. Anderson

## LEMAY, CURTIS EMERSON

Curtis E. LeMay was born on November 15, 1906, in Columbus, Ohio. He joined the Army Air Corps in 1928 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1930. He rose to the rank of major general in 1943 when he commanded the 305th Bomber Group and 20th Bomber Command in the European theater during World War II, and received command of the 21st Bomber Command in the Marianas in 1945 and advanced to commanding general of the 20th Air Force at Guam. LeMay became a legend because of his unorthodox methods. In Europe he had his bombers abandon the usual zigzag pattern of flight to avoid flack so they could have more accurate runs, and in the Pacific he removed the guns from the bombers in order to carry heavier payloads. In [Japan](#) LeMay opposed dropping the atomic bombs because he believed more firebomb raids would secure a surrender. After World War II LeMay rose through the ranks of the air force, becoming head of the Strategic Air Command in 1957 and air force chief of staff in 1961, a position he held until his retirement in 1965. LeMay came out of retirement to serve as George Wallace's vice presidential running mate in the [election of 1968](#), and his position on Vietnam was hardline. LeMay urged the United States to bring all of its firepower to bear, even nuclear weapons if necessary, on the North Vietnamese to end the war quickly. He said that the United States was capable of "bombing Vietnam back into the stone age" and that the North Vietnamese should be aware of such power. LeMay felt any settlement in the Far East should protect free governments from Communist takeovers.

Sources: McKinley Kantor, *Mission With LeMay*, 1965; *Who's Who in America, 1974-1975*, 1975.

## LIPPMANN, WALTER

Walter Lippmann was born on September 21, 1889, in New York City. He graduated from Harvard in 1910 and in 1914 helped found the *New Republic*. Lippmann joined the editorial staff of the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1931, and over the years he became one of the country's most influential syndicated columnists. During the 1950s Lippmann worried about the moralisms which infected the Cold War debate, preferring a foreign policy based on concrete political, economic, and strategic needs. He initially praised [Lyndon Johnson](#)'s handling of the war in Vietnam, especially after the [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#) in 1964, but Lippmann was too much an advocate of a negotiated settlement to be content with the 1965 escalation of the American commitment. He also doubted whether Vietnam was really enough of a strategic interest to the United States to justify the resources the war was consuming. Between 1965 and 1973 Lippmann continued to call for de-escalation. Walter Lippmann died on December 14, 1974.

Sources: *New York Times*, December 15, 1974; Ronald Steele, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 1980.

## LOC NINH, BATTLE OF (1967)

As part of his strategic preparation for the [Tet Offensive](#) in 1968, General [Vo Nguyen Giap](#) began attacking isolated American outposts in the fall of 1967. Located in Binh Long Province, nine miles east of the Cambodian border, was Loc Ninh, a military outpost defended by three [Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) companies, a [company](#) of [Regional Forces](#), and a [Popular Forces platoon](#). On October 29, 1967, two regiments of the 9th Vietcong Division came out of their base in Cambodia (see [Kampuchea](#)) and attacked the base at Loc Ninh. They encountered strong resistance from the local forces, and on November 1, [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) forces and troops from the American 1st Brigade of the [1st Infantry Division](#) came in to reinforce them. On November 7 the [Vietcong](#) abandoned the struggle, leaving 850 dead. Along with generally unsuccessful attacks at places like [Dak To](#) and Song Be, the Vietcong defeat at Loc Binh encouraged American military officials to believe that at long last the enemy was trying to use conventional tactics. Actually, the attacks brought on a dispersal of allied forces out of the cities and into the countryside, just what Giap had hoped would occur so that the upcoming Tet Offensive would have more impact.

Source: Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience. America Takes Over, 1965-1967*, 1985.

## LODGE, HENRY CABOT, JR.

Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., was born on July 5, 1902, in Nahant, Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard in 1924 and went to work as a journalist for the Boston *Evening Transcript* and then the *New York Herald Tribune*. Lodge traveled widely and spent time in Vietnam analyzing and writing about the nature of the French Empire there. In 1932, Lodge won a seat in the Massachusetts legislature, and in 1936 he was elected as a Republican to the U.S. Senate, and he served there, except for a two-year military stint during World War II, until 1953. He lost his Senate seat in the election of 1952 to [John F. Kennedy](#), and in 1953 President [Dwight Eisenhower](#) named Lodge ambassador to the United Nations. Lodge held that post until 1960. He was [Richard Nixon](#)'s running mate in their unsuccessful presidential bid in 1960, and on June 27, 1963, John F. Kennedy named Lodge ambassador to the [Republic of Vietnam](#).

In many ways Lodge was a perfect choice. He had spent time visiting and writing about [Indochina](#), spoke fluent French, and as a Republican, he might deflect GOP criticism of John F. Kennedy's foreign policies in Vietnam. Lodge was not long in Vietnam before he decided that [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) had to go, his pride, arrogance, and unbridled ambition and greed would never allow him to effect the reforms necessary to prevent a [Vietcong](#) takeover. Lodge was enraged at Diem's attacks on the [Buddhists](#) in August 1963, and he began advocating strongly the overthrow of the Diem government. Kennedy turned the matter over to Lodge after giving his approval, and after a good deal of intrigue the coup took place, with the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) working with the military officers in [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) responsible for it. Lodge was horrified at the assassination of Diem.

During the next six months, when political instability plagued the South Vietnamese regime, Lodge tired of the struggle, and he resigned as ambassador in the spring of 1964. He was also planning a bid for the GOP presidential nomination in 1964. In 1965 President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) got Lodge to accept the ambassadorship to South Vietnam again, and he remained in [Saigon](#) until 1967. Between 1967 and 1969 Lodge was ambassador-at-large for the United States and ambassador to [West Germany](#). He tried in vain to negotiate with the Vietcong and North Vietnamese as head of the U.S. delegation to the [Paris peace talks](#) in 1969 and 1970, but he resigned that post in 1970 to become special envoy to the Vatican. Lodge returned from the Vatican in 1975. He died on February 27, 1985.

Sources: William C. Widenor, *Henry Cabot Lodge and the Search for an American Foreign Policy*, 1980; *New York Times*, February 28, 1985.

## LOH-6

In 1965 the U.S. Army selected the Hughes Model 369 helicopter as the next generation of light observation helicopters. The LOH-6 began service in Vietnam in 1967.

The LOH-6 had an enclosed aluminum semi-monocoque fuselage with side-by-side crew seats for two in front and fold-down seats for two in the rear. With the rear seats folded, four combat troops could ride in the rear cargo compartment. Powered by an Allison T63 shaft-turbine engine delivering 317 SHP, the LOH-6 could cruise at 143 mph. The aircraft could be armed with a variety of weapons, including twin machine guns, the M-75 grenade launcher capable of firing 220 rounds per minute of 40mm shells, and the 7.62mm six-barrel machine gun capable of firing 2,000 rounds per minute.

With its relatively high speed and maneuverability, the LOH-6 made an excellent flying command center, and was widely used for convoy control and as an [airborne artillery](#) spotter. The LOH-6 was also widely used as a gunship in support of ground operations. Overall, the LOH-6 proved a versatile addition to the [helicopter war](#) in Vietnam.

Source: *Jane's All the World's Aircraft: 1966-1967*, 1967.

Nolan J. Argyle



## LON NOL

Born in French-controlled [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) in 1913, Lon Nol was educated at a series of French colonial schools. Between 1935 and 1954 Lon Nol held a number of political and military positions in the French colonial administration and became close to Prince [Norodom Sihanouk](#). After independence the United States provided small amounts of assistance to Cambodia through a small military mission, resulting in close ties between Minister of National Defense Lon Nol and the United States. In 1966 Lon Nol became premier of Cambodia. Although a trusted member of Sihanouk's government, Lon Nol nevertheless criticized Sihanouk for allowing [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) troops to have [sanctuaries](#) in eastern Cambodia. When Prince Sihanouk went to [France](#) in January 1970, he entrusted the country to Prime Minister Lon Nol and Deputy Prime Minister Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak. Both were long on ambition, short on ability, and vehemently anti-Communist. Lon Nol, tired of Sihanouk's [neutrality](#) in the Indochinese conflict, engineered a coup in which the National Assembly ousted Sihanouk and placed Lon Nol in complete power.

Sihanouk charged that the March 1970 coup was instigated by the [Central Intelligence Agency](#). The accusation has not been proven, but Lon Nol was in contact with members of the Nixon administration. Lon Nol proved incapable of organizing the government. In inciting the coup, he unleashed historical conflicts between Cambodians and resident Vietnamese. Quickly losing control, the anti-Vietnamese rage became rampages resulting in the deaths of several hundred Vietnamese. The American invasion of Cambodia in 1970 (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) had further alienated the population, and they rallied to the [Khmer Rouge](#). By 1971 the Khmer Rouge controlled most of the country. In 1975 they triumphed and the government of Lon Nol collapsed on April 17. Lon Nol fled to Hawaii.

Sources: Wilfred Burchett, *The Second Indochina War*, 1970; *Who's Who in the Far East and Australasia, 1970-1971*, 1971; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman

## LONG BINH

Long Binh was a major United States Army supply facility constructed just outside the city of [Bien Hoa](#), about 20 miles north of [Saigon](#). The headquarters of [II Field Force Vietnam](#) and the III [ARVN](#) Corps were located at Long Binh, as was the Long Binh Jail, the ``LBJ." [Vietcong](#) attacked the Long Binh complex during the [Tet Offensive](#) in 1968, the Post-Tet Offensive in 1969, and again, successfully, during the Final Offensive (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)) of 1975.

Sources: Al Santoli, *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-Three American Soldiers Who Fought It*, 1981; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## LONG RANGE RECONNAISSANCE PATROLS

Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRPs, pronounced ``Lurps'') were developed in response to specific combat conditions in Vietnam, a war without ``lines" or ``fronts" against a guerrilla army in rugged jungle terrain. The [Vietcong](#) were found only when they wanted to be, when they initiated combat; therefore, finding Vietcong or [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) forces tended to be more difficult than defeating them. LRRPs were developed to overcome these problems. LRRPs were small units, ten to twelve men, although sometimes as large as a [platoon](#) (about forty men), patrolling a few days to a couple of weeks at a time. They neither occupied nor established fixed positions and usually were not resupplied. They traveled light, carried a minimum of food, and foraged off the land. To facilitate extended days in the field, lightweight freeze-dried LRRP rations were developed. They were preferred over traditional C-rations because they were lighter, less bulky, and tasted better.

Generally, LRRPs avoided enemy contact. Small in number and operating independent of larger units, LRRPs were not equipped to engage the enemy. Their missions included collecting intelligence on Vietcong-NVA base camps, supply areas, trail networks and [troop](#) movements, bomb damage assessments, fire direction, capturing soldiers for interrogation, rescuing downed flight crews, laying [booby traps](#), and sabotage.

Initially, [divisions](#) developed their own LRRP units, usually one LRRP platoon with squads operating independently or in combination depending on the mission. Some divisions developed LRRP companies comprised of two platoons. The [Special Forces](#), under [Project Delta](#), made extensive use of LRRPs and established a training center at [Nha Trang](#) for Special Forces and regular Army LRRPs. Special Forces LRRP teams typically consisted of two or three Americans plus indigenous personnel. The [Australian](#) Task Force included a [squadron](#) of Special Air Service commandos who served as LRRPs, and some [ARVN](#) divisions (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) also developed LRRP units.

Two criticisms of the military's performance in Vietnam were that greater use was not made of LRRPs and that greater use was not made of rifle companies similarly operating in the field independently over extended periods of time with minimal or no resupply. For the most part, such units were highly successful.

Sources: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 1985; Cincinnatus, *Self-Destruction*, 1981; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman

## LOWENSTEIN, ALLARD KENNETH

Born in Newark, New Jersey, January 16, 1929, Allard K. Lowenstein was the principal figure in the "Dump Johnson" campaign in 1967-68. Lowenstein received a B.A. from the University of North Carolina in 1949 and an LL.B. from Yale Law School in 1954. Lowenstein had become president of the National Student Association in 1951, and remained prominent in that organization through the 1960s. In the early 1960s, he gave legal aid to jailed civil rights workers in the South; recruited student volunteers for voter registration campaigns in Mississippi; advised the Reverend [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and actively supported the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. He was a civilian observer of the 1966 elections in the Dominican Republic and the 1967 elections in [South Vietnam](#). When he returned from Vietnam, Lowenstein formed the Conference of Concerned Democrats and the Coalition for a Democratic Alternative to oppose President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)'s Vietnam War policies and promote a "Dump Johnson" movement among Democrats. In November 1967, Lowenstein announced support for Senator [Eugene McCarthy](#) for president and pledged to mobilize an army of youth volunteers. Lowenstein's "Dump Johnson" campaign was apparently a factor in the president's decision not to seek reelection in 1968. At the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968, he led a Coalition for an Open Convention opposing the nomination of [Hubert H. Humphrey](#). In the same year, Lowenstein was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Long Beach, Long Island. In Congress, he supported liberal legislation and opposed the Vietnam War. As a result, Lowenstein was included on President [Richard M. Nixon](#)'s "enemies" list. He was defeated for reelection in 1970 after the New York legislature gerrymandered his district. He then served as chairman of Americans for Democratic Action in 1971-73 and continued to be an active supporter of liberal causes during the 1970s. Lowenstein was shot to death on March 14, 1980.

Sources: Roland Turner, ed., *The Annual Obituary 1980*, 1981; *New York Times*, March 15, 1980; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the Vietnam War, 1963-1975*, 1984.

## LUCE, HENRY ROBINSON

Henry Robinson Luce was born in Tengchow, [China](#), to missionary parents on April 3, 1898. He graduated from Yale in 1920 and helped establish *Time* magazine in 1927. A strong supporter of [Chiang Kai-shek](#) and the conservative movement in Asia, Luce in particular and *Time* in general, along with the associated magazines *Fortune* and *Life*, supported the American war effort in Vietnam, reporting news favorable to the cause and editorializing frequently in favor of the [Johnson](#) administration. Henry Luce died on February 28, 1967, and under the new direction of Hedley Donovan, *Time* magazine shifted its position and began criticizing the conduct of the war.

Sources: *New York Times*, March 1, 1967; John Kobler, *Luce*, 1968; W. A. Swanberg, *Luce and His Empire*, 1972.

## LUONG NGOC QUYEN

Luong Ngoc Quyen was born in [Hanoi](#) in 1885. He was a student in [Japan](#) and became a disciple of the ardent Vietnamese nationalist [Phan Boi Chau](#). He traveled widely throughout [China](#), and in 1916 the [British](#) arrested him in Hong Kong and turned him over to the French. While in prison, Luong Ngoc Quyen engineered the unsuccessful Thai Nguyen rebellion north of Hanoi in 1917. The rebellion was crushed by the French and Luong died in the fighting, but in the process he became a martyr to Vietnamese nationalism.

Source: William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 1976.

## LYND, STAUGHTON

Born in 1929 to the famous sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd, Staughton Lynd graduated from Harvard in 1951 and in 1953, when faced with the [draft](#), declared himself a conscientious objector. He was designated a noncombatant. In 1961 Lynd began teaching at Spelman College in Atlanta and also earned a Ph.D. in history from Columbia in 1965. While in Atlanta, Lynd worked with Howard Zinn in 1962 to organize the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and protested the actions of the Kennedy administration during the Cuban missile crisis. Lynd was a civil rights activist throughout the early 1960s. In 1965 he was appointed an assistant professor of history at Yale.

His protest against the Vietnam War took two forms. The first was his refusal in 1965 to pay \$300 in income tax, which he described as an act of civil disobedience. The second, and more dramatic, was a trip to [North Vietnam](#) in 1965 with Tom Hayden. While in North Vietnam, Lynd described the war as immoral, illegal, and antidemocratic. The visit brought on a public, rhetorical battle with Yale president Kingman Brewster, who accused Lynd of "aiding the enemy." Lynd took a leave of absence from Yale, realizing he probably would not receive tenure, but then was unable to locate another position in higher education. He then went to law school at the University of Chicago and earned a degree in 1976. His law practice specializes in cases involving working-class people.

Sources: John Corry, "'We Must Say Yes to Our Souls': Staughton Lynd: Spokesman for the New Left," *New York Times Magazine*, January 23, 1966; Joseph Lelyveld, "A Touch of Class," *New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 1977.

Joanna D. Cowden

## LZ

``LZ" is slang for ``landing zone" or, in the military alphabet, ``lima zulu." While technically ``LZ" referred to a landing area for any type of aircraft, it was almost always used to designate a place where helicopters could land, dispatch troops and/or cargo, receive troops and/or cargo, and depart. Because the terrain was often covered by jungle or rain forest, LZs often had to be created by removing threatening obstacles to the thin-skinned helicopters. This was done in a variety of ways, depending on the circumstances. For instance, chain saws were often used, but if the forestation was too dense, a 15,000-pound bomb (known as the ``Daisy Cutter") could be dropped to create an instant LZ.

In Vietnam, the helicopter became the primary means of getting troops into battle, supplying them during their stay in the field, evacuating the wounded and dead, and finally removing the survivors after battle. Consequently, LZs became a focal point of combat activity. Upon initiation of contact with the enemy, the first objective was to make the LZ as secure and safe as possible. Likewise, the enemy could be expected to make the LZ so hazardous that helicopters could not accomplish their basic mission of combat troop support. For helicopter crews flying into an LZ, the critical question was whether it was ``hot" (actively contested by the enemy, in which case the helicopter was bound to be the principal target) or ``cold" (safe and secure from enemy hostilities).

Source: Robert Mason, *Chickenhawk*, 1983.

Stafford T. Thomas



## THE LIONHEADS

*The Lionheads* is the title of Josiah Bunting's 1972 novel about the Vietnam War. Written as a military history, the novel focuses on George Lemming, commanding general of the 12th Infantry Division (nicknamed "The Lionheads"). The time frame is March and April 1968, when U.S. forces were still reacting from the [Tet Offensive](#). It is a fairly standard account of military operations, with most critics commenting that the book was strong on explaining combat operations but weak on characterizations.

Sources: Josiah Bunting, *The Lionheads*, 1972; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.



## **M**

"M"

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MORTARS

MU GIA PASS

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MY LAI

MY THO



## "M"

In 1967 John Sack published his novel *M*, the first in a series of anti-Vietnam War novels. The novel focuses on M Company, a training unit of American soldiers, and follows them from basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, through several months of combat in Vietnam. Sack juxtaposes Specialist 4 Demirgian, a gung ho American soldier committed to the philosophical rationale of the war, with the corruption of [ARVN](#) troops (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam), the inability to distinguish between [Vietcong](#) and civilians, and the unbelievably poor morale among U.S. soldiers. The novel climaxes in the tragic killing of a Vietnamese girl by an American grenade lobbed into a shelter to kill Vietcong.

Sources: John Sack, *M*, 1967; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982; Review of *M* by Neil Sheehan, *New York Times Book Review*, May 14, 1967.

## M-14 RIFLE

The M-14 rifle was adopted by the U.S. Army in 1957, with delivery beginning in 1959. The M-14 was the result of a decade-long search for a replacement rifle for the M-1 used in World War II. As such, the M-14 was the army's standard weapon at the start of the Vietnam era. However, it was rapidly replaced by the [M-16](#) as the basic infantry rifle and weapon of choice in Vietnam.

Development of the M-14 reflected a century-old tradition of emphasizing marksmanship in the U.S. Army. The army sought a heavy caliber weapon, accurate at ranges up to 1,000 yards. Yet tactics evolved in World War II and in the Korean War emphasized firepower over marksmanship, and the M-14 was an uneasy compromise between the two.

A major factor in the development of the M-14 was the decision to standardize weapons used by NATO forces. All infantry weapons developed were expected to share ammunition. The [British](#) military, finding that few British troops in World War II had attempted to fire on targets over 300 yards away, and that, indeed, fewer still had bothered trying to aim their rifles, pushed for a small, lightweight [assault rifle](#) firing a small-caliber round but with a high rate of fire. They developed a fine weapon meeting these characteristics, the EM-2, and tried to push it as the standard infantry weapon for NATO. The U.S. Army, with a tradition of marksmanship, balked at the weapon, and forced NATO to adopt the 7.62mm (.30 caliber) round as a standard. The M-14 was the American version of this rifle.

M-16s had also been adopted by the army in limited numbers, and their early success in Vietnam led the army to reverse their position, dropping the M-14 in favor of the M-16, a lightweight assault rifle firing a light-caliber 5.56mm shell with a high rate of fire, much to the confusion and consternation of our NATO allies.

Source: Thomas L. McNaugher, "Marksmanship, McNamara, and the [M-16 Rifle](#): Innovation in Military Organizations," *Public Policy* 28 (Winter 1980), 1-38.

Nolan J. Argyle

## M-16 RIFLE

The adoption of the [M-16](#) as the basic infantry weapon of the U.S. armed forces represented a break with over a hundred years of military tradition, and was, in large part, a direct result of the war in Vietnam.

The M-16 has been called one of the success stories of the twentieth century. Now one of the best known infantry weapons in the Western world, it was developed as a private venture by an unknown company employing only one designer. Developed for Armalite by Eugene Stoner in the mid-1950s as the AR-15, the weapon was designed to take advantage of modern manufacturing techniques and materials. The metal components of the weapon were stamped, pressed, or forged rather than using the traditional methods of machining and casting. Plastics were used in place of traditional wood. Mechanically, the M-16 varied from other automatic or semiautomatic weapons. It is gas-operated, but rather than using the conventional piston, the gas is led through a tube directly into the bolt carrier. The drawback to this design is that it can lead to the action fouling up, something that happened frequently in the early days of its use in Vietnam. Furthermore, troops using the weapon had a tendency to tape two clips together, so that when they emptied one they could simply pull out the clip, turn it over, and start firing again. This caused the clips to hang and jam the action. Kept clean and fed with single clips, the M-16 proved to be a highly reliable weapon.

While it did prove to be a highly respected, reliable weapon, the M-16 was not at first considered suitable for the American infantryman. The U.S. Army adopted its first rifle as standard equipment in 1855 (earlier weapons had been smooth-bore weapons, lacking the accuracy given by rifled barrels). From this time on the army stressed accuracy over long distance, marksmanship, over rate of fire in selecting weapons. The American infantryman was expected to be a sharpshooter, and therefore needed a weapon with hitting power at long range. In light of the Civil War experience with rifled weapons, the army published a training manual stressing that what counted was the number of hits, not the number of shots fired, and that such hits should be made out to a range of 1,000 yards or more. This led to an emphasis on heavy-caliber weapons. Then in the 1950s, American military forces started to standardize their weapons and equipment with other NATO armed forces, so that ammunition could be interchangeable. It was decided to adopt the [British](#)-developed 7.62mm cartridge as the basic cartridge for infantry weapons. Reflecting these two concerns, the U.S. Army developed the [M-14](#) as its next-generation infantry weapon, and started to supply field units with that weapon. It was in this context that the Armalite weapon was introduced.

In 1962, Defense Secretary [Robert McNamara](#) sought to interest the army in the M-16. Having just developed the M-14, the army showed little interest in adopting the weapon. The M-16 fired a 5.56mm slug that gained its hitting power from its muzzle velocity of 3,250 feet per/second. As the slug lost speed, its hitting power dropped, giving it an effective range of only about 400 yards. Further, the light slug was easily diverted from its path by any object it encountered, including twigs, therefore affecting its accuracy over long distances. Its strong point was not marksmanship but a high rate of fire. With its straight-line design (a line drawn through the barrel would hit the rifleman at the shoulder, instead of above as in traditional designs) the M-16 could be held on target even in automatic fire, allowing the soldier to spray a target. In short, the M-16 did not fit within the army's traditions.

While the army failed to adopt the M-16, the U.S. Air Forces did adopt the weapon for its security forces. More important, the army did purchase the weapon for special units, including some of the [Special Forces](#). These units saw the first direct combat action by U.S. troops in Vietnam, and they found the M-16 far superior to the M-14 for the type of fighting they were doing. In jungle fighting, firepower was far more important than marksmanship. Just 39 inches in length and weighting only 6 pounds 5 ounces, the M-16 was an easy weapon to carry and bring into action quickly. In 1967, the army reversed its long tradition and adopted the M-16, much to the consternation of NATO. By this time, the weapon was being manufactured by Colt Arms. Several million M-16s have been



manufactured over the past two decades, and the weapon is now the most widely used infantry weapon in the world.

Sources: Thomas L. McNaugher, "Marksmanship, McNamara and the [M-16 Rifle](#): Innovation in Military Organization," *Public Policy* 28 (Winter 1980), 1-38; *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of 20th Century Weapons and Warfare*, 1969.

Nolan J. Argyle

## **M-60 MACHINE GUN**

The M-60 machine gun was designed to replace both the .30 caliber Browning light machine gun and the .50 caliber heavy machine gun for the U.S. armed forces. Mounted on a tripod, the M-60 served as a heavy machine gun, used primarily to defend fixed positions. As a light machine gun, the M-60 used a folding bipod attached to the barrel. Although Vietnam saw its first major use, the weapon's design dates back to World War II, incorporating the belt-feed mechanism of the German MG 42 machine gun and the operating mechanism of the German MG 42 automatic rifle. Although it does not have selective-fire capabilities, it does have a low cyclic rate of 600 rounds per minute, which permits firing single rounds. The weapon is gas-operated, with a muzzle velocity of 2,800 feet per second and a maximum effective range of 3,500 yards. Far smaller and lighter than its predecessors at 43.73 inches in length and 23.05 pounds, the M-60 is the first truly portable machine gun in the U.S. arsenal. Capable of being fired from the hip while moving, the M-60 proved well-suited to the type of fighting found in Vietnam.

Source: John Quick, *Dictionary of Weapons and Military Terms*, 1973.

Nolan J. Argyle

## **M-72**

The M-72, or Light Antitank Weapon (LAW), was a high-explosive rocket used by U.S. and South Vietnamese forces to destroy [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese bunkers. Lightweight and approximately three feet long, the M-72 was perfectly suited for infantry assaults.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## M-79

The M-79 grenade launcher was introduced in the early 1960s, just as the war in Vietnam was heating up and starting to take more U.S. military attention. The M-79 represented a vast improvement over earlier rifle-fired grenades. Looking like a single-barrel, break-open shotgun, the M-79 was only 28.6 inches long and weighed just 6 pounds, 2 ounces, making it a highly portable weapon capable of being carried and fired by light infantry on the move. The M-79 fired a 9-ounce, 40mm shell with various warheads, including antipersonnel, armorpiercing, and white phosphorus. With an effective range of 400 meters and far greater accuracy than the older rifle-fired grenades, the M-79 gave the field soldier a potent weapon against enemy bunkers and [troop](#) concentrations. An automatic version, the M-75, was capable of firing 220 rounds per minute with a range of 2,000 meters. The M-75 was often mounted in a remote-control turret for helicopter use.

Source: John Quick, *Dictionary of Weapons and Military Terms*, 1973.

Nolan J. Argyle

## MACARTHUR, DOUGLAS

The child of a military family, Douglas MacArthur was born on January 26, 1880, on an army base near Little Rock, Arkansas. He graduated from West Point in 1903, and then served with distinction in the [Philippines](#), Mexico, and with the Rainbow Division in World War I. After the war, MacArthur became commandant of West Point. He was promoted to general in 1930, and in 1935 went to the Philippines as a military adviser. During World War II he was commander in chief of army forces in the Pacific, and after the war virtually ruled [Japan](#) as head of the occupation forces. MacArthur drafted the new Japanese constitution and then established a democratic government and economic revival in Japan. MacArthur took command of UN forces in [South Korea](#) in 1950 after the North Korean invasion, reversed the invasion with the amphibious assault at Inchon, and then lost his command because of insubordination in 1951, after the [Chinese](#) had entered the conflict and he had refused to accept President [Harry S. Truman](#)'s vision of a limited conflict. MacArthur then retired from the army. Before his death on April 5, 1964, MacArthur frequently expressed to his associates, as well as to President [John F. Kennedy](#), his misgivings about the United States becoming involved in a protracted guerrilla war in southeast Asia.

Source: William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964*, 1978.

## MADAME NGO DINH NHU

Born as Tran Le Xuan (Beautiful Spring) in 1924 to a completely Gallicized Vietnamese family which had enriched itself in service to the French colonialists, Le Xuan dropped out of [Hanoi's](#) Lycee Albert Sarraut. She was fluent in French but never learned to write in Vietnamese. In 1944 Tran Le Xuan married [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#), and because [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) never married, she was essentially the first lady of the [Republic of Vietnam](#). Powerful in her own right, Madame Nhu issued decrees having the force of law banning divorce, adultery, prostitution, dancing, boxing, beauty contests, and fortune-telling, among other things. Considering herself a feminist, she lectured on women's issues and commanded her own paramilitary organization, the Women's Solidarity Movement.

Madame Nhu saw herself as the reincarnation of the Trung sisters, ancient leaders in the struggle for independence from [China](#), but she was more a reincarnation of Marie Antoinette. She was incredibly insensitive to and uncaring about anyone outside the ruling clique or the sufferings that Diem's inept, corrupt, and increasingly brutal government imposed on the people. When [Buddhist](#) monks, including [Thich Quang Duc](#), and a nun immolated themselves protesting Diem's government, she airily referred to them as Buddhist ``barbeques." Nhu encouraged her outrageousness by adding that ``if the [Buddhists](#) want to have another barbecue, I will be glad to supply the gasoline." Such statements helped consolidate U.S. opposition to Diem, paving the way for the November 1963 coup. Madame Nhu was traveling in the United States, campaigning for support for the Diem regime, in November 1963 when Diem and her husband were assassinated. She then returned to a widowhood in Rome.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Thomas D. Boettcher, *Vietnam, The Valor and the Sorrow*, 1985; *New York Times*, October 28-31, November 1-2, 1963.

Samuel Freeman

## MANSFIELD, MICHAEL JOSEPH

Successor to [Lyndon Johnson](#) as majority leader of the U.S. Senate, Mike Mansfield served in that position from 1961 until 1977, the longest-serving majority leader in Senate history. Born in New York City on March 16, 1903, he grew up in Montana, enlisted in the [navy](#) at age fifteen and later served with the marines. His military service took him to Asia, and he developed a deep interest in the Far East. He taught Far Eastern history at the University of Montana before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Democrat in 1942. He served on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and when elected to the Senate in 1952, he became a member of the [Foreign Relations Committee](#).

Mansfield was an early supporter of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in Vietnam. However, when the majority leader visited Vietnam in 1962 at [President Kennedy](#)'s request, he returned with a pessimistic assessment of developments there. Under the Johnson administration, he also made several visits to Southeast Asia and expressed increasing concern about the escalation of the war. He cautioned that the United States should learn from the French experience in Vietnam, and in 1965 he advised [President Johnson](#) against a major commitment of American troops. As his efforts to convince Johnson that a negotiated settlement rather than further military action was the proper course proved futile, Mansfield became a public opponent of the war. He was even more critical as the war continued under the [Nixon](#) administration and became a champion of the reassertion of congressional foreign policy powers. He backed the 1970 [Cooper-Church](#) and [Hatfield-McGovern](#) amendments, and in 1971 his amendment calling for [withdrawal](#) of U.S. military forces within nine months (subject to the release of American prisoners of war) passed the Senate but was defeated in the House. He did not seek reelection in 1976, and in 1977 was named by President Carter as U.S. ambassador to [Japan](#), a position he retained under the Reagan administration.

Sources: [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam*, 1983.

Hoyt Purvis

## MAO ZEDONG

Born in Hunan in 1893, Mao Zedong came from peasant roots. As a young man he journeyed to Beijing and found employment as a library assistant at Beijing National University. There he was caught up in revolutionary fervor and joined the [Chinese](#) Communist party. In the 1920s Mao began to articulate his view that the future of revolution in China rested with the peasantry and not with the working poor in major cities, for there were too few of them. After the famous Long March of 1934-35, Mao established himself in Yen-an in northwest China and became a folk hero during World War II because of his aggressive tactics against the Japanese. He led the Communists to victory in the Chinese Civil War and in 1949 became chairman of the Communist party and of the [People's Republic of China](#).

Afraid that revolutionary principles and zeal were waning in China by the 1960s, Mao launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966 and fueled its fanatical attacks on Chinese intellectuals until 1969. China was thrown into such turmoil that it had little opportunity to assist the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#), beyond some weapons shipments, in their struggle against the United States. The long ethnic rivalry between Chinese and Vietnamese in Southeast Asia would probably have precluded any unified front anyway. After 1969 more practical Chinese leaders brought the Cultural Revolution to an end, and Mao Zedong spent his last years in retirement. He died in 1976.

Sources: *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary*, 1983; Daniel S. Papp, *Vietnam: The View from Moscow, Peking, Washington*, 1981.

Charles Dobbs



## MARINE COMBINED ACTION PLATOONS

First formed in the fall of 1965 to support the South Vietnamese government's Revolutionary Development Program and [III Marine Amphibious Force's](#) (MAF) budding civic action policy, Marine Combined Action Platoons (CAP) became an integral, well-publicized part of the "other war", the effort to gain the confidence of villagers and thus deny the [Vietcong](#) (VC) a critical base of support. Limited to defending airfields during the first several months of deployment, marine patrols found [booby traps](#), mines, and snipers to be constant and costly reminders of an unseen VC presence. Responding with modest medical and construction projects based on marine experiences in the Caribbean islands and Central America, marine civic action eventually won enthusiastic support in [Saigon](#) and Washington and tapped resources from all major [I Corps](#) commands to build schools, roads, and hospitals.

Marine CAP supplemented civic action by integrating U.S. [Marine Corps](#) units with [Republic of Vietnam Popular Forces](#) (PF), with whom the Americans would train, share rations and quarters, and fight side by side. Typically, a [squad](#) of marines plus a navy corpsman would be integrated into a PF platoon and assigned to a particular hamlet to "win [hearts and minds](#)" and cultivate intelligence sources.

III MAF organized these units under a G-5 or civil affairs section in [Da Nang](#), and the program grew rapidly with four Combined Action Battalions deployed in Vietnam between October 1967 and July 1970. The last Marine CAP withdrew when marine ground and air operations ceased in the spring of 1971.

Sources: *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1983; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986; Russell H. Stolfi, *U.S. Marine Corps Civil Action Efforts in Vietnam, March 1965-March 1966*, 1968.

Dudley Acker

## MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOTS

When asked what made their service special, marines usually reply, "boot camp", during the Vietnam era eight to twelve weeks of intense indoctrination designed to supplant civilian values and introduce recruits to the rudiments of the [Marine Corps](#)'s mission and tradition. Training began abruptly in a receiving barracks where shorn "boots" met their drill instructors (DIs), noncommissioned officers who then double-timed them through several days of showers, dental work, inoculations, and the issue of uniforms, rifles, 782-gear, and *The Guidebook for Marines*, parts of which had to be memorized and recited loudly and in unison.

The regimen changed occasionally during the war but at any time included Marine Corps's history, physical fitness, marksmanship, and daily doses of close-order drill on "the grinder", a few acres of sun-baked tarmac on which DIs called cadence and resorted to other techniques to instill discipline. A meticulous final inspection followed by a family-oriented graduation ceremony capped Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) training, and no longer called "boots," the marines then received orders to an Infantry Training [Regiment](#) (ITR) at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, or Camp Pendleton, California.

*MCRD, Parris Island, South Carolina:* First established in 1911 at the Marine Barracks, Port Royal Naval Station, recruit training moved after two months to the Norfolk (Virginia) Naval Yard and then back to the barracks in 1915; the name of the base became Parris Island in 1919. Located amid salt marshes between Charleston and Savannah, the base is hot, humid, and under attack by sand fleas in summer, but rarely cold enough to suspend training during its damp winters.

*MCRD, San Diego, California:* Dubbed "Hollywood Marines" by those trained at Parris Island, San Diego recruits at least enjoyed a dry, moderate climate year round. The Marine Corps first established Camp Howard on a nearby island in 1914 and moved to the mainland later that year, selecting a permanent site for the future recruit depot in 1919. In 1923 boot training shifted from Mare Island in San Francisco Bay to San Diego, where the supervision of recruits from western states continued through World War II, [Korea](#), and Vietnam.

Source: V. Keith Fleming, "Welcome to the Marines: Boot Camp Training," in Ashley Brown, ed., *The U.S. Marines in Action*, 1986.

Dudley Acker

## MARINE CORPS, UNITED STATES

In the decade between the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#) and the first overt commitment of U.S. combat troops (two marine battalions at [Da Nang](#)) in March 1965, marines helped establish the Vietnamese Marine Corps and also served with the U.S. [Military Assistance and Advisory Group](#) in [Saigon](#), two helicopter [squadrons](#) and a radio [company](#) sent to the theater in 1962, as advisers to [Republic of Vietnam](#) infantry units, and in small security forces at air bases and the U.S. embassy. Before South Vietnam collapsed in 1975, marines who had spent at least part of the normal thirteen-month tour in country numbered over 450,000.

While mines, [booby traps](#), and sniper rounds accounted for a high percentage of early marine [casualties](#), after the rapid buildup in [I Corps](#) in 1966-67 small arms fire and fragments accounted for almost 90 percent of the deaths and wounds suffered by marine personnel. Peaking at 85,520 marines in country in 1968 (almost one-third of the Marine Corps's total strength at the time), in six years marine units lost almost 15,000 killed and 89,000 wounded in action compared to the 20,000 killed and 70,000 wounded fighting the Japanese in World War II. Marines accounted for 28.4 percent of the casualties, 33.5 percent of those wounded and hospitalized, 4.7 percent of the POWs, and 8 percent of the MIAs among American forces in the theater.

Fifty-seven Medals of Honor were awarded to twelve marine officers and forty-five enlisted men, thirteen of whom survived to attend their ceremonies; and marines captured 4,098 prisoners (not including [Vietcong](#) suspects and civilian detainees) and 22,879 weapons, and reported killing approximately 86,000 enemy soldiers and guerrillas.

Marines units deployed to Vietnam included two [divisions](#) reinforced by two regimental landing teams, a reinforced air [wing](#), several battalion landing teams afloat and on call with the [Seventh Fleet](#), plus small units detached to the U.S. Army or guarding the U.S. embassy and naval installations in the Saigon area. This force broke down into 24 infantry regiments, 2 reconnaissance battalions, 2 force reconnaissance companies, 4 armored battalions, more than 10 battalions of [artillery](#), 4 combined action battalions, 2 antitank battalions, 26 aircraft squadrons (approximately 500 helicopters, [fighters](#), and fighter-bombers), and 5 battalions each of engineers and motor transport personnel. Two medical battalions and a hospital company supplemented the hundreds of U.S. [Navy](#) doctors, corpsmen, and [nurses](#) attached to marine units.

While the Marine Corp's worldwide strength peaked at 317,400 in 1968 and thus fell short of the 485,113 figure set in World War II, over 730,000 marines served during the Vietnam era compared to about 600,000 in the war against Japan. Peacetime personnel policies remained in effect from 1965 to 1973 and accounted for the disparities in numbers between the two wars. In Vietnam, marines served twelve- and thirteen-month tours, then rotated back to "the world." Except those who extended for six-month increments or chose to reenlist, Marines were not required to serve for the duration of the conflict as in earlier years. [Fleet Marine Force, Pacific Command](#) thus required some 9 to 10 thousand troops to keep the marine war going, and between 85,000 and 120,000 men and women enlisted, were [drafted](#) into, or left the Marine Corps in each of the six years before its units withdrew in the spring of 1971.

Sources: *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1983; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 1982.

Dudley Acker

## MARTIN, GRAHAM ANDERSON

Born in Mars Hill, North Carolina, on September 12, 1912, Graham Martin graduated from Wake Forest University in 1932 and joined the National Recovery Administration in 1933 as an aide to W. Averell Harriman. After working in various New Deal agencies during the 1930s and serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II, Martin went to the State Department in 1947 as a foreign service officer. He was assigned to Paris for eight years, worked as a special assistant to Douglas Dillon, under [secretary of state](#), between 1957 and 1959, and became ambassador to [Thailand](#) in 1963. He was successful there in building a strong military relationship between the United States and the Thais, and in 1969 Martin became ambassador to Italy. An avowed anti-Communist, Martin was named to replace [Ellsworth Bunker](#) as ambassador to [Vietnam](#) in 1973.

Martin's stay in Vietnam was a disaster. He carried a powerful emotional burden as ambassador because his wife's son had been killed in the war, and Martin was much too abrupt for [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), who needed constant reassuring and praise. Martin also disregarded the problem of official corruption in the South Vietnamese government, which bled local villages and generated more support for the [Vietcong](#). Finally, Martin tended to exaggerate the strength of the American position in South Vietnam. Right up to the end, Martin believed that the South Vietnamese government in general and the city of [Saigon](#) in particular could survive the North Vietnamese and Vietcong assault in the spring of 1975. Holding on to the embassy flag, Martin and his wife climbed to the roof of the embassy on April 29, 1975, and fled the country. Before his retirement from the State Department, Martin served as a special assistant to Secretary of State [Henry Kissinger](#) and an ambassador-at-large for the Pacific.

Sources: Tad Szulc, *An Illusion of Peace*, 1978; *New York Times*, April 2, 1973; May 2, 1976; and August 26, 1976. MAT TRAN DAN TOC GIAI PHONG MIEN NAM See Vietcong

## MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT

On May 12, 1975, a Cambodian gunboat seized the SS *Mayaguez*, an American merchant ship, in transit from Hong Kong to [Thailand](#). The ship and its thirty-nine-member crew were taken seven miles to the Cambodian island of Poulo Wai. The Khmer government of Cambodia (see [Kampuchea](#)) claimed the *Mayaguez* was captured inside Cambodian territorial waters while engaged on a spy mission for the United States. President [Gerald Ford](#) responded that the Cambodian action was an "act of piracy" and demanded the release of the ship and its crew. When appeals to the [People's Republic of China](#) and the United Nations to use their influence to persuade Cambodia to release the crew appeared to fail, Ford prepared for a military response.

On May 14, 200 U.S. Marines were landed on Koh Tang Island by helicopter assault to rescue the *Mayaguez* crew, who were presumed to be there. The assault force encountered heavy Cambodian resistance and were able to advance no further than the beach. In a simultaneous operation a marine boarding party from the USS *Holt* seized the empty *Mayaguez* (on May 13 the crew had been moved to the Cambodian mainland). While military operations were underway, the Cambodian government released the crew of the *Mayaguez* along with five Thai fishermen who had been captured earlier and charged with spying for the United States. The announcement of the release was made at 7:07 P.M. EDT on Cambodian radio and by 11:00 P.M. the *Mayaguez* crew had been taken aboard the USS *Wilson* from a Thai fishing boat. Subsequently, at 11:16 P.M. [President Ford](#) ordered a halt to offensive operations and a [withdrawal](#) of all forces. However, planned air strikes of the Cambodian mainland were still carried out. Rescue of the marines on Tang Island was delayed because heavy Cambodian gunfire drove off the evacuation helicopters. It was not until naval gunfire support could be used that the marines were finally evacuated on the morning of May 15. The operation resulted in fifteen dead and fifty wounded.

Foreign and domestic reactions to the United States were generally favorable or neutral, although actual [casualty](#) figures were not immediately released. It later came to light that [Secretary of State Henry Kissinger](#) kept a possible diplomatic option a secret from the [National Security Council](#). The [Chinese](#) apparently were using their influence to gain release of the crew and were expecting success. General Brent Scowcroft, deputy of national security affairs, later admitted that the United States had responded harshly in an attempt to show that although the United States had recently withdrawn from Southeast Asia, it was prepared to protect its interest abroad.

Sources: Chris Lamb, "Belief Systems and Decision Making in the *Mayaguez* Incident," *Political Science Quarterly* 99 (Winter 1984-85), 681-702; Roy Rowan, *The Four Days of Mayaguez*, 1975.

Mike Dennis

## McCain, John Sidney, Jr.

Commander in chief of Pacific naval forces (1968-72), John McCain was the youngest son of another full admiral. He was born on January 17, 1911, in Council Bluffs, Iowa. He grew up in Washington, D.C., where he attended Central High School. After completing high school he entered the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis at the tender age of sixteen. In 1931 he graduated from Annapolis nearly at the bottom of his class.

McCain's first tour of duty was on the battleship *Oklahoma*, and he subsequently served on submarines between 1933 and 1938. After his stint on submarines he became an instructor of electrical engineering at the Naval Academy. With the outbreak of World War II, McCain entered combat aboard the USS *Skipjack*, a submarine, and subsequently commanded submarines in both the Atlantic and Pacific. After the war he became records director of the Bureau of Naval Personnel until 1949.

During the 1950s McCain successfully served aboard the USS *St. Paul* as its executive officer. His next assignments followed in succession: director of navy undersea warfare research and development; commander of Submarine Squadron 6; commander of the attack transport USS *Monrovia*; director of progress analysis in the Office of the [Chief of Naval Operations](#); commanding officer of the USS *Albany*; and chief of legislative liaison for the secretary of the navy. McCain was promoted to rear admiral in 1959 and to vice admiral four years later.

During the early 1960s McCain was part of the Atlantic Fleet's amphibious command, eventually rising to its entire command in 1965. Admiral McCain took part in the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965. He finally succeeded retiring Admiral [Ulysses S. Grant Sharp](#) as [commander in chief, Pacific Command](#) on July 31, 1968. McCain was a hard-liner on the Vietnam War and believed that the Communists were using the Vietnamese conflict to further their expansionist aims. In the fall of 1972 it was McCain who urged that President [Nixon](#) take drastic measures against [North Vietnam](#). He supported the resumption of bombing as well as the mining of Haiphong Harbor to bring the North Vietnamese to the conference table. McCain, before 1972, was a strong and vocal proponent of the Nixon administration's [Vietnamization](#) program. Yet by the fall of 1972, McCain was weary of his longtime service to the country and consequently decided to return to the Naval Academy as an instructor of electrical engineering. He retired in 1972 and died on March 22, 1981.

Sources: *Current Biography*, November 1970; *Washington Post*, March 24, 1981; *Congressional Record*, October 3, 1972; *New York Times*, March 23, 1981.

John S. Leiby

## McCARTHY, EUGENE JOSEPH

Elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1948 and to the Senate in 1958 from his native state of Minnesota, McCarthy became an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War. Born in Watkins, Minnesota, on March 29, 1916, he was a schoolteacher and college professor before being elected to Congress. He served on the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#), and after supporting the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) and generally refraining from criticism of Johnson administration policies in Vietnam, by 1967 he had become a leading critic of the war.

On November 30, 1967, McCarthy announced as a candidate for the 1968 Democratic presidential nomination against [President Johnson](#), emphasizing his support for a negotiated settlement of the war. He said the war was draining "the material and moral resources of the country from our really pressing problems." Viewed as more of a scholar than a politician, McCarthy surprised the experts. He demonstrated the political potential of the [antiwar movement](#) and was a rallying point for youthful opponents of the war. His strong showing against Johnson in the New Hampshire primary on March 12, 1968, was a major factor in [Robert Kennedy](#)'s decision to become a candidate for the presidential nomination and in Johnson's decision not to seek reelection. McCarthy remained in the race for the nomination through the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where he was defeated by Vice President [Hubert Humphrey](#). McCarthy left the Senate after completing his second term in 1970.

Sources: Eugene McCarthy, *The Year of the People*, 1969; Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1968*, 1969.

Hoyt Purvis

### **McGEE, GALE WILLIAM**

Gale McGee was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1915. He graduated from the Nebraska State Teachers College in 1936 and eventually earned a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago. Between 1938 and 1948 he taught at a number of colleges, until his appointment as professor of history at the University of Wyoming. McGee served as a legislative assistant to Democratic Senator Joseph O'Mahoney in 1955 and 1956, and in 1958 he won election to the U.S. Senate. During the years of the Vietnam War, McGee was one of the Senate's most articulate "hawks," generally supporting the American military presence in Southeast Asia. McGee served in the Senate until 1977. He had been defeated in the election of 1976 by Malcolm Wallop. After his 1976 defeat, McGee served from 1977 to 1981 as a permanent representative to the Organization of American States. He is the author of *The Responsibility of World Power* (1968).

Sources: *Current Biography*, 1961; "Democrats," *Time*, January 17, 1969, p. 19; *The Almanac of American Politics*, 1982, 1982.

Joanna D. Cowden



## McGOVERN, GEORGE STANLEY

George Stanley McGovern was born in Avon, South Dakota, on July 19, 1922. He served as a pilot with the Army Air Force during World War II and received his B.A. from Dakota Wesleyan University in 1945. McGovern went on to earn the M.A. and Ph.D. in history from Northwestern University in 1949 and 1953. He taught at Dakota Wesleyan between 1949 and 1953, and then served for two years as executive secretary of the South Dakota Democratic party. McGovern was elected to Congress in 1956, and in 1961 accepted President John F. Kennedy's offer to direct the Food for Peace program. McGovern was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1963 and served there until 1981. In 1968, after the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, McGovern staged a belated run for the Democratic presidential nomination, emphasizing opposition to the war in Vietnam and the need to reinforce [Great Society](#) programs. He lost the nomination to [Hubert Humphrey](#), but between 1968 and 1972 McGovern was a leading figure in the restructuring of the Democratic party, de-emphasizing the power of the urban machines and the South in favor of women and minorities. McGovern won the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972, campaigning on the theme of an immediate, unilateral [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam, but he suffered a landslide defeat at the hands of President [Richard M. Nixon](#) in the general election.

Sources: George S. McGovern, *A Time of War, A Time of Peace*, 1968; *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985; Theodore White, *The Making of the President, 1972*, 1973; Robert Sam Anson, *McGovern: A Biography*, 1972.

## McNAMARA, ROBERT STRANGE

Robert S. McNamara was born on June 9, 1916, in San Francisco, California. He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1937 and then received his M.B.A. from Harvard in 1939. An expert in systems management and statistics, McNamara served in administrative positions with the Army Air Corps during World War II, and after the war he joined the Ford Motor Company, where he rose rapidly through management ranks as one of the new generation of whiz kids. In 1960, at the age of forty-four, McNamara was named president of Ford Motor Company. President-elect [John F. Kennedy](#) had his eye on McNamara, however, and offered him the cabinet post of [secretary of defense](#). McNamara came to Washington, D.C., in 1961 and remained there until his resignation from the Pentagon in 1968.

Robert McNamara proved to be one of the most influential figures in the history of the Vietnam War. Blessed with a keen, analytical mind and a supreme confidence in the efficacy of modern technology, McNamara became a primary architect of American policy in Vietnam, exercising both logistical and operational control over the war, presiding over the initial buildup, and eventually losing all faith in the American effort there. McNamara was a leading exponent of [counterinsurgency](#), the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#), and bombing of [North Vietnam](#) in 1964 and 1965, as well as the large-scale commitment of ground troops to [South Vietnam](#). To stop [infiltration](#) from North Vietnam along the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) and across the [Demilitarized Zone](#), McNamara called for the construction of an electronic barrier across Southeast Asia, a system of devices to alert the United States of any breach of security at any time. Dubbed "McNamara's Wall" (see [Project Practice Nine](#)) by skeptical journalists, the proposal was never implemented, but it did show the naivete of McNamara's faith in modern technology.

By 1966, however, McNamara had become somewhat skeptical of the American war effort in Vietnam. He was astonished at the resilience of the North Vietnamese and the relative lack of effect American bombing had, especially on their extraordinary ability to move men and material down the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) into South Vietnam. McNamara was also surprised at the level of [casualties](#) the [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) were willing to accept, and he knew, statistician that he was, how their commitment upset the basic philosophy behind the American [war of attrition](#) there. Finally, McNamara grew positively disgusted with the corruption of South Vietnamese officials, the instability of their government, and their lack of sensitivity to democratic principles. Between 1961 and 1966 McNamara visited South Vietnam eight times, and by the end of 1966 he realized that American casualties were too high for the results achieved. No end of the war was in sight.

By 1967 McNamara was advocating a negotiated settlement to the conflict, pushing on President [Lyndon Johnson](#) a diplomatic solution to the problem. Understandably, the president was upset. For years he had accepted the counsel and advice of these "experts," the "best and the brightest" in [David Halberstam's](#) words, and now they were essentially admitting they had been wrong, after the troop totals had reached more than 500,000 soldiers and more than 30,000 Americans were dead. As McNamara's skepticism grew throughout 1967, so did Johnson's frustration, and in November 1967 he asked McNamara to resign his defense post. By that time McNamara was advocating an end to bombing the north, a cap on American troop strength in Vietnam, and gradually turning the war over to the South Vietnamese. After leaving the Department of Defense, McNamara became president of the World Bank, a position he held until his retirement in 1983.

Sources: David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; Gregory Palmer, *The McNamara Strategy and the Vietnam War: Program Budgeting in the Pentagon, 1960-1968*, 1978.  
McNAMARA'S WALL See Project Practice Nine

## McNAUGHTON, JOHN THEODORE

Born on November 21, 1921, John McNaughton was one of [Robert McNamara](#)'s whiz kids brought into the Department of Defense to make it more efficient. McNaughton was a former Harvard Law School professor and one of McNamara's closest civilian advisers when the United States embarked on its Vietnamese venture. After [President Johnson](#) received the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) in August 1964, he was among the hard-liners who urged serious action against [North Vietnam](#). Of course, the Johnson administration decided that any military operations against North Vietnam would be taken after the November 1964 elections.

McNaughton agreed with [Maxwell Taylor](#)'s assertions that only direct intervention by the United States would save [South Vietnam](#) from almost certain takeover by the Communists. He recommended that combat units be introduced and that air bases be constructed in South Vietnam. McNaughton also suggested that naval forces be stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin to provoke the North Vietnamese and hence give the United States justification to punish the [Hanoi](#) regime. Although McNaughton was a hard-liner, he did urge some restraint so as not to damage Johnson's image with the American public. In March 1965, after U.S. combat forces had been deployed in South Vietnam, McNaughton asserted that only these forces, with accompanying reinforcements, could avert defeat of the South Vietnamese. He supported continuing escalation at least until American public opinion soured on the Vietnam War.

By late 1967, however, McNaughton began to question America's role in Vietnam. Throughout the summer of 1966, he had been part of a think tank institute which drafted the [Jason Study](#). This study found that U.S. actions in Vietnam had failed. Because of their primitive economy, North Vietnam had not been materially damaged by U.S. air raids. Instead of destroying their morale, the air raids had strengthened patriotism and nationalism among the Hanoi leadership. The study found in addition that the North Vietnamese had increased their [infiltration](#) into the south. Such conclusions alarmed McNamara and made him more pessimistic about the U.S. involvement. McNaughton, in private conversations with McNamara, warned in the summer of 1967 that the Vietnam War was fast becoming so serious that its consequences "could cause the worst split in our people in more than a century." McNaughton, however, did not live to see his prophecy fulfilled. In July 1967, he and his family were killed in an air crash, only a short time before he was to become the secretary of the navy.

Sources: "Career's End," *Newsweek*, July 31, 1967; *New York Times*, July 18, 1967; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

John S. Leiby

## MEDEVAC

“Medevac” was an acronym for medical evacuation, almost always associated with evacuation of [casualties](#) by helicopter during or after a battle. Consequently, the helicopters used for these missions also were called “medevac helicopters,” or simply “medevacs.” The use of the helicopter in a variety of missions was a distinguishing feature of the Vietnam War. For American and Allied troops, the sound of the helicopter was perhaps the most nearly ubiquitous sound of the war. Usually, it evoked positive feelings for troops in the field, since the helicopter almost always meant relief in some form, be it additional troop reinforcements; supplies such as ammunition, food, and medicine; or evacuation of the wounded and/or dead. The medevac helicopter was an especially important factor in enhancing and sustaining troop morale in the field. Soldiers knew that if they were wounded, the probability was high that they would be transported quickly to a field hospital. Statistics suggest the validity of this assumption: nearly 98 percent of those wounded in action were evacuated from the battlefield alive, and no battlefield was more than one hour’s flying time from a hospital. Medevac helicopter crews often had to fly into “hot” [landing zones](#) to evacuate the wounded, and all of those involved in evacuating wounded under such conditions were at great risk to becoming casualties. The use of the helicopter for medical evacuation contributed substantially to the military performance of American and Allied troops during the Vietnam War, and medevacs resulted in many wounded being saved who might otherwise have died from wounds. A synonym for medevac was “[dustoff](#),” used after the death of Lieutenant Paul B. Kelley in 1964. Kelley’s radio call sign was “dustoff,” and he was killed on a medevac mission. The term was used to refer to medevac missions and medevac helicopters after that.

Source: Robert Mason, *Chickenhawk*, 1983.

Stafford T. Thomas

## **MEDICAL SUPPORT**

Because of major improvements in medical support facilities and evacuation of the wounded, less than 19 percent of soldiers died from combat wounds in the Vietnam War, compared to 26 percent in the Korean War and 29 percent in World War II. Helicopters quickly evacuated wounded troops to base camp hospitals, MASH units, field hospitals, and hospital ships off the coast of the South China Sea. Also, because of major improvements in pharmaceutical care against infectious diseases, death or disability from malaria, hepatitis, and intestinal disorders was well below the rates of Korea and World War II.

Source: Spurgeon Neel, *Vietnam Studies: Medical Support of the U.S. Army in Vietnam, 1965-1970*, 1973.

## **MEDINA, ERNEST L.**

Ernest L. Medina was born in Springer, New Mexico, in 1936. His mother died when he was only a few months old and shortly thereafter his father sent him to Montrose, Colorado, where he was reared by his grandparents. To supplement his grandparents' meager income he worked as a soda jerk, a paperboy, and in a local supermarket.

When Medina was sixteen years old, he lied about his age to enlist in the National Guard, where he served until 1956, when at the age of twenty he entered the army as a private. In March 1964, after serving eight years, Medina was commissioned a second lieutenant, graduating fourth out of a class of more than two hundred from Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. After his second tour of duty in Germany, where he met his wife Barbara, an East German refugee, he was ordered to Hawaii in December of 1966. Medina was promoted to captain and given command of Charlie Company, which was a part of the 11th Infantry Brigade (see [23rd Infantry Division](#)). In December of 1967 the 11th Brigade was flown to Vietnam.

While in Vietnam Medina won the Bronze and Silver stars for valor. On March 10, 1970, Medina was charged with murder, manslaughter, and assault as a result of the March 16, 1968, massacre at [My Lai 4](#) hamlet. On September 22, 1970, a jury of five officers cleared him of all charges. Subsequently, Medina resigned his commission from the army on October 15, 1971, explaining, "I cannot wear the uniform with the same pride I had before."

Source: Seymour M. Hersh, *My Lai 4: Report on the Massacre and its Aftermath*, 1970.

Mike Dennis

## MEKONG DELTA

The Mekong Delta area of Vietnam technically extends from Go Cong Province all the way down to the Ca Mau Peninsula, the area drained by the Mekong River as it reaches the South China Sea. Sometimes the Vam Co, [Saigon](#), and Dong Nai rivers are also included in the region known as the Mekong Delta, giving it a total of more than 26,000 square miles. The Mekong Delta area is known for its elaborate system of rivers and canals as well as its rice cultivation. Formed by silt deposits, the soil is extremely fertile, and at the mouth of the Mekong River the sediment extends the shoreline by an average of 250 feet a year. The Mekong Delta area is inhabited primarily by ethnic Vietnamese, with large concentrations of [Khmers](#) in the southwestern areas. The Mekong Delta was included in the [IV Corps](#) Tactical Zone during the Vietnam War.

Source: Danny J. Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976.

## MEKONG RIVER PROJECT

Known officially as the Mekong River Basin Development Project, the Mekong River Project was launched in 1957 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. Designed after the successful Tennessee Valley Authority of the 1930s, the Mekong River Project involved [Laos](#), [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), [Thailand](#), and the [Republic of Vietnam](#), but Burma and the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) refused to participate. Surveys began in 1958 under the direction of the four-nation committee, headquartered in Bangkok. By the early 1970s, the Mekong River Project had completed three dams providing for flood control and hydroelectric power.

Sources: Harvey H. Smith, et al. *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; "The Mekong Project," *Impact* 8 (1963), 168-180; Danny J. Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976.



## MENDENHALL, JOSEPH

Born in 1920 and a graduate of the Harvard Law School, Joseph Mendenhall was a career diplomat in the State Department, where he worked with the Marshall Plan and Vietnamese affairs. He served in the American embassy at [Saigon](#) between 1959 and 1962; was director of Far Eastern affairs in Washington, D.C., between 1964 and 1965; was director of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Vientiane, [Laos](#), between 1965 and 1968; and served first as deputy then as acting assistant administrator of USAID Vietnam in Washington between 1968 and 1969. In 1963 President [John F. Kennedy](#) sent Mendenhall and General [Victor Krulak](#) to Saigon to assess the situation in Vietnam; Krulak decided the war was being aggressively pursued and could be won, while Mendenhall decided that the regime of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) was near collapse. Mendenhall reported that educated, urban Vietnamese were more interested in eliminating Diem than in fighting the [Vietcong](#) and that there was a "virtual breakdown of the civil government in Saigon." He warned of a religious war between Catholics and [Buddhists](#) and saw no chance of defeating the Vietcong unless "as a minimum, [Nhu](#) (Diem's brother) withdrew or was removed from the government." When Mendenhall and Krulak returned, [John Kennedy](#) remarked, "You two did visit the same country, didn't you?"

Source: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

Samuel Freeman

## MENDES-FRANCE, PIERRE

An unconventional political figure who became prime minister of [France](#) at age forty-seven during the 1954 Geneva Conference, Mendes-France believed France's position in world affairs depended upon [withdrawal](#) from the war in [Indochina](#). He had been urging direct negotiations with [Ho Chi Minh](#) and was opposed to the United States becoming militarily involved in Vietnam. In the National Assembly on June 10, 1954, he called for a complete change in French policy ``to make it sure that France's aim is not the intervention of the United States, but an honorable end of the terrible conflict. France should play for a straightforward peace with the [Vietminh](#)." A week later the longtime critic of the Indochina war was chosen to head the government. He immediately pledged to obtain a cease-fire and imposed a deadline of four weeks, saying that he would resign otherwise. He told the French people, ``If you want war we shall have to send draftees, your own sons, to the battlefields of Indochina. If you want peace, I shall bring you a cease-fire agreement by July 20 or resign." He met his deadline, the negotiations including some secret meetings with [Zhou Enlai](#), China's representative at the talks. The armistice agreement included the provisional partitioning of Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel (see [Geneva Accords](#)). Mendes-France remained in office only a short time thereafter. His government fell in February 1955 during controversy over French policy in North Africa.

Born in Paris in 1907, he was first elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1932 and held key positions in a number of French governments. He died in 1982.

Sources: Jean Lacouture, *Pierre Mendes-France*, 1985; Alexander Werth, *Lost Statesman*, 1958.

Hoyt Purvis

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY ADVISORY GROUP

Headed by Wesley Fishel, the Michigan State University Advisory Group (MSUAG) contracted with the South Vietnamese government to train civil servants, civil guards, and police, reforming the National Administration Institute along American lines, reorganizing [Ngo Dinh Diem's](#) administration, studying social problems, and issuing reports and recommendations to South Vietnamese and American policymakers. The MSUAG functioned between 1954 and 1961. Fishel was a strong supporter of Ngo Dinh Diem. Given to social science jargon, Fishel extracted democratic principles from virtually all of Diem's oppressive and authoritarian actions and claimed that the internal Communist threat left Diem no choice. Shortcomings in [South Vietnam's](#) exercise of democracy were explained away with such statements as the "people of Southeast Asia are not, generally speaking, sufficiently sophisticated to understand what we mean by democracy." According to Fishel, South Vietnam needed strong leadership, not democracy. He defended corruption on the grounds that all Asian governments were corrupt. Early in the 1960s, the program was dissolved when Michigan State University refused to restrain returning scholars who openly criticized the South Vietnamese government.

Sources: [Bernard Fall](#), *The Two Viet-Nams: A Social and Political Analysis*, 1963; Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972.

Samuel Freeman

## MILITARY AIRLIFT COMMAND

From headquarters at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, the Military Airlift Command (MAC) directed during the Vietnam era some 90,000 active-duty military and civilians as well as more than 1,000 aircraft at more than 340 locations in 26 countries. Created as the Air Transport Command just before World War II, MAC was redesignated the Military Air Transport Service in 1947 and received its present designation in 1966. It held responsibilities throughout the era for airlift support of American forces throughout the world, and in supporting these requirements managed air bases not just within the United States but also at such far-flung places as Clark Air Base, the [Philippines](#); Ramstein Air Base, Federal Republic of Germany; and Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

MAC's assigned airlift capability, all configured to handle passengers, supplies, and equipment, rested during the early Vietnam era essentially on an aging fleet of C-124 transports, slow C-133 aircraft, and [C-130](#) and C-135 cargo aircraft which were more suited to [tactical airlift](#) roles. Some of the great difficulties MAC personnel faced in supporting Southeast Asia requirements with these aircraft were their relatively small cargo capacities and, especially, the lengthy flying times necessary to travel across the Pacific. For example, a round-trip between Travis Air Force Base, California, a major departure port, and [Saigon](#) in the prop-driven C-24 normally required about ninety-five flying hours.

As a result of the difficulties inherent in resupplying a large overseas force by air, MAC officials during the 1950s moved toward the replacement of these prop-driven transports with jet cargo aircraft. Accordingly, a milestone in South-east Asia [strategic airlift](#) support was realized in April 1965 when the [C-141](#) Starlifter became operational. This jet cargo transport could carry 67,620 pounds of cargo across the Pacific at speeds in excess of 440 knots per hour. A second improvement came with the deployment of the [C-5](#) Galaxy, an enlarged version of the C-141, beginning in December 1969. These two aircraft greatly enhanced MAC's ability to supply American forces in Southeast Asia over a massive logistics pipeline halfway around the globe.

Charged with strategic airlift in support of military operations in Southeast Asia between American escalation in 1965 and [withdrawal](#) of forces in 1973, MAC used all types of aircraft at its disposal to develop and operate a complex airlift system that spanned more than 15,000 miles between the United States and American bases in the Pacific and on the Asian mainland. This reliance on strategic airlift stemmed from the disabilities of ship movements to support an ever-larger and more sophisticated military mission to [South Vietnam](#). Moreover, the lack of suitable ports, roads, and railways hampered the ready distribution of personnel and war material in Southeast Asia. It was not uncommon, for instance, during the 1965-66 force buildup for ships to wait in harbors for days or weeks to be unloaded.

In responding to the urgent Southeast Asian theater requirements during the American escalation of operations, the U.S. Air Force quickly found that traffic to the Pacific grew from a monthly average of 33,779 passengers and 9,123 tons of cargo in fiscal year 1965 to 65,350 passengers and 42,296 tons of cargo in fiscal year 1967. Similar rises were experienced until 1969, when reductions in military support began to take place. Throughout the conflict in Southeast Asia, MAC personnel offered unique airlift support to American military forces in the theater. Only with the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975 did MAC airlift into that nation finally end.

Source: Kenneth W. Patchin, "Strategic Airlift," in Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973, An Illustrated Account*, 1977.

Roger D. Launius

## MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND ADVISORY GROUP

The U.S. government created the Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG), [Indochina](#), in 1950 to process, monitor, and evaluate American military aid to the French forces fighting in Southeast Asia. As originally conceived, it numbered about sixty men and was headed by a general officer. The French commanders resented MAAG's presence and hindered its operations. At first, the American group's mission was not to train or advise the [Vietnamese National Army](#) (VNA), but by the time of the Battle of [Dien Bien Phu](#), those activities were under consideration by American and French officials. After the Geneva Conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)), specific Franco-American discussions began on the future relationship between MAAG and VNA. In 1955, MAAG, Indochina, became MAAG, Vietnam, and a separate MAAG was established in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). In 1955 and 1956, MAAG, Vietnam, took over from the French the training and organizing of VNA. Using various legal pretexts to avoid overt violation of limits set at Geneva on foreign troops, the number of American advisers grew to almost 700 in the late 1950s.

The task facing MAAG was enormous. The South Vietnamese Army that it inherited from the French was poorly trained, equipped, and led. Furthermore, the Vietnamese often viewed the American advisers as interlopers just as they had the French colonialists. Despite these difficulties, by 1960 MAAG had shaped the South Vietnamese Army into what appeared on paper to be an efficient force. The reality, however, was that the army still lacked good leadership, and President [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) constantly frustrated MAAG by selecting his commanders on the basis of loyalty rather than merit.

By the time [John F. Kennedy](#) became president of the United States in 1961, the role and effectiveness of MAAG was under review. Following military doctrine developed during World War II and the Korean War, MAAG had prepared the South Vietnamese Army to fight a conventional war with little attention to guerrilla tactics. The growing strength of the Communist insurgency in South Vietnam in the early 1960s necessitated a change in doctrine. As part of Kennedy's move to a [counterinsurgency](#) effort, the administration replaced MAAG with the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV), in 1962.

Source: Ronald H. Spector, *United States Army in Vietnam: Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941-1960*, 1983.

David L. Anderson

## MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM

Located at [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#) outside [Saigon](#), the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), was a unified command subject to the direction of the Commander in Chief, Pacific. The MACV commander was responsible for all American military activities in Vietnam. MACV was first established at Saigon on February 8, 1962, after President [John F. Kennedy](#) had ordered an increase in U.S. military personnel. The [Military Advisory and Assistance Group](#) (MAAG), which had been in Vietnam since November 1955, remained in charge of advising [ARVN](#) (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)), but on May 15, 1964, MACV succeeded MAAG in that responsibility as well. Between that reorganization on May 15, 1964, and its departure from Vietnam on March 29, 1973, MACV directed the [United States Army, Vietnam](#); [Naval Forces Vietnam](#); the [Seventh Air Force](#); [III Marine Amphibious Force](#); the [Fifth Special Forces Group](#); [I Field Force Vietnam](#); [II Field Force Vietnam](#); the [XXIV Corps](#); and a variety of pacification programs (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)). Four people commanded MACV: General Paul [Harkins](#) (February 1962 to June 1964); General [William Westmoreland](#) (June 1964 to July 1968); General [Creighton Abrams](#) (July 1968 to June 1972); and General [Frederick Weyand](#) (June 1972 to March 1973).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam*, 1984; George S. Eckhardt, *Command and Control, 1950-1969*, 1981.

## MILITARY REGIONS

Until July 1970, U.S. military officials divided [South Vietnam](#) into four major geographical zones, known as [corps](#) tactical areas. They were designated [I Corps](#), [II Corps](#), [III Corps](#), and [IV Corps](#). After July 1970 a new designation was used. Military Region I, or MR I, was the new designation for I Corps. MR II referred to II Corps, MR III to III Corps, and MR IV to IV Corps.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

The Military Sealift Command was a United States [Navy](#) operation responsible for shipping fuel, food, clothing, and weapons to Vietnam in support of the American war effort. At its peak the Military Sealift Command operated more than 500 ships, including fuel tankers, LSTs, aircraft ferries, tugboats, and [troop](#) carriers. At the end of the war in 1975, the Military Sealift Command helped evacuate more than 40,000 [refugees](#) from [South Vietnam](#).

Source: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.



## MISSING IN ACTION

Distributed by MGM/United Artists in 1983 and 1984, *Missing in Action* starred Chuck Norris as [Special Forces](#) leader James Braddock, who had escaped from a Vietnamese prisoner of war (POW) camp after ten years imprisonment. After the war is over in 1975, Braddock returns to Vietnam as part of an American fact-finding mission, but is frustrated with the lying and posturing of the sadistic General Tran (played by James Hong), who denies knowledge of any remaining American prisoners in Vietnam. Braddock leaves the mission, heads into [Thailand](#) where he purchases enough weapons to become a one-man army, and then returns to Vietnam and rescues a group of American POWs. *Missing in Action*, a precursor to [Rambo](#), was one of the genre of action films in the 1980s celebrating the sacrifices American soldiers made during the Vietnam War.

## MISSING IN ACTION 2: THE BEGINNING

Released by MGM/United Artists in 1985, *Missing in Action 2: The Beginning* starred Chuck Norris as American [Special Forces](#) soldier James Braddock, who is captured and spends ten years in a Vietnamese prisoner of war camp before escaping. Dubbed a ``prequel" to [Missing in Action](#), *Missing in Action 2* told the story of Braddock in the period before the scenes depicted in *Missing in Action*. Like [Rambo](#), *Missing in Action*, and [Uncommon Valor](#), *Missing in Action 2* portrayed the American effort in Vietnam as a noble one spoiled only by politicians back home who refused to give American soldiers the total support they needed to win.

## MOBILE GUERRILLA FORCES

Designed to fight [Vietcong](#) insurgency, the Mobile Guerrilla Forces (MGF) evolved out of the special reconnaissance projects, Projects [Delta](#), [Omega](#), and [Sigma](#), established in 1965 and 1966. Each MGF consisted of a 12-man A-Team of [Special Forces](#), a 150-man mobile guerrilla [company](#), and a 34-man combat reconnaissance [platoon](#). The MGF operated for extended periods of time in Communist-controlled regions of [South Vietnam](#) and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). Basically they were hit-and-run units giving the North Vietnamese and Vietcong a taste of their own tactical medicine. The MGF operations were known as "Blackjack Missions" and existed between October 1966 and July 1967, when they became part of the Mobile Strike Forces.

Source: Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Special Forces, 1961-1971*, 1973.

## MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE

Because of the extent of the [Mekong Delta](#), nearly 90 percent of the lines of communication in [South Vietnam](#) was by river and canals. More than 50,000 junks operated in the Mekong Delta, providing [Vietcong](#) guerrillas with the ability to ship supplies and move about undetected. To interdict that guerrilla effort, the United States [Navy](#) implemented [Operation Game Warden](#) in 1965 and established Task Force 116 under the command of Captain Burton B. Witham, Jr., to carry it out. In 1967 Task Force 117 was established to attack the Vietcong in the Mekong Delta and the [Rung Sat Swamp](#) area. Eventually, several hundred armed small craft, 31-foot fiberglass PBRs, [air-cushion vehicles](#), reconditioned World War II landing craft, motorized junks, LCM6 mechanized landing craft, and amphibious [troop](#) carriers, operated with Task Forces 116 and 117. In June 1967 the Mobile Riverine Force was established by joining the existing naval riverine forces with the United States Army Ninth Infantry's Riverine Forces. Blessed with 5,000 highly mobile troops, the Mobile Riverine Force was capable of moving the soldiers up river more than 150 miles within a day's time. The Mobile Riverine Force was headquartered first at [Vung Tau](#) in III [Corps](#) but moved to a [Seabee](#)-constructed base at Dong Tam about five miles from [My Tho](#) in the Mekong Delta. Between 1969 and 1971 the Mobile Riverine Force was turned over to [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) as part of [Vietnamization](#).

Sources: William B. Fulton, *Riverine Operations, 1966-1969*, 1973; Victor Croizat, *The Brown Water Navy: The River and Coastal War in Indo-China and Vietnam, 1948-1972*, 1984.

## MOBILE STRIKE FORCE COMMAND

In June 1965, the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#), established Mobile Strike Force Commands in each of the four [Corps](#) Tactical Zones and at the [Fifth Special Forces Group](#) headquarters at [Nha Trang](#). Each of these "Mike" forces consisted of a Special Forces twelve-man A-Team, several [Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) battalions, a reconnaissance [company](#), and a [Nung](#) or Cambodian [airborne](#) company. They were all under the direction of Special Forces commanders. The Mobile Strike Force Commands operated until the [withdrawal](#) of the Fifth Special Forces Group from [South Vietnam](#) in 1971.

Sources: John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 1985; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.

## **MOMYER, WILLIAM WALLACE**

William W. Momyer was born on September 23, 1916, in Muskogee, Oklahoma. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1937, joined the Army Air Corps in 1938, and saw action in North Africa and Italy during World War II. Momyer climbed through the ranks of the United States Air Force officer corps after World War II, and in 1966 was given command of the [Seventh Air Force](#) in Vietnam, where he supervised the air war over Southeast Asia. Momyer left [South Vietnam](#) in the summer of 1968 and retired from the air force in 1973.

Sources: *Who's Who in America, 1968-1969*, 1969; William W. Momyer, *Airpower in Three Wars*, 1978; John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience. Thunder From Above: Air War, 1941-1968*, 1985.

## MONTAGNARDS

The Montagnards, or "mountain people," were primitive tribes occupying the [Central Highlands](#) of Vietnam. Before World War II, the Montagnards were isolated from the conflict in [Indochina](#), except for periodic tribute payments they made to a series of emperors. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, French imperial officials continued the policy of general neglect. But when the [Vietminh](#) began their assault on the French Empire again in 1946, General [Vo Nguyen Giap](#) declared the Central Highlands crucial to the expulsion of the French and conquest of the South. Through the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, competing armies tried to woo the Montagnards, and the North Vietnamese proved more successful than the South Vietnamese or the Americans. After 1954 [Ho Chi Minh](#) brought more than 10,000 Montagnards to [Hanoi](#) for training as teachers, medical assistants, soldiers, and political agents; established open, self-governing zones in the North for the mountain people; and gave the tribes representation in the National Assembly. The South Vietnamese took another approach, trying to assimilate the Montagnards through relocation, reservations, and cultural pressure. The fact that [South Vietnam](#) also put Catholic [refugees](#) on Montagnard land only further alienated the mountain people. Some Montagnard tribes, like the Hre and the Rhade, were loyal to the United States and South Vietnam, but they were exceptions rather than the rule. By 1975, the Montagnards had suffered the loss of their land and cultural isolation, facing the disintegration of their village lifestyle. More than 200,000 of them had died in the conflict, and 85 percent of all Montagnards had been displaced from their tribal lands.

Sources: Gerald C. Hickey, *Free in the Forest: An Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands, 1954-1976*, 1982; Robert L. Mole, *The Montagnards of South Vietnam: A Study of Nine Tribes*, 1970.

## MOORE, ROBERT

Robert Moore was born October 21, 1909, in Charlotte, North Carolina, and graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1932. He fought in both the Atlantic and Pacific during World War II, and in 1961 he had achieved the rank of rear admiral. In 1964, Moore was transferred to the attack [aircraft carriers](#) with the [Seventh Fleet](#) in the South China Sea. He was on board the USS *Ticonderoga* during the [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#) in July and August 1964, and he assumed command of the task force President [Lyndon Johnson](#) ordered to bomb [North Vietnam](#). Robert Moore retired from the navy in 1967.

Sources: *Who's Who in America*, 1966, 1966; Eugene C. Windchy, *Tonkin Gulf*, 1971.



## MOORER, THOMAS HINMAN

Thomas Moorer was born in 1912 in Mount Willing, Alabama. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy and served on warships between 1933 and 1935 and in aviation squadrons between 1936 and 1943. Moorer commanded a bombing squadron in 1943, and between 1943 and 1945 he served as a gunnery and tactical officer on the staff of the commander of the Naval Air Force. Moorer had a variety of assignments in the late 1940s and early 1950s, serving as executive officer on the aircraft carrier *Midway* and receiving the rank of captain in 1952. Between 1953 and 1962 Moorer was successively on the staff of the commander of the Naval Air Force, Atlantic Fleet; aide to the assistant secretary of the navy; commander of the USS *Salisbury Sound*; and a strategic planner for the [chief of naval operations](#). He was promoted to rear admiral in 1958 and in 1962 became commander of the [Seventh Fleet](#). Moorer became commander in chief of the Atlantic Fleet and head of NATO in 1965. In 1967 he was named chief of naval operations and, in 1970, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)). He was a soft-spoken, competent leader who relied on his diplomatic and problem-solving skills. Moorer retired in 1974.

Sources: *International Who's Who, 1984-1985*, 1984; "Armed Forces," *Time* 96, February 26, 1965, p. 16, and 85, July 6, 1970, p. 21; Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1979; Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Sailors and Cold War Crises*, 1977; Lawrence J. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-Five Years*, 1976.

Joanna D. Cowden

## MORATORIUM DAY DEMONSTRATIONS (1969)

The Moratorium Day demonstrations on October 15, 1969, constituted the largest public protest at that time in American history. The demonstrations were organized by the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, which was founded on June 30, 1969, in order to galvanize a majority position against the war through a nationwide demonstration in October with plans for one additional day of demonstrations on each successive month until there were satisfactory peace negotiations and a firm American commitment to withdraw from Vietnam. This timetable of demonstrations was conceived by peace campaign veterans Sam Brown, Marge Sklencar, David Hawk, and David Mixner in an effort to counter the anarchic and violent protest seen in the Chicago demonstrations in 1968 (see [Democratic National Convention](#)), and to take the [antiwar movement](#) into the communities where people who had never protested before could respectably offer their opposition to the war in Vietnam. At the same time, the reconstituted New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam was preparing for renewed antiwar demonstrations. Working in an uneasy collaboration, the two groups developed a moderate and mainstream approach, whereby organizers generated a grass-roots structure in dozens of cities across the nation, garnered bipartisan endorsements from a multitude of senators and congressional representatives, and got their message to the people through ads in the *New York Times* and press conferences. Millions of people participated in the October 15 Moratorium. The activities, in an effort to suspend "business as usual," varied: many people, including some GIs in Vietnam, wore black armbands to show their opposition to the war; others shone their car headlights; some passed out leaflets door to door; over 100,000 people massed on the Boston Commons; New York City Mayor Lindsay decreed the day a day of mourning and ordered the city's flags to be at half-staff; the two largest unions, the Teamsters and the Auto Workers, teamed up with the Chemical Workers to support the Moratorium; a quarter of a million people marched in Washington, D.C.; and Coretta Scott King led a candlelight vigil through the capital. Countless speakers from [Benjamin Spock](#), to former Supreme Court Justice [Arthur Goldberg](#), to activist [David Dellinger](#) and diplomat [Averell Harriman](#), all voiced their opposition to the war. The White House attempted to dampen the sense of goodwill and unity the Moratorium demonstrated by releasing a message of support for it by [North Vietnam](#) Premier [Pham Van Dong](#), but the enormous numbers and the moderate nature of the protest demonstrated overwhelming nationwide opposition to the war. President [Nixon's](#) "silent majority" speech two weeks later attempted to downplay mainstream opposition to the war, but the Moratorium demonstrations in November surpassed the October 15 demonstrations in number. The Vietnam Moratorium Committee was disbanded in April 1970. Sources: Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975*, 1984; Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 1980.

Linda Kelly Alkana

## MORSE, WAYNE LYMAN

Known as a maverick who frequently stood alone and refused to compromise, Wayne Morse was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1942 and served through 1968. Born in Madison, Wisconsin on October 20, 1900, he received a law degree from the University of Oregon. Elected to the Senate from Oregon as a Republican, he became an independent in 1952 and in 1955 joined the Democrats.

He was an early and outspoken critic of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, but his irascible style and reputation as a gadfly left him without much influence. He argued vigorously against the 1964 [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#). Morse was the first to suggest that the Johnson administration was not revealing the full story of the [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#). He charged that the United States was acting as a "provocateur" in Vietnam. Morse criticized the administration for not referring the matter to the United Nations. He asserted that the place to settle the controversy "is not by way of the proposed predated declaration of war, giving to the President the power to make war without a declaration of war. The place to settle it is around the conference tables."

Morse argued that the resolution represented an illegal abridgment of the Constitution, and warned at the time of its passage that [President Johnson](#) would interpret it broadly. He said those senators who voted for it "will live to regret it." But he was joined only by Senator [Ernest Gruening](#) in voting against the resolution. He later predicted that the Tonkin controversy would continue for decades.

During the remainder of his last term in the Senate, Morse repeatedly opposed Johnson administration policies in Vietnam and in 1967 failed in an effort to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Morse lost a reelection bid in 1968. He died in 1974.

Sources: Anthony Austin, *The President's War*, 1971; *Congressional Record*, August 6-7, 1974; *New York Times*, July 21, 1974.

Hoyt Purvis

## MORTARS

Mortars are muzzle-loaded, either smooth- or rifle-bored, high-angle fire weapons. Small, light, and easier to move than [artillery](#), the mortars used in Vietnam varied in range up to a maximum of 5,650 meters for the 4.2 inch ("four-deuce") usually mounted on vehicles or emplaced at fire bases, with U.S. forces also deploying the smaller, [troop](#)-carried 81mm and 60mm at the [battalion](#) and [company](#) levels, respectively. Commonly used mortar ammunition included high explosive (either impact or proximity fused) for use against troops and light material; white phosphorus ("willy-pete") for screening, signaling, and incendiary action; illumination; and tactical gas rounds.

The [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) often captured allied ordnance, and their 82mm mortar, rather than the more cumbersome 120mm model, became a choice weapon because it also fired U.S.-made 81 mm rounds. With sympathetic villagers to pace off the dimensions of U.S. positions, Communist gunners proved accurate and elusive. Relying on the weapon's high-angle trajectory, mortarmen would "hang" several rounds in the air toward a target then quickly disassemble and move or bury their mortar before radar or visual sighting could direct and adjust effective counterbattery fire.

Source: Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984.

Dudley Acker

## **MU GIA PASS**

Located in Quang Binh Province, the Mu Gia Pass was part of the Truong Son Mountain Range and a strategic route for North Vietnamese supplies making their way into [South Vietnam](#) during the years of the war. Throughout the 1960s the pass was subjected to massive American bombing in an attempt to cut off the flow of supplies.

Source: Danny J. Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976.

## MUSTE, ABRAHAM JOHANNES

A. J. Muste was born in the Netherlands on January 8, 1885, and immigrated to the United States in 1891. He attended Hope College in Michigan and in 1909 became a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. Inspired by Quaker writings and the suffering of the industrial poor, Muste was an avowed pacifist by 1915. He joined the [Fellowship of Reconciliation](#), a nondenominational pacifist group, in 1915. From 1926 to 1929 Muste served as national chairman of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and from 1940 to 1953 as its executive secretary. He openly opposed both World War I and II. In 1957 Muste helped found the Committee for Nonviolent Action, which protested nuclear proliferation through mass demonstrations, and was elected its first national chairman.

When the United States increased its involvement in Vietnam, Muste was one of the earliest critics. He was the keynote speaker at one of the first antiwar rallies, held on December 20, 1964, in New York City. Throughout 1965 and 1966 Muste appeared at dozens of antiwar rallies, vigils, and demonstrations, and in 1966 he was expelled from [South Vietnam](#) after leading a demonstration in [Saigon](#). In November 1966, at the age of eighty-two, Muste became chairman of the [Spring Mobilization](#) to End the War in Vietnam. He visited [North Vietnam](#) and spoke with [Ho Chi Minh](#) in January 1967, and died on February 11, 1967.

Sources: Jo Ann Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 1981; *New York Times*, February 12, 1967; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984.

John Ricks

## MY LAI

Because the American public prided itself on its humanity during war, the My Lai incident was a particularly painful part of the conflict in Vietnam. My Lai was a small rural hamlet of about 700 people located in the Son My district of Quang Ngai Province, situated on the northeast coast of [South Vietnam](#). It was believed to be one of the toughest [Vietcong](#) strongholds in the area. In the spring of 1967, search and destroy operations, led by Task Force Oregon (see [23rd Infantry Division](#)), began in Quang Ngai Province. In September 1967, the newly created Americal Division (see 23rd Infantry Division) went to relieve Task Force Oregon, continuing the mission to ["sanitize"](#) the region. In December, Charlie Company led by Captain [Ernest L. Medina](#) went in to assist the operation. Because of continual attacks by unseen enemies, the duty inspired questionable judgement and intensified emotions on the part of American troops. They had seen comrades killed and maimed by mines, bombs, and [booby traps](#) with the perpetrators melting into Vietnamese village life. The virtual impossibility of differentiating between Vietnamese peasants and Vietcong guerrillas led, at the bare minimum, to a contempt for all Vietnamese people. It also provided the backdrop for the My Lai massacre.

On the morning of March 16, 1968, a short [artillery](#) barrage fell on the village of My Lai to "soften" it up for the clean sweep to be made by Charlie Company. [Lt. William Calley](#) and his 1st Platoon boarded helicopters and landed on an airstrip 150 meters west of My Lai. Following this, the 2nd and 3rd platoons arrived, led by Lt. Stephen Brooks and Lt. Jeffrey La Crosse. A plan was formulated calling for Calley's 1st Platoon to approach the hamlet from the north. La Crosse's 3rd Platoon, accompanied by commander Captain Medina, would stay behind at the airstrip to establish communication with headquarters and direct operations. Additional protection was afforded by helicopter [gunships](#) circling My Lai at 1,000 feet.

Upon entering the village neither platoon met with enemy fire; there was no resistance. Calley ordered his men to round up all of the civilians at the center of the village. At this point accounts of the incident begin to differ. It seems that Calley opened fire on the civilians and ordered his men to do the same. Then his platoon moved through the village, systematically shooting anything that moved. No Vietcong ever appeared. The [body count](#) was estimated at 400 to 500, but Calley was eventually charged with the deaths of 122. One man who shot himself in the foot was the only American [casualty](#). Radio messages were sent back and forth among combat pilots and crewmen flying over My Lai. These were monitored by high-ranking officers such as Major General Samuel Koster and Colonel Oran K. Henderson during the course of the morning, and yet no senior officers made an attempt to investigate or stop the massacre. A report filed two weeks later referred to the attack as "well planned, well executed, and successful."

The incident was successfully concealed until Ronald Ridenhour wrote a letter in 1969 to President [Nixon](#) and a number of congressmen and Defense Department officials. The letter prompted an investigation and the indictment of twelve officers and enlisted men on charges either of murder or of assault with intent to commit murder. Lt. William Calley was found guilty of murder while all the others were either acquitted or had charges dismissed.

While the actual events of March 16, 1968, may never be completely clear, My Lai represents a landmark in American history for two reasons. First, such [atrocities](#) have traditionally been committed by countries considered uncivilized and barbaric, categories Americans did not see themselves fitting. Second, in broader and more encompassing terms, My Lai reveals the nature of the war as it was fought by the U.S. military and supported by the U.S. government, conduct which violated America's basic moral principles. With her reputation tainted, America could no longer rightfully claim her virtuous position at the head of other world powers.

Sources: Gerald Kurland, *The My Lai Massacre*, 1973; Richard Hammer, *The Court Martial of Lieutenant Calley*, 1971; Seymour Hersh, *My Lai 4: A Report on the Massacre and Its Aftermath*, 1970.

Sally Smith



## MY THO

My Tho is the capital city of Dinh-Tuong Province. Located along Highway 4 between [Saigon](#) and Ca Mau, My Tho was first founded by [Chinese refugees](#) fleeing from Taiwan. With a population of nearly 100,000, My Tho became one of [South Vietnam](#)'s autonomous principalities in September 1970. During the [Tet Offensive](#) in 1968, [Vietcong](#) forces occupied My Tho, and in response U.S. bombers and [artillery](#) reduced a full third of the city to rubble.

Sources: *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, 1984.



## N

9TH MARINE AMPHIBIOUS BRIGADE

9TH MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADE

NAPALM

NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

NAVAL BOMBARDMENT

NAVAL FORCES VIETNAM

NAVARRE PLAN

NAVY, UNITED STATES

NEUTRALITY

NEUTRALIZE

NEW LIFE HAMLETS

NEW YORK TIMES CO. v UNITED STATES, 403 U.S. 713 (1971)

NEW ZEALAND

NEWPORT

NGHE TINH UPRISING

NGO DINH CAN

NGO DINH DIEM

NGO DINH NHU

NGO DINH THUC

NGUYEN

NGUYEN CAO KY

NGUYEN CHANH THI

NGUYEN CHI THANH

NGUYEN CO THACH

NGUYEN DUY TRINH

NGUYEN HUU CO

NGUYEN HUU THO

NGUYEN KHANH

NGUYEN LUONG BANG

NGUYEN NGOC LOAN

NGUYEN PHU DUC

NGUYEN THI BINH

NGUYEN VAN BINH

NGUYEN VAN HINH

NGUYEN VAN LINH

NGUYEN VAN THIEU

NHA TRANG

NINTH INFANTRY DIVISION

NITZE, PAUL HENRY

NIXON DOCTRINE

NIXON, RICHARD MILHOUS

NOLTING, FREDERICK ERNEST

NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY

NUNG

NURSES (WOMEN) IN VIETNAM



## 9TH MARINE AMPHIBIOUS BRIGADE

When the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) attacked in force across the [Demilitarized Zone](#) in late March 1972, the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB) provided troops and aircraft off the coast ready to attack NVA-controlled areas south or north of the seventeenth parallel (see [Geneva Accords](#)), support [ARVN](#) forces (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam), and if necessary evacuate U.S. military personnel and material in South Vietnam's northern provinces. The deployment of 9th MAB revived the [Marine Corps](#)'s traditional amphibious role, and with marine aircraft sent ashore to provide support for ARVN infantry, 9th MAB also dispatched a [battalion](#) landing team (BLT) to provide security for the air bases at [Bien Hoa](#) and Nam Phong.

In 1975 the [Seventh Fleet](#) and 9th MAB conducted [Operation Frequent Wind](#) (April 29-30) to evacuate U.S. personnel and friendly South Vietnamese from [Saigon](#). Ninth MAB provided several ground security units and sixty-eight transport helicopters to lift thousands off the roof of the U.S. embassy and out of [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#), and two of the brigade's officers died when their CH-46 helicopter crashed into the South China Sea on the last day of the Vietnam War. But 9th MAB took more [casualties](#) two weeks later when, two hours after the unannounced release of the crew of the SS *Mayaguez* (see [Mayaguez incident](#)), elements of one of its BLTs unwittingly landed on Koh Tang island and met fierce resistance from Cambodian forces. The Marine Corps role in [Indochina](#) thus ended in a bloody but futile daylong battle.

Sources: Edwin H. Simmons, "Marine Corps Operations in Vietnam, 1969-1972," and Richard E. Carey and David A. Quinlan, "Frequent Wind," in *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1983; J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 1982.

Dudley Acker

## 9TH MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADE

The August 1964 [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#) led to the transformation of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) from a paper organization into the deployable 6,000-man air and ground force from which two infantry battalions made the initial sea and air landings to secure [Da Nang's](#) air base in March 1965. Despite this commitment of combat troops, the Washington-[Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) landing directive stated that marines ``will not, repeat, will not, engage in day-to-day actions against the [Vietcong](#)," and overall responsibility for both offensive and defensive operations in the vicinity temporarily remained with [ARVN](#) commanders (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam).

In early May, however, 9th MEB established two more bases on the coast at Chu Lai and [Phu Bai](#), 57 miles south and 30 miles north of Da Nang, respectively. Sensitive to reviving memories of the French debacle through use of the term ``expeditionary," 9th MEB became the [III Marine Amphibious Force](#) on the seventh of that month.

Sources: Jack Shulimson and Edward F. Wells, ``The Marine Experience in Vietnam, 1965-71: First In, First Out," in *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1983; Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War*, 1977.

Dudley Acker

## NAPALM

Napalm is jellied gasoline. Its name is an acronym of naphthenic and palmitic acids, which are used in its manufacture. Although used in World War II and the Korean War, napalm became (in)famous in Vietnam where it was used in three capacities. Perhaps its most visual use was being dropped from aircraft in large canisters which tumbled lazily to earth. Exploding on impact, it engulfed large areas in flame, sucking up all the oxygen and emitting intense heat, thick black smoke, and a smell which no one exposed to it will ever forget. Dropping napalm from high-speed jet aircraft was not very accurate, resulting in numerous instances of ``friendly" (Allied) and/or civilian [casualties](#). A second use of napalm was in flamethrowers, by both U.S.-ARVN (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) and [Vietcong](#)-North Vietnamese Army forces, which were very effective in clearing bunkers. If the flames could not be directed to penetrate the bunker, they could bathe the bunker in fire, consuming all the oxygen and suffocating those inside. Flamethrowers also were used in destroying ``enemy" villages. Napalm was used in base camp and fire base perimeter defense. Barrels of napalm would be buried under concertina wire (coils of barbed wire standing two-three feet high and stretched around the perimeter). As troops massed to breach the wire, the barrels would be detonated, incinerating anyone in the immediate area, and dampening the attackers' enthusiasm. A terrifying, effective weapon, napalm's properties are such that it clings to whatever it touches. Smothering it is the only effective way to put it out. Trying to wipe it off only spreads it around, expanding the burn area. The rapid consumption of oxygen can cause suffocation, and the intense heat can produce severe burns without actual contact. The noise, smoke, and smell are terrifying in themselves.

Source: Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984.

Samuel Freeman



## NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM

The Madison, Wisconsin-based National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam (NCC) was a short-lived umbrella organization formed in August 1965 in order to mobilize nationwide activity against the war in Vietnam and to coordinate the over thirty disparate local antiwar groups which had sprung up in protest of [President Johnson](#)'s escalation of the war in February 1965. Its roots lay in the Assembly of Unrepresented People, an organization which linked social injustice to the war in Vietnam. The NCC sponsored the International Days of Protest in October 1965, which involved about 100,000 people nationwide and included a massive rally at Berkeley with a teach-in at the Oakland Army Base, a parade of twenty to twenty-five thousand people down 5th Avenue in New York, and the first [draft](#) card burning since Johnson had signed the order making such burnings a felony. The NCC, which included an uneasy coalition of the Old and New Left, antiwar liberals and different pacifist groups, disbanded in January 1966 because of splits within the organization about whether to remain an umbrella group or to reorganize as a national organization making immediate [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam the group's basic priority. The NCC's last action was to call for another International Day of Protest in March 1966. The large size and international scope of the second International Day of Protest showed the increasing power of the [antiwar movement](#) and the growing unpopularity of the war.

Sources: Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975*, 1984; Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 1980.

Linda Kelly Alkana

## **NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD**

One provision of the Paris Peace Accords was creation of a tripartite National Council of Reconciliation and Concord. The accords called for a [withdrawal](#) of all American troops within sixty days of the cease-fire, return of all [prisoners of war](#), and establishment of the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord. The National Council, composed of representatives of the United States, the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#), the [Republic of Vietnam](#), and the [Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam](#), would then negotiate a political settlement throughout Vietnam. That, of course, was the stickiest negotiating point and one that was never concluded. The National Council never got off the ground in 1973, and any hope for a final political settlement died with the North Vietnamese offensive in 1975.

Sources: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1985; Walter Scott Dillard, *Sixty Days to Peace*, 1982.

## NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Between the assassination of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in November 1963 and the rise of the ruling junta of [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) in June 1965, [South Vietnam](#) had experienced wave after wave of political instability. On June 12, 1965, Generals [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), Nguyen Cao Ky, and [Nguyen Huu Co](#) declared the establishment of a National Leadership Council to rule the [Republic of Vietnam](#). The three military leaders subsequently expanded the National Leadership Council to ten members and elected Nguyen Cao Ky as chief executive of the council. Ky eventually used his position as head of the council to become the new premier of the Republic of Vietnam. The National Leadership Council functioned until the regular elections in 1967, when Nguyen Van Thieu became the new president of the Republic of Vietnam.

Source: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972.

## **NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER**

In 1947, as the Cold War and fear of communism gained momentum in the United States, Congress passed the National Security Act, which consolidated the armed services into a new Department of Defense, established the [Central Intelligence Agency](#), and formed the [National Security Council](#) (NSC). The national security adviser is the head of the NSC administrative staff and is known as the assistant to the president for national security affairs. During the years of the Vietnam War, four men served as the national security adviser. Gordon Gray served under President [Dwight Eisenhower](#) and left the position in January 1961. [McGeorge Bundy](#) took over under President [John Kennedy](#) and served until April 1966, when [Walt W. Rostow](#) assumed the post. With the election and then the inauguration of [Richard Nixon](#) in January 1969, Rostow left the National Security Council and was replaced by [Henry Kissinger](#). Kissinger served there until November 1975.

Sources: George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1985; [Paul L. Kattenburg](#), *The Vietnam Trauma in American Foreign Policy, 1945-1975*, 1980.

## NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

Created by the National Security Act of 1947, the National Security Council (NSC) consisted of the president, the vice president, the secretaries of defense and state, and the director of the Office of Emergency Planning. Under Presidents [John F. Kennedy](#) and [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), the NSC had little power because these two presidents essentially bypassed it in policy-making, but between 1969 and 1977 the NSC became the major foreign policy body in the United States. President [Richard M. Nixon](#) named [Henry Kissinger](#) as [national security adviser](#), and Kissinger added the head of the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman of JCS](#)) to the NSC on an informal basis. Nixon allowed the NSC to supplant completely the Department of State in Vietnam War decisions, and it remained that way until mid-1973, when Kissinger replaced [William P. Rogers](#) as [secretary of state](#).

Sources: Richard A. Johnson, *The Administration of United States Foreign Policy*, 1971; Tad Szulc, *The Illusion of Peace*, 1978.

## NAVAL BOMBARDMENT

Between the summer of 1965 and early fall of 1972, the [Seventh Fleet](#) occupied positions off the coast of [North](#) and [South Vietnam](#). Task Force 70.8, part of the Seventh Fleet, was charged with shore bombardment operations. Except for a six-month stay of the battleship USS *New Jersey* in 1968-69, Task Force 70.8 was composed primarily of cruisers and destroyers. The ships provided [artillery](#) support for U.S. and South Vietnamese troops, and attacked important targets within range in North Vietnam. Most of Task Force 70.8 shore bombardment took place in [I Corps](#).

Sources: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

## NAVAL FORCES VIETNAM

The office of the commander of Naval Forces Vietnam existed between April 1, 1966, and March 29, 1973, to direct the U.S. naval effort along the coast of the South China Sea. Naval Forces Vietnam supervised Task Forces 115, 116, and 117 (see [Mobile Riverine Force](#)), involving coastal surveillance and river operations, as well as the [Coast Guard](#) patrols and the [Seabees](#). [Seventh Fleet](#) operations farther off the coast, however, were under the direct command of the [commander in chief, Pacific Command](#), in Hawaii.

Sources: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

## NAVARRE PLAN

A career army officer, Henry Navarre was appointed commander of French forces in [Indochina](#) in May 1953. Major General Rene Cogny became his deputy. Together they developed the so-called Navarre Plan to end the crisis in Vietnam. The plan proposed a major strengthening of the [Vietnamese National Army](#), the addition of nine new French battalions to the Indochinese theater, withdrawal of scattered French forces, and the launching of a major offensive in the Red River Delta against the [Vietminh](#). The United States agreed to support the Navarre Plan in 1953 with nearly \$400 million in assistance. Eventually, Navarre committed his augmented forces to the village of [Dien Bien Phu](#) in northwestern Vietnam, hoping the Vietminh would stage a frontal attack on the French valley outpost. The rest was history. General [Vo Nguyen Giap](#) inflicted a complete defeat on the French army and destroyed the French Empire in Indochina.

Sources: Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967; Jules Roy, *The Battle of Dien Bien Phu*, 1965.



## NAVY, UNITED STATES

The United States Navy played a direct role in the conflict in Vietnam from 1964 to 1975. The [Seventh Fleet](#) was responsible for naval operations in the South China Sea and over [Indochina](#). During the war the navy performed three major functions. First, aircraft attack carriers flew tens of thousands of [sorties](#) over [North Vietnam](#), [South Vietnam](#), [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). The [F-4 Phantom](#), [A-4 Skyhawk](#), [A-1 Skyraider](#), and [A-6 Intruder](#) were the primary naval aircraft involved in the attack on the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnam. Second, cruisers and destroyers, and for a while the battleship *New Jersey*, were responsible for naval [artillery](#) bombardment in support of U.S., South Korean, and [ARVN](#) troops (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam). Finally, a host of smaller craft were responsible for patrolling the coast of the South China Sea and the major river systems in South Vietnam to interdict enemy supplies. During the course of the war, naval personnel suffered 1,574 killed in action and 4,180 wounded.

Sources: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asia Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

## NEUTRALITY

The question of neutrality was a difficult one during the Vietnam War, especially as it related to [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). Both Laos and Cambodia claimed neutrality in the conflict between the United States and Vietnam, but at the same time the North Vietnamese consistently used both countries to provide troops and supplies in [South Vietnam](#). [North Vietnam](#) began constructing the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) in 1959, and eventually it reached all through the panhandle of southern Laos and the eastern parts of Cambodia into South Vietnam. The United States ostensibly honored the neutrality of Laos and Cambodia, but throughout the conflict worked to stop the flow of supplies. International law requires neutral nations to prevent their own exploitation by a belligerent, which both Laos and Cambodia failed to do, and the United States eventually justified all of its interventions there, the White Star Mobile Training Teams between 1959 and 1962, [Operation Barrel Roll](#) in 1964, [Operation Steel Tiger](#) and Operation Tiger Hound in 1965, [Operation Rolling Thunder](#) in the 1960s, and the 1970 and 1971 "incursion" into Cambodia and Laos, on the grounds that if a neutral nation did not stop a belligerent from using its territory for hostile purposes, the other belligerent was not obligated to respect political neutrality. Neutrality proved to be an empty phrase during the Vietnam War.

Sources: Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*, 1983.

## NEUTRALIZE

“Neutralize” was one of the first and most commonly used euphemisms used to describe assassination. However, the term originated considerably before Vietnam and was frequently used in a context both broader than and different from assassination, physical targets or enemy positions to be destroyed by aerial bombardment or [artillery](#). In Vietnam the term was also used to designate “unfriendly” hamlets hiding [Vietcong](#), and those hamlets were subject to destruction. If pacification efforts (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) continuously failed, a decision might be made to “neutralize” the hamlet by relocating the inhabitants to a government-controlled area, perhaps a New Life Hamlet, and destroying the hamlet, often by burning it down, giving rise to the phrase “[zippo war](#).” Often the results of such neutralizations were negative in that innocent civilians were killed either because of mistaken identity or false or erroneous information providing the basis for targeting.

Sources: Jonathan Schell, *The Village of Ben Suc*, 1967; Richard Hammer, *One Morning in the War*, 1970.

Samuel Freeman

## NEW LIFE HAMLETS

Part of the [Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support](#) pacification program (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)), New Life Hamlets were one of a succession of hamlet development programs beginning with [Strategic Hamlets](#) and continuing through "Ap Doi Moi" (Really New Life Hamlets), which followed the New Life Hamlet program. Each was intended to deprive the [Vietcong](#) "fish" of the civilian "sea" by relocating civilians from the countryside to secured, fortified hamlets. Revolutionary Development (RD) cadres lived and worked among hamlet residents and tried to teach them about the [Republic of Vietnam](#), hoping to earn their respect and build their loyalty. In practice, the New Life Hamlet program was riddled with corruption. It ignored the sacred nature of the land and the people's worship of their ancestors. To leave ancestral land was to die. Resources were inadequate or unavailable. Pacification priorities were always subordinate to military needs, and security was uniformly inadequate. The RD cadres, even when present and not corrupt, were undertrained. Paid and supplied by [Saigon](#), they were dependent on and had to please Saigon officials, not the villagers. Hastily constructed in Vietcong areas, the hamlets were usually infiltrated. In sum, the program was poorly conceived and even more poorly executed.

Source: Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counter-insurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman

## NEW YORK TIMES CO. v UNITED STATES, 403 U.S. 713 (1971)

In this decision, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the First Amendment right of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to publish excerpts from a U.S. Defense Department study marked Top Secret and entitled *History of U.S. Decision-Making Process on Vietnam Policy*, popularly known as the [Pentagon Papers](#). The *New York Times* began to publish excerpts from the Pentagon Papers on Sunday, June 13. On the evening of June 14, after White House consultation, U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell asked the *New York Times* to stop publishing excerpts from the Pentagon Papers on the ground that publication violated the Espionage Act. The *Times* refused to comply, saying "that it is in the interest of the people of this country to be informed of the material contained in this series of articles." The Department of Justice obtained a temporary restraining order against the *Times*. The newspaper appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court on June 24. While the *Times* was restrained from publishing excerpts from the Pentagon Papers, the *Washington Post* began to publish portions of the study. The *Post* distributed extracts to some 345 client publications through the *Washington Post-Los Angeles Times* News Service. The Department of Justice obtained a temporary restraining order against the *Post*, and then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled that the *Post* had a constitutional right to publish the material. Extracts from the Pentagon Papers were also published by the *Boston Globe*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and a number of other newspapers during June 22-29. The Department of Justice obtained a restraining order against the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* on June 26. On that day, the U.S. Supreme Court heard public oral arguments from Solicitor General Erwin Griswold for the United States, Alexander Bickel for the *Times*, and William Glendon for the *Post*. In an extraordinary flourish of activity, the Court rendered a 6-3 decision on June 30 and issued a short per curiam opinion for the Court, with Justices Burger, Harlan, and Blackmun dissenting. The decision was accompanied by nine opinions. The per curiam opinion held that the United States had not overcome the heavy presumption against the constitutional validity of any prior restraint on the press. Justices Black and Douglas took a nearly absolute view of a First Amendment prohibition of prior restraint on newspapers. Justices Brennan, Marshall, Stewart, and White acknowledged that there could be conditions that would justify a prior restraint on press publication of national security information. Such conditions were not, in their view, present in this case. Chief Justice Burger objected to the "unseemly haste" with which the Court handled the cases of the *Times* and the *Post*. Justices Harlan and Blackmun also objected to the "frenzied train of events ;obthat;cb took place in the name of the presumption against prior restraints created by the First Amendment." The dissenting justices believed that publication of the Pentagon Papers should have been delayed until an assessment could be made of their potential effect on national defense and security. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* hailed the decision as a victory for freedom of the press and resumed publication of excerpts of the Pentagon Papers on July 1.

Source: Sanford J. Ungar, *The Papers and The Papers*, 1972.

John Kincaid

## NEW ZEALAND

A charter member of the [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization](#), New Zealand was reluctant to become too deeply involved in the Vietnam War, simply on the grounds of limited resources and limited political support at home, and because the war was more than two thousand miles away. Nevertheless, New Zealand did make a [troop](#) commitment to the conflict. Eventually, New Zealand sent about a thousand soldiers and [artillery](#) support troops to [South Vietnam](#) because they wanted to prove their allegiance to American collective security arrangements in the Pacific and because they genuinely did not want to see a Communist takeover of Vietnam, [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), and [Laos](#).

Sources: Stanley Robert Larsen and James Lawton Collins, Jr., *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 1975; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## NEWPORT

The major American [troop](#) buildup between 1965 and 1968 required enormous logistical resources. By 1968 nearly 45 percent of all American military personnel in [South Vietnam](#) were support troops, and more than five million tons of goods were shipped into the country. Because of inadequate port facilities, American merchant ships in 1965 usually had a twenty-day waiting period to be unloaded. To eliminate that backlog, the United States constructed major deep-water ports at [Cam Ranh Bay](#), [Da Nang](#), [Qui Nhon](#), and Newport, near [Saigon](#). The port at Newport just outside Saigon relieved the congestion there after its construction was completed in 1967. Newport handled more than 150,000 tons of supplies each month. It was under the direction of the army transportation [corps](#).

Sources: Carroll H. Dunn, *Base Development in South Vietnam, 1965-1970*, 1972; Edwin B. Hooper, *Mobility, Support, Endurance: A Story of Naval Operational Logistics in the Vietnam War, 1965-1968*, 1972.

## **NGHE TINH UPRISING**

Communism appeared for the first time in Vietnam in Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces in 1930 and 1931. The worldwide depression had driven down the price of rice by more than 50 percent, and tax revolts were spreading throughout the countryside. Peasants in Nghe An Province joined with discontented factory workers, protesting capitalism and French imperialism. They formed a "Red Soviet" in Nghe An Province on September 12, 1930. Public demonstrations were widespread until French aircraft attacked a crowd of 6,000 protesters, killing more than 200 of them. The protests then went underground, but the movement weakened because of the famine which hit Vietnam in 1930 and 1931. The French went after leaders of the Indochinese Communist party (see [Lao Dong](#) party) with a vengeance, arresting 1,000 of them and executing 80. The uprising is known as the Nghe Tinh Uprising because of its strength throughout Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces.

Source: William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 1976.



## NGO DINH CAN

Ngo Dinh Can was the younger brother of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) and [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#), and from the Ngo family compound in [Hue](#), he ruled central Vietnam as a virtual warlord or feudal baron. Although Can held no official position, he was the de facto governor of the Hue region, and his actual power under the Diem administration was as extensive in his area as was that of Nhu in the [Saigon](#) region. The dividing line between the two brothers' domains was Phan Thiet Province. The youngest brother, Ngo Dinh Luyen, resided abroad as South Vietnam's ambassador to [Great Britain](#).

Unlike his brothers, Can did not have a Western education, never traveled abroad, and seldom left his native Hue, where he lived with the clan's widowed matriarch. He lived in a simple, reclusive style, despite many reports that he had used his position for personal enrichment. Employing his own secret police network, Can exercised a severe, even brutal, domination over central Vietnam. His local authority was largely independent of Saigon, and at times he was at odds with his brothers. Overall, however, the brothers worked together to maintain their power. Following the assassination of Diem and Nhu in 1963, the new regime arrested, tried, and executed Can.

Sources: Robert G. Scigliano, *South Viet-Nam: Nation Under Stress*, 1963; Terrence Maitland and Stephen Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: Raising the Stakes*, 1982.

David L. Anderson

## NGO DINH DIEM

Son of a counselor to Emperor Thanh Thai, Ngo Dinh Diem was born in 1901 and claimed to descend from mandarins, a claim disputed by some. The third of six sons, Diem graduated first in his class from a Catholic school in [Hue](#) and studied for the civil service at a French college in [Hanoi](#). Rising rapidly through administrative ranks, he became minister of the interior in 1933 but resigned two months later because of French unwillingness to grant Vietnam greater autonomy. An ardent nationalist and early opponent of communism, Diem retired from public life for twenty years, having nothing further to do with the French and refusing offers from the Japanese during World War II. His anticommunism strengthened when [Vietminh](#) forces killed one of his brothers and a nephew. Diem refused [Ho Chi Minh](#)'s offer to join his government, denouncing him as a "criminal." In 1950 Diem went to the United States where he met Cardinal Spellman and Senators [John Kennedy](#) and [Mike Mansfield](#). These contacts served Diem well when he accepted Emperor [Bao Dai](#)'s 1954 offer to become prime minister of what would become the [Republic of Vietnam](#). One of Diem's first acts was to request American assistance.

Diem might be described as a brilliant incompetent who beat the odds longer than anyone thought possible. Given his twenty-year retirement, he was not well-known in Vietnam and had no following outside the Catholic community in an overwhelmingly [Buddhist](#) nation. Reclusive and paranoid, he depended almost exclusively on his family, refused to delegate authority, and did little to build a broadly based, popular government. Diem was surprisingly adept in meeting challenges to his government. In 1955 he rejected the reunification elections specified in the [Geneva Accords](#), disposed of Emperor Bao Dai in a fraudulent election (winning 98.2 percent of the vote), neutralized the [Cao Dai](#) and [Hoa Hao](#) religious sects, and defeated the [Binh Xuyen](#) in open combat. He survived a 1960 coup attempt which rendered him even more dependent on his immediate family, especially his brother [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#).

Administratively, Diem could not set priorities, choosing to spend a long afternoon with a journalist while members of his government and the military waited for audiences. Governing through repression and intrigue, he quickly killed or imprisoned the remaining Vietminh infrastructure along with most other potential opponents. His oppressiveness and refusal to implement reforms tried the patience of the United States, which flirted with dumping him as early as 1955. By 1963, however, he was finished. The final blow was Ngo Dinh Nhu's vicious attacks on Buddhist dissidents and the ensuing national paralysis. Although not involved in the coup, the United States signaled that it would accept a change in government. On November 1, the generals moved; Diem and his brother were murdered the next day.

After the coup, Diem was vilified, but Vietnamese attitudes toward Diem changed in the 1970s as the United States withdrew and South Vietnam's fate became obvious. In South Vietnam's final weeks Diem was rehabilitated as a courageous nationalist tragically victimized by the United States.

Sources: Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian*, 1963; *Who's Who in the Far East and Australasia, 1961-1962*, 1962; Marvin Kalb and Elie Abel, *Roots of Involvement: The U.S. in Asia, 1784-1971*, 1971.

Samuel Freeman

## NGO DINH NHU

Born in 1910, Ngo Dinh Nhu was educated at the Ecole des Chartes in Paris and then worked in the French colonial bureaucracy until penalized for nationalist activities. A master at organization, Nhu orchestrated [Saigon](#) demonstrations in September 1954 advocating a "third force" alternative to French colonialism or [Ho Chi Minh](#). The [Can Lao](#) Nhan Vi Cach Mang Dang was his primary effort at mass organization. Unfortunately, Nhu's "personalism" was based on a misinterpretation of French thinking and was so alien to Vietnamese thought and culture that no one understood it. The party was organized along the lines of Communist cells complete with fascist-styled storm troopers and an elaborate intelligence network. Nhu used the party to maintain the authority of the Ngo family rather than building democratic institutions or national unity.

Nhu recommended and administered the [Strategic Hamlet](#) Program. Like everything else in the Diem regime, it was poorly administered and riddled with corruption. Obsessed with numbers, Nhu pushed the construction of strategic hamlets more rapidly than they could be assimilated, often in unsecured areas. Government promises for equipment, material, and money were not kept. Villagers often had to pay bribes to receive promised supplies. The [Vietcong](#) quickly subverted many hamlets; others simply disintegrated.

As head of the secret police, Nhu created thirteen internal intelligence units which spied on one another as well as on potential dissidents. He also commanded Vietnamese Special Forces, effectively his personal army. With these resources Nhu frustrated numerous efforts to depose his brother, [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), who always viewed internal dissent as more threatening than the Vietcong. The corruption, brutality, and intrigue caught up with the Diem regime in 1963 when Nhu took on the [Buddhists](#). After Nhu's Special Forces attacked Buddhist pagodas, the United States notified plotting generals that it would accept a coup. On November 1 the generals moved. Diem and Nhu were murdered that next day.

Source: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Thomas D. Boettcher, *Vietnam: The Valor and the Sorrow*, 1985; Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian*, 1963.

Samuel Freeman

## NGO DINH THUC

Ngo Dinh Thuc was the older brother of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), and the second oldest of the six Ngo brothers. The [Vietminh](#) killed Ngo Dinh Khoi in 1945, and Thuc then became the senior male in the Ngo clan. Although the family was devoutly Catholic, Vietnam's Confucian traditions meant that Thuc, the family elder, had considerable authority within the family and took proprietary interest in the welfare of all its members.

Under the influence of his father, Ngo Dinh Kha, who had once studied for the priesthood, Ngo Dinh Thuc entered the seminary in his youth. He rose steadily in the [Roman Catholic](#) hierarchy in Vietnam and eventually became the bishop of Vinh Long. He shared his brother Diem's distaste for Emperor [Bao Dai](#)'s seeming collaboration with the French colonialists, and in 1950 the two brothers traveled to America and Europe to meet influential Catholics and to promote themselves as anticolonial and anti-Communist Vietnamese. When Diem became prime minister in 1954, these contacts and this Ngo family image in the West proved very valuable to the new regime.

By the end of the 1950s, Thuc was Archbishop of [Hue](#) and dean of the Catholic episcopacy in Vietnam. He held no official post in his brother's government, but as leader of the Catholic clergy, he was in an excellent position to promote the interests both of the Church and the Ngo family. The Vatican declined to make him Arch-bishop of [Saigon](#) in order to keep some discreet distance between Thuc and Diem, but the prelate still spent considerable time in the capital city advising his brothers and managing the Church's real estate. In the fall of 1963, the Vatican ordered Thuc to Rome to answer for his conduct during the government's violent suppression of the [Buddhists](#). Consequently, he was out of Vietnam at the time of the coup against Diem. He never returned to Vietnam, and the Church eventually excommunicated him for religious extremism.

Sources: Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967; Anthony T. Bouscaren, *The Last of the Mandarins: Diem of Vietnam*, 1965; [David Halberstam](#), *The Making of a Quagmire*, 1965.

David L. Anderson

## NGUYEN

The Nguyen were the dynastic family in control of [Annam](#) and [Cochin China](#) during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the sixteenth century, the [Trinh](#) family, another warlord group, took control of Vietnam from the Le clan, and by 1620 the Nguyen clan had separated from the Trinh family and dominated Annam. Throughout the 1600s the Trinh tried unsuccessfully to bring the Nguyen back under control, but they were never able to penetrate the large walls the Nguyen had constructed near the seventeenth parallel (see Geneva Accords). Gradually the Nguyen moved south, colonizing the [Mekong Delta](#) and bringing the Cham and Khmer people under Annamite culture. By the 1700s the Nguyen had taken over parts of [Thailand](#), [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), and were anxious to dominate all of [Indochina](#). The [Tay Son Rebellion](#) temporarily displaced them in the late eighteenth century, but under Nguyen [Gia Long](#) they reestablished their control. Indeed, because the Tay Son Rebellion had crushed the Trinh family in the north, Gia Long was able to unite all of Vietnam under a Nguyen dynasty which remained in power until the abdication of [Bao Dai](#) in 1955. Only the arrival of the French Empire and later the Japanese and Americans stopped Nguyen expansion. Although the Nguyen had nationalist sympathies and resented foreign control over Vietnam, they tended to cooperate with foreign rulers, French, Japanese, or American, in order to maintain their own positions of wealth and influence. Blessed with a Confucian, elitist mentality, they continued to occupy important political positions in South Vietnam during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The most prominent family representative then was [Nguyen Cao Ky](#), head of the South [Vietnamese Air Force](#).

Source: Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, 1958.

## NGUYEN CAO KY

Nguyen Cao Ky was born on September 8, 1930, in Son Tay, [Tonkin](#), near [Hanoi](#). Ky was drafted into the [Vietnamese National Army](#) in 1950, served with distinction, and rose to the rank of lieutenant. He was trained as a pilot in [France](#) and Algeria in 1953 and 1954, and during the regime of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) he became an officer, eventually a lieutenant general, in the South [Vietnamese Air Force](#). Flamboyant and with an iron will, Ky first came to prominence in 1964 when he threatened to conduct an air strike against the headquarters of [Nguyen Khanh](#) because of all the squabbling during the military regime. Ky finally agreed to cooperate after a dressing-down by U.S. ambassador [Maxwell Taylor](#), and in 1965 he became prime minister, sharing power with General [Nguyen Van Thieu](#). A dedicated elitist with decidedly Western tastes, Ky imposed brutal restrictions on the [Buddhists](#), far more than even Ngo Dinh Diem had imposed, and invited their wrath. Throughout 1966 the Buddhists demanded Ky's ouster, but Ky continued in power. In 1967, he agreed, with considerable support from the United States, to let Thieu become the sole head of state, with Ky serving as vice president. Although Ky had promised [Lyndon Johnson](#) he would strive to bring about a "social revolution" in Vietnam, he had no intention of upsetting the status quo of corruption and power which was enriching him and his family. Between 1967 and 1971, Ky's influence was gradually eclipsed as Thieu consolidated his own power, and in 1971, Thieu disqualified Ky from challenging him for the presidency of [South Vietnam](#). Nguyen Cao Ky fled South Vietnam before the Final Offensive (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)) and opened a liquor store in southern California.

Sources: [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; Nguyen Cao Ky, *Twenty Years and Twenty Days*, 1976; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986.

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## NGUYEN CHANH THI

Nguyen Chanh Thi was born in central Vietnam in 1923 and became a career military officer in the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#). In 1960, as a colonel, Thi worked surreptitiously in an unsuccessful coup attempt against [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). Although loyal to the concept of an independent [South Vietnam](#), Nguyen Chanh Thi was also a [Buddhist](#) who resented Diem's attacks on the church. By 1965 Thi had risen to command [I Corps](#), and there he formed a close relationship with Buddhist leader [Thich Tri Quang](#). As Buddhist opposition to the government of [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) mounted, Thi became more and more vulnerable. In 1966, Ky dismissed Thi as I Corps commander, put him under house arrest in [Saigon](#), and triggered countrywide Buddhist protest demonstrations. Nguyen Chanh Thi was exiled to the United States.

Source: "Central Figures in the Struggle for Leadership of Vietnam," *U.S. News & World Report* (March 28, 1966), 14.

## NGUYEN CHI THANH

Nguyen Chi Thanh, the North Vietnamese commander in charge of operations in [South Vietnam](#), was born in 1914 in central Vietnam. He attended school in [Hanoi](#) and became a schoolteacher before World War II, but he joined the [Vietminh](#) after the war and began fighting first the French and then the Americans in South Vietnam. In 1965, Thanh was infiltrated into South Vietnam to take control of North Vietnamese and [Vietcong troop](#) movements. He operated out of Tay Ninh Province, where he headed the [Central Office for South Vietnam](#). Thanh was committed to defeating South Vietnamese and American troops through conventional means on an early timetable, but as they accumulated heavy losses in 1965 and 1966, General [Vo Nguyen Giap](#) switched to more emphasis on guerrilla operations and a political victory over the Americans. Nguyen Chi Thanh died on July 8, 1967, in a Hanoi hospital.

Source: *New York Times*, July 9, 1967.



## NGUYEN CO THACH

Nguyen Co Thach, a veteran North Vietnamese politician, was active in anti-French activities as a student in the 1930s, and with the [Vietminh](#) in the 1940s and 1950s. He began a diplomatic career in 1954 with the creation of the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#). Between 1956 and 1960, Thach served as ambassador to India and headed the Vietnamese delegation to the Geneva convention in 1962. After the fall of [South Vietnam](#) in 1975, Thach became assistant and then minister of foreign affairs for the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#).

Source: *International Who's Who, 1982-1983*, 1983.

## NGUYEN DUY TRINH

Nguyen Duy Trinh was born in the village of Nghi Loc, in Nghe An Province, in 1910. He joined the New Vietnam Revolutionary party as an eighteen-year-old student in 1918, and was a member of the Communist party as early as 1930. Trinh was imprisoned for anti-French activities in 1928 in [Saigon](#), was released in 1930, and was imprisoned in Kontum again between 1932 and 1945. Upon his release at the end of World War II, Trinh immediately organized anti-French uprisings in Vinh and [Hue](#), and in 1951 was selected as a member of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' party. After the expulsion of the French from [Indochina](#) in 1954, Trinh became secretary of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' party, and deputy prime minister of [North Vietnam](#) in 1960, where he served until 1975. Trinh served concurrently as minister of foreign affairs between 1965 and 1975. After the fall of [South Vietnam](#) in 1975, Trinh became a member of the politburo of the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#).

Source: *Who's Who in the Socialist Countries*, 1978.

## NGUYEN HUU CO

Nguyen Huu Co was a native of [South Vietnam](#) born in 1925. He rose quickly through the ranks of the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#), and was one of thirteen generals who replaced [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in 1963. After two years of political instability for South Vietnam, Co was one of the ten generals who helped put [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) in power in 1965. Co was widely known as an excellent field commander who was also hopelessly corrupt, accumulating a fortune by accepting payments from draft dodgers and selling military appointments. When he was ousted from power and exiled to Taiwan in 1967, Nguyen Huu Co was serving as defense secretary and deputy premier.

Source: "Clean-Up Time," *Newsweek* (February 6, 1967), 44-45.

## NGUYEN HUU THO

Nguyen Huu Tho was born on July 10, 1910, in the [Cholon](#) suburb of [Saigon](#). A French-educated Saigon attorney, Tho was a revolutionary with middle-class credentials. Between 1945 and 1954 he fought against French forces in Vietnam, protested American involvement in the Conflict as early as 1950, and spent two years in a prison for anti-French activity from 1950 to 1952. He was arrested in 1961 for establishing the Saigon-Cholon Peace Movement, escaped from the control of the [Diem](#) government, and became chairman of the central committee of the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)) in 1962. By June 1970 Tho was chairman of the consultative council of the [Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam](#), and entered Saigon with North Vietnamese forces in 1975.

Source: *The International Who's Who, 1976-77, 1976.*

## NGUYEN KHANH

Born in 1927, Nguyen Khanh grew up to be an incorrigible, untrustworthy schemer. He had quit school in 1943 and joined the [Vietminh](#) in their campaign against the Japanese and the French, but the Vietminh soon expelled him. Khanh then went over to the French, who trained him for an officer's position in the [Vietnamese National Army](#). In 1954 Khanh came to the support of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), but in 1963 he also participated in the coup against him. Khanh then participated in a bloodless coup in January 1964 which put him in control of the government of [South Vietnam](#). For the next year South Vietnam deteriorated under his convoluted leadership, with the [Vietcong](#) gaining strength and his own government torn apart by corruption and internecine political warfare. In February 1965, Generals [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) and [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) ousted Khanh for good. He was exiled to the United States and took up residence in Palm Beach, Florida.

Sources: *Who's Who in the Far East and Australasia, 1964-1965*, 1965; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972.

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## NGUYEN LUONG BANG

Nguyen Luong Bang was born in Hai Hung Province in North Vietnam in 1904. He worked as a sailor before joining [Ho Chi Minh's](#) Revolutionary Youth League (see [Thanh Nien Cach Menh Dong Chi Hoi](#)) in 1925. Bang was a founding member of the Indochinese Communist party (see [Lao Dong](#) party) in 1930. Between 1931 and 1943 he spent most of his time in French prisons, escaping in 1932 but being recaptured in 1933. Bang escaped again in 1943 and fled to [China](#). Between 1952 and 1956 he was the ambassador to the [Soviet Union](#) for the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#). Bang became vice president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1969.

Source: U.S. State Department, *Who's Who in North Vietnam*, 1972.

## NGUYEN NGOC LOAN

General Nguyen Ngoc Loan achieved infamy with the filmed summary execution of a [Vietcong](#) suspect in [Saigon](#) during the [Tet Offensive](#) in 1968. Widely reported in the United States, it contributed to the American people's increasing revulsion with the war. Loan attempted to justify the execution, explaining that the man had murdered a friend and his family. Nevertheless, the execution was in keeping with his reputation for ruthlessness, corruption, and brutality.

A northern-born Catholic, Loan first came into prominence in 1966 as a colonel while serving as Saigon's chief of police, a lucrative position which enabled him to control Saigon's extortion racket. Faced with the "Buddhist Crisis," [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) placed him in charge of subduing rebellious [I Corps](#). With loyal troops reenforced by tanks and [airborne](#) units, Loan attacked [Da Nang](#) pagodas which lodged resisting [Buddhists](#) and military units. In a series of firefights ending May 22, Loan regained control of the city, killing hundreds of rebel troops and about 100 civilians in the process. He then proceeded to lay siege to [Hue](#), prompting self-immolations by nine Buddhist priests and nuns in protest. After Loan pacified Hue, Ky instigated a public relations campaign to soften resentments. Prominent members of the uprising were treated leniently. Colonel Loan was ordered to clean up Hue, and he jailed hundreds who remained behind bars for years without trial. Loan's efforts were rewarded with promotion to general and chief of the national police shortly thereafter. After the fall of [South Vietnam](#) in 1975, Loan fled to the United States.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; *New York Times*, February 1-2, 1968.

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## NGUYEN PHU DUC

Nguyen Phu Duc was born on November 13, 1924, in Son Tay, and he was educated at the University of [Hanoi](#) and the Harvard Law School. During the 1960s, Nguyen Phu Duc was a diplomat in active support of the South Vietnamese government. He served as special assistant for foreign affairs to President [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) in 1968; acted as envoy to [Thailand](#), [Laos](#), Indonesia, and the United States between 1969 and 1972; and participated in the [Paris peace talks](#) of 1968 and 1973. Duc was named minister of foreign affairs in 1973, and between 1974 and 1975 he was ambassador to Belgium.

Source: *International Who's Who, 1982-1983*, 1983.



## NGUYEN THI BINH

Nguyen Thi Binh was born in 1927 to a middle-class [Saigon](#) family. As a student she became a strident nationalist, opposing first French rule, Japanese occupation, and finally the American presence. Between 1951 and 1954 Nguyen Thi Binh spent three years in a French prison for anti-French and anti-American activities, and after 1954 was a bitter opponent of the regime of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). Nguyen Thi Binh joined the National Liberation Front (NLF; see [Vietcong](#)) soon after its creation in December 1960, and in 1962 she had risen to membership in its central committee. Binh traveled around the world explaining the NLF position and opposing U.S. involvement in the war. At the same time she worked as a representative, and between 1963 and 1966, as head of the Women's Liberation Association, a group promoting the rights of Vietnamese women in the struggle for revolution. In 1968, Binh appeared in Paris as head of the NLF delegation at the peace talks. For the next four years Binh served as the public NLF spokesman, and after the collapse of the South Vietnamese government in 1975, she was named minister of education for the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#).

Sources: John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; *Encyclopedia of the Third World*, 3:1929-31, 1982.

## NGUYEN VAN BINH

Nguyen Van Binh was born on September 1, 1910, in [Saigon](#) and was educated at the [Roman Catholic](#) Seminary of Saigon and in Rome. He was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1937 and served in parishes in Duc Hoa and Can Dat. He was ordained a bishop in 1955 and served for six years as the Apostolic Vicar of [Can Tho](#) until being named Archbishop of Saigon in 1961, a position he still held in the 1980s.

Source: *Who's Who in the Far East and Australasia, 1981-1982, 1982.*

## NGUYEN VAN HINH

In an effort to counter the military strength of the [Vietminh](#), the French began in 1951 the creation of the [Vietnamese National Army](#) (VNA). General Nguyen Van Hinh, as chief of staff, was the commander of this force from its inception until November 1954. Hinh was the son of Nguyen Van Tam, a prominent Vietnamese collaborator with the French and one of Emperor [Bao Dai](#)'s prime ministers. Like his father, Hinh was a French citizen. He was also an officer in the French armed forces, had a French wife, and preferred the French way of life. In the eyes of the Vietnamese he was French, and his command of the VNA made a mockery of the notion of an independent Vietnamese army. Because of its colonialist stigma, the VNA under Hinh never became the efficient and inspired anti-Vietminh force that the French and many Vietnamese desired.

In 1954 Hinh openly challenged [Ngo Dinh Diem](#)'s authority as prime minister. Defying demands by Diem that he leave the country, the general plotted with gangsters and religious sects around [Saigon](#) to oust the prime minister. Diem responded with his own enticements to the sects. Hoping to maintain a stable government in Saigon to combat the Communists in the North, the Americans warned that a coup by Hinh would mean the end of U.S. assistance to [South Vietnam](#). Faced with that prospect, Bao Dai ordered Hinh to come to [France](#), and the general reluctantly complied. Hinh returned once to Vietnam in 1955 when Diem's authority seemed threatened but soon fled the country when Diem's forces prevailed. Hinh was then given a high position in the French army.

Source: Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

David L. Anderson

## NGUYEN VAN LINH

Nguyen Van Linh was born in 1913 in [North Vietnam](#). A longtime member of the central committee of the [Lao Dong party](#), Nguyen Van Linh was a bitter opponent of the French Empire as well as the subsequent [Japanese](#) and American occupations of Vietnam. Between 1976 and 1981 Linh served as secretary of the [Communist party of Vietnam](#).

Source: *International Who's Who, 1982-1983*, 1983.

## NGUYEN VAN THIEU

Nguyen Van Thieu was born in 1923 in Tri Thuy village in Ninh Thuan Province. Nguyen Van Thieu distinguished himself against the [Vietminh](#) after graduating from the Vietnamese Military Academy as an infantry lieutenant in 1949. Thieu also graduated from the United States Command and General Staff College in 1957. His major commands in the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN), beginning in 1959, included the 21st Infantry Division, commandant of the National Military Academy, the [ARVN 1st Infantry Division](#), and the [5th Infantry](#) Division. He led a [brigade](#) of the 5th Division against Diem's presidential guard during the 1963 coup. Thieu continued to rise in power after the overthrow of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) and was instrumental, along with General [Nguyen Cao Ky](#), in bringing General [Nguyen Khanh](#) to power in January 1964. By February 1965 Ky and Thieu had positioned themselves to take over the government. Surprisingly, the Ky-Thieu government was [South Vietnam](#)'s longest. Although Ky originally was premier and Thieu was chief of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, Thieu outmaneuvered Ky to become the presidential candidate (with Ky as his vice president) in the 1967 elections.

While Thieu would have been more acceptable to the United States than Ky in 1965, they were about equally acceptable by 1967. The primary American concern was that they not run against each other, splitting the military and raising prospects for a civilian government or more coups. A Thieu-Ky ticket ensured military unity and their victory. However, Thieu managed only 35 percent of the vote with a surprise peace candidate running an unexpectedly strong second in elections marred by double voting by military personnel and stuffed ballot boxes. When Ky attempted to run against him for president in 1971, Thieu outmaneuvered him again, disqualifying his candidacy on a technicality. Eliminating Ky prompted General [Duong Van "Big" Minh](#) to withdraw, leaving Thieu to run unopposed and to head the government until just before its collapse in April 1975.

Thieu bitterly opposed the proposed 1972 peace agreement. Calling it a sellout, he delayed its signing until January 1973. To gain Thieu's assent, some minor modifications were effected. More important, [Nixon](#) made secret promises regarding future American military support. In August 1974 Nixon resigned rather than face impeachment and [Gerald Ford](#) became president. Congress passed the [War Powers Resolution](#) and other legislation restricting American involvement in Southeast Asia. When Thieu asked the United States to honor Nixon's promises, [President Ford](#) had neither the authority nor the sense of obligation to provide assistance. For the first time Thieu and South Vietnam stood alone.

The stability of Thieu's regime did not result from his establishing a popular government. Like its predecessors, it was noted for corruption, incompetence, and oppression. Stability resulted from Thieu's keeping the Vietnamese military command either unable or unwilling to mount a successful coup. This depended largely on his maintaining the confidence of the United States. At bottom it was the American military and American money which kept South Vietnam afloat, as demonstrated by its rapid disintegration once the support was terminated. Some criticize the United States for not coming to Thieu's assistance in 1975; however, a strong case can be made that since South Vietnam had failed to build a viable government after a massive twenty-five-year effort, there were no meaningful prospects for ever building one. President Thieu now lives in [Great Britain](#).

Sources: *Who's Who in the Far East and Australasia, 1974-1975*, 1975; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Edward Doyle and Terrence Maitland, *The Vietnam Experience: The Aftermath, 1975-1985*, 1985.

Samuel Freeman

## NHA TRANG

Nha Trang, 15 miles north of [Cam Ranh](#) Bay in Khanh Hoa Province, was a major logistic base for the supply of American military forces and headquarters for the [Fifth Special Forces Group](#) and the [I Field Force Vietnam](#). Nha Trang had a population of 194,969 in 1971. It was made an autonomous municipality in October 1970.

Sources: Harvey H. Smith, et al, *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Danny J. Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976.

## NINTH INFANTRY DIVISION

The Ninth Infantry Division was created in 1940 and during World War II saw combat in North Africa, Italy, [France](#), and Germany. Known as "Old Reliables," the Ninth was deactivated in 1946, reactivated in 1947, deactivated in 1962, and reactivated again in 1966 and deployed to Vietnam on December 16 that year. In 1967 the Ninth Division fought in Dinh Tuong and Long An provinces, the [Saigon](#) area during the [Tet Offensive](#) and post-Tet campaigns of 1968, and widely throughout [IV Corps](#) in 1969. One [brigade](#) of the Ninth Infantry Division participated in the [Mobile Riverine Force](#), which searched and fought against [Vietcong](#) units in the [Mekong Delta](#). During its stay in Vietnam, the Ninth Infantry Division was commanded by four men: Major General George S. Eckhardt (December 1966-June 1967); Major General George G. O'Connor (June 1967-February 1968); Major General Julian J. Ewell (February 1968-April 1969); and Major General Harris W. Hollis (April 1969-August 1969). The 1st and 2nd brigades of the Ninth Infantry left Vietnam on August 27, 1969, and the 3rd Brigade remained behind, assigned to the [25th Infantry Division](#). The 3rd Brigade left Vietnam on October 11, 1970.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## NITZE, PAUL HENRY

Paul H. Nitze was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, on January 16, 1907. He graduated cum laude from Harvard in 1928 and shortly thereafter became a vice president for the investment banking firm of Dillon, Reed, and Company. In 1940 Nitze became assistant to James V. Forrestal, under secretary of the navy. In 1941 he was named financial director of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, then under Nelson Rockefeller's direction. During World War II, Nitze served on the Board of Economic Warfare and the Foreign Economic Administration, and after the war he was vice chairman of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey. Nitze moved to the State Department in 1946, helped develop the Marshall Plan, and in 1949 succeeded [George Kennan](#) as head of the State Department's policy planning staff. In 1956, Nitze wrote *U.S. Foreign Policy, 1945-1955*.

In 1960 President [John F. Kennedy](#) appointed Nitze assistant [secretary of defense](#) for international security affairs, where he specialized in disarmament and military assistance plans. Nitze was secretary of the navy between 1963 and 1967, and deputy secretary of defense between 1967 and 1969. In that position he helped draft the [San Antonio Formula](#) and served on the [Ad Hoc Task Force on Vietnam](#), where he advised against further escalation of the war for fear of intervention from the [People's Republic of China](#). Nitze resigned from the Defense Department when [Richard Nixon](#) entered the White House in January 1969, although he served until 1974 as a member of the U.S. delegation to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. In 1981 Nitze was named head of the U.S. delegation to the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Negotiations with the [Soviet Union](#), and in 1984 as arms control adviser to [Secretary of State](#) George Schultz.

Sources: *Current Biography*, 1962; *International Who's Who 1984-85*, 1984; "Brinks-manship on a Hot Border," *Time* 113, February 26, 1979, pp. 39-40.

Joanna D. Cowden



## NIXON DOCTRINE

Facing enormous political pressure because of economic problems, squeezes on the federal budget, antiwar opposition, and a new spirit of neo-isolationism, President [Richard Nixon](#) announced the Nixon Doctrine in a talk with journalists on Guam on July 25, 1969. While maintaining the protection of Southeast Asia and [Japan](#) by the "nuclear umbrella," the United States insisted that Asian soldiers, rather than American troops, would have to carry the burden of land warfare in the future. The Nixon Doctrine would not go into effect until after American disengagement from [Vietnam](#), and would not modify any existing U.S. commitments to the [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization](#) or any bilateral commitments to Japan, [South Korea](#), Taiwan (see [Chiang Kai-Shek](#)), or the [Philippines](#). Critics charged that the Nixon Doctrine was based on a continuation of the [containment](#) policy and actually made the United States more dependent on its Asian allies and more vulnerable to political instability in the area. President Nixon invoked the doctrine in 1971 to justify increased American economic and military assistance to Iran.

Sources: Earl C. Ravenal, "The Nixon Doctrine and Our Asian Commitments," *Foreign Affairs* 49 (1971), 201-17.

## NIXON, RICHARD MILHOUS

Richard M. Nixon was born on January 9, 1913, in Yorba Linda, California. He graduated from Whittier College in 1934 and then took a law degree at Duke in 1937. Nixon practiced law in Whittier, California, between 1937 and 1942, and was active in the naval reserve during World War II. He won a seat in Congress, as a Republican, in 1946, and then rose to prominence in 1949 pushing the treason case against Alger Hiss for the House Un-American Activities Committee. A conservative, anti-Communist Republican, Nixon won a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1950. In 1952 [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) selected Nixon as his vice presidential running mate, and Nixon survived a controversy over personal use of campaign funds to become vice president of the United States. In 1960, he lost a narrow election for president to Democrat [John F. Kennedy](#), and in 1962 he lost a bid for the governorship of California to incumbent Democrat Pat Brown. Most observers assumed Nixon's political career was over, but while practicing law he spoke widely on behalf of Republican candidates and causes, and in 1968 he won the GOP presidential nomination. By then the Democratic party was self-destructing over Vietnam, and in the general election, promising a new plan to end the war, Nixon narrowly defeated [Hubert Humphrey](#).

Although Nixon's political career had taken a hard-line, ideological tone over the years, especially in foreign policy, he proved to be a pragmatic president willing to explore a variety of initiatives. Until 1967, he had supported the American commitment in Vietnam, but he became more critical as the election politics of 1968 heated up. By the time he took office in 1969, Nixon, along with his [national security adviser](#), [Henry Kissinger](#), was convinced the war must come to an end. But they wanted no ignominious [withdrawal](#) either. Anything less than an "honorable" peace would compromise their grand design to reach an accommodation with the [People's Republic of China](#) and the [Soviet Union](#) without abandoning traditional allies.

The Nixon-Kissinger approach to peace came to be known as [Vietnamization](#) and rested on several major assumptions: (1) the government of [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) was stable and was prepared to assume more responsibility for conduct of the war; (2) South Vietnamese troops would gradually replace American troops in combat operations and American troops would simultaneously be withdrawn; (3) the American withdrawal must not bear the slightest taint of defeat; (4) there must be no coalition government with the [Vietcong](#) in the South; (5) all [prisoners of war](#) (POWs) would have to be returned; and (6) the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam would have to be carried out before the United States would terminate its support of the [Republic of Vietnam](#).

In the ongoing peace talks in Paris as well as the secret diplomacy of Henry Kissinger, the North Vietnamese refused to cooperate, insisting on an unconditional withdrawal of all American troops and creation of a coalition government, without [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), in [South Vietnam](#). Nixon initiated large-scale bombing of [infiltration](#) routes in [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Menu](#)) and strategic targets in [North Vietnam](#), but it had little impact on the negotiations. The pace of Vietnamization quickened. Most American combat troops were removed between 1969 and 1972, and massive amounts of military equipment were handed over to South Vietnam. In 1970 Nixon launched an "incursion" into Cambodia (see [Operation Binh Tay](#) by American and [ARVN](#) troops (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) to attack Vietcong and North Vietnamese [sanctuaries](#) there, but the invasion triggered a storm of protest, as well as the tragedy at [Kent State](#) University. In 1971 he ordered an invasion of [Laos](#) (see [Lam Son 719](#)) to sever North Vietnamese supply lines, but it too did little to stop the flow of supplies.

In March 1972, conscious of the upcoming presidential election and anxious to fulfill his promise of ending the war, Nixon was ready to make some concessions, and the North Vietnamese were equally ready to intensify their commitment to the fall of the South. They launched a massive invasion of South Vietnam, and in response Nixon unleashed massive bombing of the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#). Late in 1972 negotiations finally became serious, but only because the United States surrendered on most major points. Nixon was anxious to get an agreement before the election. He agreed to a coalition government in South Vietnam, complete withdrawal of

American troops, leaving North Vietnamese troops in place, and exchanges of all prisoners of war. The treaty was concluded late in October, and Nixon won reelection in November, defeating [George McGovern](#). In December 1972, when North Vietnam appeared to be dragging its feet on the [POW](#) issue, Nixon ordered a new round of massive Christmas bombings (see [Operation Linebacker II](#)), and North Vietnam acquiesced. In March 1973, in what will surely be remembered as the high point of the Nixon administration, the American POWs came home. After that, the [Watergate](#) quagmire gradually destroyed the Nixon presidency, forcing his resignation in August 1974.

Sources: Fawn Brodie, *Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character*, 1983; Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 1982; Theodore S. White, *Breach of Faith. The Fall of Richard Nixon*, 1976; Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 1978, and *No More Vietnams*, 1985.

## **NOLTING, FREDERICK ERNEST**

Born on August 24, 1911, in Richmond, Virginia, Frederick Nolting received the B.A. from the University of Virginia in 1933, an M.A. from Harvard in 1941, and a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia in 1942. After service in the navy during World War II, Nolting joined the State Department, serving in a series of minor positions until his appointment to the NATO delegation in 1955. [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) named him the alternate permanent representative to NATO in 1957, and then appointed him ambassador to [South Vietnam](#) in 1961. Nolting developed a close and supportive relationship with President [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) and worked diligently to get him as much American military and economic assistance as possible. But during the [Kennedy](#) administration, American officials gradually lost faith in Diem, doubting whether he had the inclination or the temperament to win broad support among Vietnamese peasants. Kennedy replaced Nolting with [Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.](#), in 1963 after growing dissatisfied with Nolting's unwavering support of Diem and his unwillingness to clearly describe the deterioration of Diem's political position. Nolting resigned from the State Department and joined the investment firm of Morgan Guaranty Trust Company. He stayed there until 1970, when he joined the faculty of the University of Virginia to direct the White Burkett Miller Center for Public Affairs.

Sources: [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; *Who's Who in America*, 1978-1979, 1979.

## NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY

At the outset of the war in Vietnam, most American soldiers anticipated a fairly quick end to the conflict because they expected the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) to be little match for U.S. firepower. By 1975, the American military respected the NVA as one of the finest armies, man for man, in the world. In 1950, the NVA, though not yet officially named, consisted of three infantry [divisions](#) of perhaps 35,000 troops. They were commanded by [Vo Nguyen Giap](#). That army engaged the French and finally defeated them in 1954 at the battle of [Dien Bien Phu](#).

The NVA was formally organized in 1954 after the [Geneva Accords](#). By 1964 the NVA totaled fifteen infantry divisions armed with World War II-vintage weapons. During the next decade, supplied by the [Soviet Union](#) and the [People's Republic of China](#), the NVA grew to nearly 600,000 men organized into eighteen infantry divisions. In 1968, they had used PT-76 Soviet tanks, and by 1975 they had a total of four armored regiments equipped with nearly one thousand Soviet-made T-34, T-54, T-59, and PT-76 tanks. The NVA also consisted of ten [artillery](#) regiments, twenty independent infantry regiments, twenty-four antiaircraft regiments, and fifteen [SAM](#) regiments. Despite early denials, more than half of the NVA was deployed in [South Vietnam](#), [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the other half invaded South Vietnam in 1975 for the final conquest (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)).

Sources: Anthony Robinson, ed., *The Weapons of the Vietnam War*, 1983; International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1963-64*, 1963 and *The Military Balance 1974-75*, 1975.

## NUNG

The Nung were a Sino- Tibetan minority group of more than 300,000 people living in [North Vietnam](#). A small number, perhaps 15,000, resided in the [Central Highlands](#) of South Vietnam. Originating in the Western Canton River area of [China](#), the Nung migrated to [Tonkin](#) in the nineteenth century and intermarried with Muong and Thai people. In 1955 [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) raised three battalions of Nung soldiers to fight the [Binh Xuyen](#) and [Hoa Hao](#) sect. During the 1960s, the [Fifth Special Forces Group](#) continued to train and equip the Nung tribesmen, and eventually came to consider them a superb fighting force against the [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#).

Sources: Alan Houghton Brokrick, *Little China: The Annamese Lands*, 1942; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## NURSES (WOMEN) IN VIETNAM

The majority of the approximately 10,000 U.S. women who served in Vietnam were army nurses. (These numbers are subject to debate. The Department of Defense claims there were around 7,000 women in Vietnam. Other estimates range as high as 55,000.) All army nurses were volunteers; many specified Vietnam service. They received six weeks basic training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and were assigned one-year stints in Vietnam hospitals and Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) units. Many of the nurses were fresh graduates from three-year nursing hospitals. Some were sent to train South Vietnamese nurses, but the majority worked with the [casualties](#) of the war who had been helicoptered to hospitals where the emergency skills of the nurses were most needed. Many army nurses shared experiences with other veterans: the shock of the consequences of conflict in Vietnam, their problematic return to a country that did not understand their participation or experiences, high incidences of Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and denial of their work in Vietnam. Oral histories and autobiographies reveal that American nurses in Vietnam also experienced a sense of isolation from their male counterparts in Vietnam and their female counterparts back home, as well as an anger at the absence of Veterans Administration and veterans' service group support upon their return. Nurse veterans are responsible for forming a Women's Veterans project within the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) to press for financial, educational, and health benefits for women veterans. Others are organizing a Vietnam Women's Memorial Project to acknowledge and honor the work of nurses in Vietnam.

Sources: Lynda Van Devanter and Christopher Morgan, *Home Before Morning*, 1983; Shelley Saywell, *Women in War*; Carol Lynn Mithers, "Missing in Action: Women Warriors in Vietnam," *Cultural Critique* (Spring 1986).

Linda Kelly Alkana





## O

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OPERATION PERSHING  
OPERATION PIRANHA  
OPERATION PRAIRIE  
OPERATION RANCH HAND  
OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER  
OPERATION SCOTLAND  
OPERATION SEA DRAGON  
OPERATION SHINING BRASS  
OPERATION SOMERSET PLAIN  
OPERATION STARLITE (STARLIGHT)  
OPERATION STEEL TIGER  
OPERATION SUNRISE  
OPERATION TEXAS

OPERATION TEXAS STAR

OPERATION TOAN THANG

OPERATION TRAN HUNG DAO

OPERATION UNION

OPERATION UNIONTOWN

OPERATION UTAH

OPERATION VULTURE

OPERATION WHEELER/WALLOWA

OPERATION WHITE STAR

OPERATION YELLOWSTONE



## 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)

From the very beginning of the conflict to the end of American combat operations in Vietnam, the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) was one of the elite U.S. military units. The 1st [Brigade](#) of the 101st arrived in Vietnam on July 29, 1965, and fought in the [II Corps](#) Tactical Zone. In 1966 the brigade fought in Phu Yen and Kontum provinces. The 1st Brigade became part of Task Force Oregon (see [23rd Infantry Division](#)), along with the 3rd Brigade of the [25th Infantry Division](#) and the [196th Light Infantry Brigade](#), to fight in Quang Ngai and Quang Tin provinces and allow the [United States Marines](#) to move north closer to the [Demilitarized Zone](#). On November 18, 1967, the 1st Brigade rejoined the 101st Airborne Division.

The 101st Airborne Division deployed to Vietnam on November 19, 1967. Known as the "Screaming Eagles," the 101st had an illustrious history, especially at the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. By 1967 the division was completing its transition from parachutist to airmobile tactics. At first committed to [III Corps](#), the 101st was moved to [Hue](#) during the [Tet Offensive](#), and in April and May 1968 the unit ranged widely throughout Thua Thien and [Quang Tri](#) provinces. In mid-1968, the 3rd Brigade fought around [Dak To](#) and then joined the 25th Infantry Division in defense of [Saigon](#). It was redeployed to [I Corps](#) in September 1968. The 101st participated in [Operation Texas Star](#) throughout 1970, and in 1971 joined [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) in [Operation Jefferson Glenn](#), the last American offensive action of the war. Later in 1971 the 101st supported ARVN in [Lam Son 719](#), the ill-fated invasion of [Laos](#). The 101st Airborne Division left Vietnam on March 10, 1972.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975; John J. Tolson, *Airmobility, 1961-1971*, 1973.

## 173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE

The 173rd [Airborne](#), formed in 1963 and stationed in Okinawa as the Pacific's ready-action strike force, was the first major United States Army combat unit in Vietnam. The [brigade](#) arrived in country on May 7, 1965. It was supposed to serve in [South Vietnam](#) only temporarily until a brigade of the [101st Airborne](#) could be deployed from the United States, but that was changed by the brigade's completion of early combat operations. Aside from periodic duty in [III Corps](#), the 173rd operated primarily in northern [II Corps](#). The 2nd [Battalion](#) of the 173rd conducted the only major U.S. airborne assault of the war in III Corps in 1967 during [Operation Junction City](#). Unlike most infantry brigades, which have three battalions, the 173rd had only two. Occasionally it was augmented with a "round out" battalion such as the 1st Battalion of the Royal [Australian Regiment](#). In 1969 the brigade's battalions were mated with the 22nd and 24th [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) Infantry [divisions](#) for joint operations.

The 173rd was affectionately known as "Sky Soldiers" and as "The Herd" or "Two Shades of Soul" because of its camaraderie and excellent relations between black and white troops. It won a Presidential Unit Citation in 1967 for taking infamous Hill 875 from the [North Vietnamese Army](#) on Thanksgiving Day in 1967 just outside of [Dak To](#). Establishing itself quickly as a battle-seasoned unit with aggressive leadership, the 173rd took great pride in its abilities. It participated in many operations, including Marauder, Crimp, [Attleboro](#), [Hawthorne](#), [Cedar Falls](#), Junction City, Greeley, and [MacArthur](#). It also paid for its aggressiveness. The 173rd Airborne Brigade sustained more [casualties](#) in its seven years in Vietnam than did the entire divisions of either the [82nd](#) or 101st Airborne during World War II. The 173rd Airborne Brigade left Vietnam on August 25, 1971.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

Samuel Freeman

## 196TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE

Raised at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, in 1965, the 196th Light Infantry Brigade arrived in [South Vietnam](#) in August 1966. The brigade's first major combat came during [Operation Attleboro](#) in October and November 1966. In the spring of 1967 the [brigade](#) was assigned to a divisional task force in the I [Corps](#) Tactical Zone named Task Force Oregon (see [23rd Infantry Division](#)). Task Force Oregon became the Americal Division (see [23rd Infantry Division](#)) in September 1967. When the American Division was withdrawn from South Vietnam in 1971, the 196th Light Infantry Brigade was reconstituted as a separate provisional brigade. This provisional brigade was withdrawn from South Vietnam in June 1972. It was the last American combat brigade to leave the country. The 196th Light Infantry Brigade participated in the following operations and battles: [Attleboro](#), [Cedar Falls](#), [Junction City](#), [Malheur](#), Hill 63 (1967), Nhi Ha (1968), Tien Phuoc (1969), and Frederick Hill. During its tour in South Vietnam, the 196th Light Infantry sustained nearly 7,000 [casualties](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

Robert S. Browning III

## 199TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE

The 199th Light Infantry Brigade was formed at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1966, and arrived in [South Vietnam](#) that December. The brigade assumed responsibility for [Operation Fairfax](#), defending the approaches to [Saigon](#), until late 1967. In December 1967, the brigade undertook [Operation Uniontown](#), a sweep into War Zone D (see [Iron Triangle](#)) near [Bien Hoa](#). During the [Tet Offensive](#) the brigade defended Bien Hoa airfield together with the [Long Binh](#) post complex and the headquarters of [II Field Force Vietnam](#). However, elements of the brigade were used to recapture the Pho Tho racetrack in Saigon and, together with other American and South Vietnamese troops, held the area during two days of house-to-house fighting. During most of 1968, the 199th Light Infantry Brigade continued to patrol the area around Bien Hoa in support of a series of joint American-Vietnamese operations known as [Operation Toan Thang](#) (or "Total Victory"). The brigade also supported the invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) in May 1970. The 199th Light Infantry Brigade was withdrawn from South Vietnam in the fall of 1970 and was deactivated at Fort Benning in October. The 199th sustained more than 3,200 [casualties](#) during its stay in South Vietnam.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

Robert S. Browning III



## O'DANIEL, JOHN W.

Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel was chief of the United States Army [Military Assistance and Advisory Group](#) (MAAG), [Indochina](#), from March 1954 to October 1955. ``Iron Mike" O'Daniel was a hard-charging combat veteran of both world wars and the Korean War.

In 1953 he was commander of the U.S. Army, Pacific, when the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)) selected him to head a special mission to Vietnam to assess French needs for military aid. He made a second inspection trip later in 1953 before becoming chief of MAAG in 1954. His initial reports on the French effort in Indochina were positive. After the French defeat at [Dien Bien Phu](#), however, he became one of the key American officials in implementing the transfer of South Vietnamese military training and support from [France](#) to the United States. While in Vietnam, he developed a high regard for [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) and for the potential of the South Vietnamese military. After his retirement from the U.S. Army in 1955, he became one of the founders of the [American Friends of Vietnam](#), a highly effective lobby for American support of the Diem government.

Source: Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941-1960*, 1983.

David L. Anderson

## OFFICE OF CIVIL OPERATIONS

A forerunner of [CORDS](#) (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support), the Office of Civil Operations was established in November 1966 by Ambassador [Henry Cabot Lodge Jr.](#), to pursue the goal of pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) in [South Vietnam](#). At that time pacification fell under the general direction of the embassy in the [Republic of Vietnam](#), but when CORDS was established in May 1967, that effort passed to the control of the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#).

Sources: Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counter-insurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.

## ONE TO COUNT CADENCE

*One to Count Cadence* is the title of James Crumley's 1969 Vietnam War novel. The story centers on a ten-man communications detachment stationed first at Clark Air Base in the [Philippines](#) and then in Vietnam during the early stages of the war. A Sergeant "Slag" Krummel is the narrator, and his foil is Joe Morning, a classic, self-destructive loser. The novel exposes the gratuitous violence of military life, bars, brothels, fights, and profanity, as well as the futility of the war in Vietnam. The novel concludes with the communications team, decimated by combat in Vietnam, returning to the Philippines, where Morning joins the Huk rebellion.

Sources: James Crumley, *One to Count Cadence*, 1969; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## ONE VERY HOT DAY

*One Very Hot Day* is the title of [David Halberstam](#)'s 1967 Vietnam War novel. Written at an early stage of American involvement in the escalated war, *One Very Hot Day* traces three characters, the American captain Beaupre, the Vietnamese lieutenant Thuong, and the black American Ranger captain Redfern, on one day in the hot, wet, sticky, despair-ridden atmosphere of the Vietnam War. When one of Beaupre's men, a Lieutenant Anderson, dies in an ambush, Beaupre is unable to find any reason for the death, any meaning to a dead American in some nowhere-place called Ap Than Thoi. A likable young American soldier had died for nothing on a hot day in nowhere. Such is the theme of *One Very Hot Day*.

Sources: Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982; David Halberstam, *One Very Hot Day*, 1967.

## OPERATION ABILENE

Operation Abilene was a sweep of Phuoc Tuy Province mounted by elements of the [1st Infantry Division](#) in April 1966. Such sweeps were intended to put pressure on the [Vietcong](#) and demonstrate the United States army's willingness to take the offensive into the jungle.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

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## OPERATION ALA MOANA

Operation Ala Moana was the codename for the combat operations of the [25th Infantry Division](#) in December 1966. General [William Westmoreland](#) wanted to keep the [Vietcong](#) away from major rice-producing areas near [Saigon](#) and in the Ho Bo Woods in [III Corps](#). Operation Ala Moana was launched on December 1, 1966, and continued into 1967, although most of the combat action shifted then to Hau Nghia Province. Operation Ala Moana was a preliminary to [Operation Cedar Falls](#).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## **OPERATION APACHE SNOW**

Operation Apache Snow was the codename for the combat activities of the 9th Marine Regiment and elements of the [101st Airborne \(Airmobile\) Division](#) in Thua Thien Province of [I Corps](#) between May 10 and June 7, 1969. The most important and controversial phase of Operation Apache Snow was the Battle of [Ap Bia](#), or [Hamburger Hill](#).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## **OPERATION ATLAS WEDGE**

Operation Atlas Wedge was the codename for the engagement between Colonel George S. Patton's [11th Armored Cavalry](#) and elements of the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) 7th Division in the abandoned Michelin rubber plantation near [Saigon](#) between March 17 and 26, 1969. The 11th Armored Cavalry destroyed huge bunkers in the area and fought intense battles with the North Vietnamese before the NVA withdrawal.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.



## OPERATION ATTLEBORO

Operation Attleboro, conducted in [War Zone C](#) between September 14 and November 24, 1966, was the first field test of the army's doctrine of "[search and destroy](#)." Initiated by the [196th Light Infantry Brigade](#), Operation Attleboro had the objective of discovering the location(s) of the [Vietcong](#), or North Vietnamese base areas, and forcing the enemy to fight. There was no important contact in this operation until October 19, when the brigade discovered a major base area and severe fighting erupted. By November 6, the American units involved included (in addition to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade) the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 27th Infantry Regiment ([25th Infantry Division](#)), the [173rd Airborne Brigade](#), and two brigades of the [1st Infantry Division](#). By November 15, the 9th Vietcong Division was able to successfully disengage. The United States Army reported 1,106 enemy [casualties](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; S. L. A. Marshall, *Ambush: The Battle of Dau Tieng, Also Called The Battle of Dong Ming Chau, War Zone C, Operation Attleboro, and Other Deadfalls in South Vietnam*, 1969.

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## OPERATION BABYLIFT

With the imminent takeover of [South Vietnam](#) by Communist forces in 1975, President [Gerald R. Ford](#), announced that the United States would evacuate some 2,000 Vietnamese orphans to the United States. At a press conference in San Diego, California, on April 3, 1975, he commented: ``I have directed that C-5A aircraft and other aircraft especially equipped to care for these orphans during the [flight](#) be sent to [Saigon](#). I expect these flights to begin within the next 36 to 48 hours. These orphans will be flown to Travis Air Force Base in California, and other bases on the West Coast, and cared for in those locations."''

Hours after the presidential statement, the dramatic humanitarian airlift, named Operation Babylift, began. On April 4, 1975, the first Babylift aircraft, a [Military Airlift Command C-5](#) en route from Clark Air Base, the [Philippines](#), landed at [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#) in Saigon; unloaded its military cargo; and was on its way back to the Philippines with 314 persons onboard. Unfortunately, what started out as a routine flight ended in tragedy when the aircraft crashed approximately fourteen minutes after takeoff. Of the 314 aboard, 138 were killed. It was a tragic beginning that fortunately was not repeated in other flights.

Although Babylift got off to a bad start, the operation gathered momentum thereafter and was conducted without further mishap. By noon the next day, five [C-141s](#) and other aircraft had moved 141 orphans and 137 evacuees and escorts from Saigon to Clark Air Base. During subsequent days the flow of aircraft to and from Saigon continued at a steady pace as Vietnamese [refugees](#) were transported to homes in the United States. Between April 5 and May 9, 1975, Operation Babylift aircraft evacuated 2,678 Vietnamese and Cambodian orphans to the homes of sponsors in the United States.

Sources: ``Global Humanitarian Airlift," Military Airlift Command Fact Sheet, February 1983; Dick J. Burkard, *Military Airlift Command: Historical Handbook, 1941-1984*, 1984.

Roger D. Launius

## OPERATION BARREL ROLL

Operation Barrel Roll was the codename given to American air operations over northern [Laos](#) from December 1964 to February 1973. The aircraft involved included both U.S. [Navy](#) and Air Force [fighters](#), as well as air force bombers (including [B-52s](#)) and fixed-wing [gunships](#). For political reasons, the American government did not inform the public of these operations until American aircraft were lost, at which time it was announced that the Americans were flying escort missions at the request of the Royal Laotian government.

Sources: John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985; P. Frank Futrell, *Aces and Aerial Victories: The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia*, 1976.

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## OPERATION BINH TAY

Operation Binh Tay was the codename for combined U.S.-ARVN (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) combat activities in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) in 1970. On May 6, 1970, as part of the Cambodian "incursion," the [4th Infantry Division](#) combined with the 49th ARVN Regiment in attacking [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) positions in Cambodia. On May 16, 1970, the 4th Infantry Division turned Operation Binh Tay completely over to ARVN troops, who continued it until mid-June without making significant enemy contact.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Tom Carhart, *Battles and Campaigns in Vietnam*, 1984.

## OPERATION BOLO

Operation Bolo was the codename given to the U.S. Air Force effort to eliminate North Vietnamese MiG-21 strength. Since American aircraft were prohibited from attacking the airfields from which the MiGs operated (until April 1967), it was necessary to lure the MiGs into the air. F-4C aircraft were equipped with [F-105](#) electronic pods in an effort to confuse North Vietnamese radar. The operation was mounted on January 2, 1967, from Ubon Air Base in [Thailand](#). Seven MiG-21s were shot down and the remainder temporarily withdrawn from action. No American aircraft were lost.

Source: P. Frank Futrell, *Aces and Aerial Victories: The U.S. Air Force in Southeast Asia*, 1976.

Robert S. Browning III

## OPERATION BRAVO

Late in October 1963, as the political support for his regime was rapidly crumbling, [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) hatched an elaborate plot to shore up his crumbling position. Known as Operation Bravo I and Bravo II, the plan involved staging a fake revolt in [Saigon](#), with Diem and his brother [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#) fleeing to the countryside. The rebels would conduct demonstrations, orchestrate ``revolutionary'' broadcasts from the Saigon radio station, and even assassinate several local officials. All this, known as Bravo I, would continue for several days. Bravo II would then go into effect, with Diem and Nhu marching back into Saigon and crushing the ``rebellion,'' proving that only they were capable of keeping the [Republic of Vietnam](#) out of Communist hands. Although both Diem and Nhu thought the operation was underway early in November, military officials responsible for conducting Operations Bravo I and II were actually plotting, with tacit American support, a coup d'etat against the regime. The coup was successful and Ngo Dinh Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu were assassinated. Operations Bravo I and II had failed.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian*, 1963; [Tran Van Don](#), *Our Endless War*, 1972.

## OPERATION BUFFALO

Operation Buffalo was the codename for a brief combat action by elements of the [Third Marine Division](#) near the [Demilitarized Zone](#) in [I Corps](#). The operation lasted between July 2 and July 14, 1967, and resulted in just over 700 enemy [casualties](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975.

## OPERATION CEDAR FALLS

A major "search and destroy" effort by U.S. troops in January 1967, Operation Cedar Falls, named after the hometown of an early Vietnam War recipient of the Medal of Honor (posthumously), was aimed at the [Iron Triangle](#), located only 20 miles northwest of the outskirts of [Saigon](#). A 60-square-mile area of rice paddies, dense jungle, rubber plantations, and an extremely sophisticated complex of underground tunnels, the Iron Triangle had been controlled by the [Vietcong](#) (VC) since the late 1950s and was characterized as a "dagger pointed at the heart of Saigon." Destruction of the VC infrastructure in the Iron Triangle was the basic military objective of Cedar Falls. The fundamental plan of Cedar Falls was the "hammer-and-anvil" tactic, in which a blocking force of American troops would be landed by helicopter at one edge of the area and then a second force (the "hammer") would drive the enemy against this "anvil." In order for this tactic to work, the entire area had to first be cleared of innocent civilians so that a free fire zone could be created. In this way, any Vietnamese in the area would be assumed to be a Vietcong.

Operation Cedar Falls began on January 8, 1967, with the forced evacuation and total destruction of [Ben Suc](#), an Iron Triangle village that was a haven for VC. The next phase was saturation bombing and [artillery](#) fire, after which the infantry swept the Iron Triangle using the hammer-and-anvil tactic. The tunnel complex was a particular target, and approximately 500 tunnels, running for some 12 miles underground, were discovered and destroyed. Operation Cedar Falls lasted eighteen days and was declared a success. The VC lost 775 veteran soldiers while American losses were approximately 250. The enemy bastion was seized, and the Vietcong were eliminated from the Iron Triangle. The major allied units involved in the operation were the [1st](#) and [25th Infantry](#) divisions, the [173rd Airborne Brigade](#), the [11th Armored Cavalry](#), and several [ARVN](#) units (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam). However, since basic strategy did not include occupation of captured territory, Allied troops did not stay in the Iron Triangle after Cedar Falls. Given the enemy's tenacity and resiliency, within six months the Vietcong had returned in strength, and the local inhabitants were more hostile and resentful of the allies; they had also become more supportive of the enemy than before the occupation. The Iron Triangle became a major staging area for the [Tet Offensive](#) attacks on Saigon on January 31, 1968, illustrating the frustration that characterized American military successes throughout the war: to defeat the enemy thoroughly only to find him reappearing sometime after the engagement.

Sources: Jonathan Schell, *The Village of Ben Suc*, 1967; Bernard William Rogers, *Cedar Falls-Junction City: A Turning Point*, 1974.



## OPERATION COMMANDO HUNT

Commando Hunt was the codename for combined U.S. [Navy](#), [Marine](#), and Air Force air assaults on [infiltration](#) routes along the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) in the Laotian panhandle. The air strikes began in 1968 and continued until January 1973, but they had little or no effect on the volume of materiel and the number of troops brought into [South Vietnam](#) by the North Vietnamese.

Sources: Tom Carhart, *Battles and Campaigns in Vietnam*, 1984; John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience. Rain of Fire: Air War, 1969-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION DEFIANT STAND

Operation Defiant Stand was the codename for a combined United States [Navy](#), United States [Marine Corps](#), Korean Marines, and [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) amphibious assault on Barrier Island south of [Da Nang](#). [Vietcong](#) responded with only light resistance when the landing force swept through the island on September 7, 1969.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION DELAWARE

Operation Delaware was the codename for a combined United States Army-ARVN (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) combat operation in the [A Shau Valley](#). The ARVN portion of the operation was dubbed Operation [Lam Son](#) 216. Elements of the [1st Cavalry Division \(Airmobile\)](#), [101st Airborne Division\(Airmobile\)](#), the [196th Light Infantry Brigade](#), the [ARVN 1st Division](#), and the ARVN Airborne Task Force Bravo participated in the operation, which took place between April 19 and May 17, 1968. Although the operation resulted in nearly 900 enemy [casualties](#), American forces sustained heavy helicopter losses and never really dealt a death blow to [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) forces in the A Shau Valley.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975.

## OPERATION DEWEY CANYON

Operation Dewey Canyon was the codename for the combat activities of the 9th Marine Regiment in [I Corps](#) between January 22 and March 18, 1969. The marine objective was to cut a [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) supply route which came into Vietnam from [Laos](#) and moved through the Da Krong Valley and the [A Shau Valley](#). During the course of Operation Dewey Canyon, marines flew more than 13,000 [sorties](#) in air support of the campaign, and the 9th Marine Regiment discovered more than 500 tons of NVA weapons and ammunition, along with inflicting more than 1,335 [casualties](#) on the North Vietnamese.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Keith William Nolan, *Into Laos. The Story of Dewey Canyon II/Lam Son 719*, 1986.

## OPERATION DOUBLE EAGLE

Operation Double Eagle was launched by United States Marines in [I Corps](#) on January 28, 1966. The 4th Marines and the 7th Marines, two regiments garrisoned at Chu Lai in Quang Tin Province, joined with the 2nd ARVN Division (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) to drive south into Quang Ngai Province, where they hoped to trap a large contingent of [Vietcong](#) -North Vietnamese Army ([NVA](#)) troops between them and the U.S. Army [1st Cavalry Division](#) and 22nd ARVN Division's operations in Binh Dinh Province. The marines made an amphibious assault at Thach Tru, a coastal point approximately 20 miles south of Quang Ngai, and then drove inland. For the next five weeks, the marines searched in vain for significant Vietcong-VNA contacts, encountering little more than occasional sniper fire. Early in March, the marines called off Operation Double Eagle.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975; Jack Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War 1966*, 1982.

## OPERATION EAGLE PULL

Eagle Pull was the codename for the U.S. effort to evacuate American diplomatic and military officials from [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) in 1975. With the [Khmer Rouge](#) surrounding and invading Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia, naval helicopters from the [Seventh Fleet](#), leaving their ships in the South China Sea, landed on the embassy grounds and removed 276 people, most of them Cambodian and American embassy employees and their families.

Sources: Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*, 1983; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979.

## OPERATION EL PASO

Operation El Paso was the codename for combat activities of the U.S. [1st Infantry Division](#) and the [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) 5th Infantry Division in Binh Long Province of [III Corps](#). Early in May 1966, American intelligence officers received news of an impending attack by the [Vietcong](#) (VC) 9th Division on the [Special Forces](#) base at Loc Ninh. Operation El Paso I was designed to locate the VC 9th Division, but it was largely a fruitless endeavor. So on June 2, 1966, the 1st Division went deep into [War Zone C](#) in search of the Vietcong. By that time [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) hoped the operation would prevent the Vietcong from offensive operations during the monsoon season. Operation El Paso II ended on July 13, 1966, by which time MACV claimed to have killed 855 Vietcong.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION ENHANCE PLUS

Operation Enhance Plus was the codename for a crash program late in 1972 to transfer huge volumes of military equipment to the South Vietnamese. In October 1972, when it became apparent that a negotiated settlement with the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese was possible, [Secretary of State Henry Kissinger](#) had the Pentagon launch Operation Enhance Plus, a six-week program to deliver \$2 billion in military equipment, as well as control over American military bases in [South Vietnam](#), to the government of [Nguyen Van Thieu](#). Kissinger also asked Thieu to take military control of as much territory in South Vietnam as possible, all of this based on the premise that U.S. military influence there would shortly be discontinued. Operation Enhance Plus supervised the equipment transfer. By the end of 1972, with goods shipped in from the United States, Taiwan (see [Chiang Kai-shek](#)), [South Korea](#), and the [Philippines](#), South Vietnam had acquired one of the largest aircraft and naval armadas in the world.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire*, 1980; Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 1982.



## OPERATION ENTERPRISE

Operation Enterprise was the codename for combined U.S.-ARVN (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) military activities in Long An Province in 1967 and 1968. Launched on February 13, 1967, Operation Enterprise was designed to clear the [Vietcong](#) (VC) out of Long An Province. The [9th Infantry Division](#), several ARVN elements, and groups of [Regional Forces](#) and [Popular Forces](#) participated in the operation. The operation continued until March 11, 1968, and although [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) claimed more than 2,000 VC [casualties](#), the campaign had not achieved its objective of clearing the VC out of Long An Province. They remained popular in provincial villages and retained a powerful presence throughout the area, even after the losses the [Tet Offensive](#) had brought to them.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION FAIRFAX

Operation Fairfax was the codename given to combined United States Army and [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) combat operations outside [Saigon](#) in 1967. It was an early experiment in [Vietnamization](#) in which ARVN forces were supposed to gradually assume responsibility for the campaign. The [199th Light Infantry Brigade](#) joined with the 5th ARVN Ranger Group, and both groups patrolled the region surrounding Saigon. The main objective of Operation Fairfax was to enable the South Vietnamese to assume responsibility for defending Saigon. The operation began in January 1967, and by November ARVN troops had assumed primary responsibility for the combat patrols. The [Tet Offensive](#) in January 1968 demonstrated clearly that ARVN troops had not achieved the capability of defending the country's capital city against [Vietcong](#) attack.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION FARMGATE

In April 1961, the United States Air Force created the 4400th Combat Crew Training [Squadron](#), also called "Jungle Jim," and stationed it at Elgin Air Force Base in Florida. In October 1961, half of the 4400th Combat Squadron received a new codename, Farmgate, and were deployed to an old French air base at [Bien Hoa](#), just 15 miles northeast of [Saigon](#). Farmgate trained Vietnamese pilots to fly [A-1H Skyraiders](#), dropped propaganda leaflets over [Vietcong](#) territory, and supplied Vietnamese Ranger camps and [Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) camps along the Laotian and Cambodian borders. At first Farmgate pilots provided only covert support to Vietnamese operations. They had to fly with Vietnamese copilots in Vietnamese aircraft.

The American pilots chafed under their restrictions, and by 1964 almost ninety of them were flying combat missions for [South Vietnam](#). When Captain Edwin G. Shank was shot down and killed piloting a T-28 aircraft in May 1964, the press got wind of the combat operations and criticized the Department of Defense. Operation Farmgate continued after the press revelations, but [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#) strictly confined its duties to training missions.

Source: John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience. Thunder From Above: Air War, 1941-1968*, 1985.

## OPERATION FRANCIS MARION

Operation Francis Marion was the codename for operations by the [4th Infantry Division](#) in the [Ia Drang Valley](#) from April to October 1967. The 4th Infantry Division had the responsibility of patrolling the Cambodian border to prevent North Vietnamese forces from pushing into the [Central Highlands](#). During Operation Francis Marion, elements of the 4th Infantry Division fought in eight battles and numerous smaller skirmishes. The heaviest fighting took place in May, June, and July. On May 18, Company B of the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry, lost twenty-nine killed and thirty-one wounded in an ambush; and over a two-day period from May 20 to 22, the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry, and the 3rd Battalion, 12th Infantry, were subjected to a series of fierce assaults by North Vietnamese regulars. In October 1967, Operation Francis Marion was incorporated into Operation Greeley, and the two operations were renamed [Operation MacArthur](#).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

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## OPERATION FREQUENT WIND

Operation Frequent Wind was the codename for the United States [Navy](#)'s evacuation of American personnel and Vietnamese civilians from [Saigon](#) in April 1975. The U.S. [aircraft carriers](#) *Enterprise* and *Coral Sea* supplied the necessary air cover, and Operation Frequent Wind commenced in the morning of April 29, 1975. The two primary evacuation locations were [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#) and the U.S. embassy in Saigon. More than 7,100 American and South Vietnamese military and civilian personnel were helicoptered out of Saigon to ships of Task Force 76 of the [Seventh Fleet](#). The [Military Sealift Command](#) and ships of the [South Vietnamese Navy](#), along with hundreds of sampans and junks, also ferried thousands of Vietnamese civilians and military personnel out of [South Vietnam](#). When Operation Frequent Wind was over, more than 80,000 people had been evacuated from South Vietnam and taken to the [Philippines](#) and Guam.

Sources: Thomas G. Tobin, et al, *Last Flight from Saigon*, 1978; Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

## OPERATION GAME WARDEN

Launched in December 1965, Operation Game Warden was the codename of the United States [Navy](#) program to patrol approximately three thousand miles of rivers and canals in [South Vietnam](#), especially in the [Mekong Delta](#), in order to prevent the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese from moving personnel and materiel along the inland waterways. Task Force 116 of the United States Navy, also known as the Riverine Assault Force (see [Mobile Riverine Force](#)), conducted the operation. The task force used [air-cushion vehicles](#), helicopters, mine-sweepers, fiberglass boats, and LST landing ships to attack the Vietcong and North Vietnamese on the rivers and streams of South Vietnam.

Sources: William B. Fulton, *Riverine Operations, 1966-1969*, 1973; Victor Croizat, *The Brown Water Navy: The River and Coastal War in Indochina and Vietnam, 1948-1972*, 1984.

## OPERATION HARVEST MOON

Operation Harvest Moon was the codename for a joint United States [Marine](#) and [ARVN](#) (see Army for the Republic of Vietnam) operation intended to trap the [Vietcong](#) in the Phuoc Ha Valley in December 1965. The operation began on December 8 when the 11th ARVN Ranger Battalion and the 1st Battalion of the 5th ARVN [Regiment](#) were ambushed and overrun by the Vietcong. A marine counterattack began on December 9, encountering fierce resistance and forcing the deployment of eventually three marine battalions. On December 12-14, [B-52](#) strikes were made in support of the ground effort, and follow-up ground forces encountered little immediate resistance, although the 2nd Battalion of the 7th Marines was ambushed on December 18 and suffered heavy [casualties](#) before a combination of [artillery](#) and close air support forced the Vietcong to disengage.

Sources: Shelby Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Jack Shulimson and Charles M. Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Landing and the Buildup 1965*, 1978.

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## OPERATION HASTINGS

Operation Hastings was the codename for a gruelling battle between a joint U.S. [Marine](#)-South Vietnamese force and the 324B North Vietnamese regular [division](#) in July 1966. Six marine battalions and five [ARVN](#) battalions (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) were ultimately committed to the struggle, which began on July 7. The most intensive fighting took place on July 28 in the [Song Ngan Valley](#), which the marines had nicknamed "[Helicopter Valley](#)" after a number of helicopters were either shot down or crashed there. Operation Hastings was a typical marine operation of 1966, in which the marines attempted to defend the [I Corps](#) Tactical Zone by attacking any large-scale enemy [troop](#) concentration they discovered, using helicopter mobility to bring in large numbers of troops quickly. Although some of the marine encounters are labeled as distinct operations, the fighting was more or less continuous. Operation Hastings officially ended on August 3, but was immediately succeeded by [Operation Prairie](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975; S. L. A. Marshall, *Battles in the Monsoon: Campaigning in the Central Highlands, South Vietnam, Summer 1966*, 1966.

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## OPERATION HAWTHORNE

Operation Hawthorne was the codename for combat activities of the 1st [Brigade](#) of the [101st Airborne Division](#) in Kontum Province during June 1966. Designed to rescue the Tou Morong Regional Force, which was surrounded by the 24th NVA [Regiment](#) (see [North Vietnamese Army](#)), Operation Hawthorne was launched on June 2, 1966, and concluded on June 20, 1966. Along with the 1st [Battalion](#) of the 42nd [ARVN](#) Regiment and the 21st ARVN Ranger Battalion (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam), the 1st Brigade succeeded in reaching the outpost and withdrawing the isolated troops. More than 460 air strikes, including 36 [B-52 sorties](#), were called in on NVA troops. On June 20, 1966, the NVA 24th Regiment withdrew from the area, having sustained approximately 530 [casualties](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; S. L. A. Marshall, *Battles in the Monsoon: Campaigning in the Central Highlands, South Vietnam, Summer 1966*, 1966.

## OPERATION HOMECOMING

On January 27, 1973, [Henry Kissinger](#), assistant to the president for national security affairs, concluded a cease-fire with representatives of [North Vietnam](#) which provided for the [withdrawal](#) of American military forces from [South Vietnam](#). Part of the agreement also provided for the release of nearly 600 American [prisoners of war](#) (POWs) held by North Vietnam and its allies. This gave rise to Operation Homecoming, the return of POWs from Southeast Asia to their homes in the United States. The operation was divided into three phases. First, there was to be the initial reception of prisoners at three release sites: prisoners held by the [Vietcong](#) were to be flown by helicopter to [Saigon](#); those held in North Vietnam were to be released at [Hanoi](#); and three POWs in [China](#) were to be freed in Hong Kong. All groups were to be flown to Clark Air Base, the [Philippines](#). Second, at Clark Air Base these individuals were to be processed through a reception center, debriefed, and examined by physicians. Third, the former POWs were to be flown to military hospitals for recovery. Beginning on February 12, 1973, the first of these POWs were released at Hanoi and the last were turned over to American officials on March 29. In all, 591 POWs were released.

Source: Carl Berger, "American POWs and Operation Homecoming," in Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973: An Illustrated Account*, 1984.

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## OPERATION IRVING

Operation Irving was the codename for the [1st Cavalry \(Airmobile\) Division](#)'s activities in Binh Dinh Province of [II Corps](#) between October 2 and October 24, 1966. Charged with clearing [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) elements out of the Phu Cat Mountain area, Operation Irving combined the 1st Cavalry with [Republic of Korea](#) troops. When the operation was concluded on October 24, [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) claimed that Irving had inflicted 681 [casualties](#) on the enemy.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Kenneth D. Mertel, *Year of the Horse, Vietnam: First Air Cavalry in the Highlands*, 1968.

## OPERATION JEFFERSON GLENN

Launched on September 5, 1970, and continuing until October 8, 1971, Operation Jefferson Glenn was the codename for the combined activities of the [101st Airborne Division](#) and the ARVN [1st Infantry Division](#) (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) in Thua Thien Province. During the 399 days of the operation, Allied forces established several fire bases in the coastal lowlands of Thua Thien Province and fought against regular [North Vietnamese Army](#) troops. Gradually the 101st Airborne disengaged and turned the fighting over to ARVN troops. The North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) sustained more than 2,000 [casualties](#) before the operation was terminated. Operation Jefferson Glenn was the last major U.S. ground combat operation in the Vietnam War.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION JUNCTION CITY

Operation Junction City was the codename for the 1967 combined United States Army-ARVN (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) search and destroy campaign in [War Zone C](#) of Tay Ninh Province. At its time, Junction City was the largest military operation of the war, involving twenty-two American and ARVN battalions, elements of the [1st](#), [4th](#), and [25th Infantry](#) divisions, [196th Light Infantry Brigade](#), [11th Armored Cavalry](#), and the [173rd Airborne Brigade](#). [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) launched Operation Junction City on February 22, 1967, one month after the conclusion of [Operation Cedar Falls](#). Junction City continued until May 14, 1967. It was successful in attacking [Vietcong](#) (VC) strongholds in War Zone C. By the end of the operation, the VC had taken nearly 3,000 [casualties](#). But instead of making the VC vulnerable by eliminating their secure areas in War Zone C, Junction City had different results. The VC 9th Division simply withdrew from War Zone C and moved across the Cambodian border (see [Kampuchea](#)) where they could regroup and be resupplied. That added a new strategic dimension to the war. The question of how to deal with the Cambodian sanctuary preoccupied American policymakers throughout the war.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Bernard William Rogers, *Cedar Falls, Junction City: A Turning Point*, 1974.

## OPERATION KINGFISHER

Operation Kingfisher was the codename for a three-month operation by the [Third Marine Division](#) in the [I Corps](#) Tactical Zone beginning in July 1967. This operation was one of a number of marine operations that summer designed to interrupt [North Vietnamese Army infiltration](#) of the [Demilitarized Zone](#) and to support efforts to build a manned and electronic barrier across South Vietnam which was expected to prevent, or reduce in effectiveness, any large-scale movement of enemy troops. This barrier project was initially codenamed [Project Practice Nine](#), was renamed Project Illinois City in June 1967, and was finally entitled Project Dye Marker a month later. The cost of Operation Kingfisher was 340 U.S. Marines killed and 3,086 wounded.

Sources: Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, 1980; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

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### OPERATION LEXINGTON III

Operation Lexington III was the codename for battles of the 1st Battalion of the 18th Infantry in the [Rung Sat](#) Special Zone between April 17, 1966, and June 9, 1966. Although Operation Lexington III resulted in the destruction of large numbers of [Vietcong](#) sampans, movement in the waist-deep mangrove swamps prevented large-scale engagement of ground troops. The onset of the summer monsoons brought Operation Lexington III to an end.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION LINEBACKER I

On Good Friday, March 30, 1972, three [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) [divisions](#) crossed the [Demilitarized Zone](#) (DMZ) and invaded the [Republic of Vietnam](#). Before the Easter weekend was over, 120,000 NVA regulars with 200 armored vehicles were in South Vietnam. Launched to strengthen [Hanoi](#)'s negotiating position at Paris, the invasion prompted the second major bombing campaign over [North Vietnam](#) by the United States. Named Linebacker I, the operation continued nearly nine months and involved nearly all United States Air Force assets in the theater. [B-52 Arc Light](#) bombing missions against [infiltration](#) routes and staging areas increased, and B-52 forces already in the theater were strengthened by additional aircraft deployments to Guam. At the same time tactical [air power](#) forces were also reinforced. Over the next few weeks U.S. [Marine](#) air squadrons deployed to several staging bases; [Navy](#) carrier support doubled; and Air Force tactical air units rejoined the war from [Korea](#) and the United States. The major priority of returning tactical air units was to support South Vietnamese forces directly so that the ground battle in South Vietnam could be stabilized.

On April 2, 1972, President [Richard Nixon](#) authorized air strikes against military targets and logistic supply points north of the DMZ to the parallel at 17dg 25pr; this was increased to 18dgN on April 4 and to 19dgN on April 6. On April 9, fifteen B-52s struck railroad and supply depots at Vinh, the first use of B-52s in North Vietnam since October 28, 1968. Three days later, eighteen B-52s struck Bai Thuong airfield. On the weekend of April 15-16, navy and air force aircraft bombed military storage areas surrounding Hanoi and Haiphong.



## OPERATION LINEBACKER II

On October 22, 1972, when it seemed the [Paris peace talks](#) were leading to an agreement, the United States halted air operations above the twentieth parallel. This end of [Operation Linebacker I](#) provided a breathing spell for the North Vietnamese, who quickly strengthened air defenses in [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong. By mid-December, Hanoi had repaired rail lines to [China](#) and adjusted its supply routing to compensate for the naval mine blockade. The restored rail lines were capable of handling 16,000 tons of supplies per day, or 2.5 times Hanoi's needs. Simultaneous with the cessation of bombing, negotiations between [North Vietnam](#) and the United States stalled amid indications that Hanoi might renew its offensive in [South Vietnam](#). By early December, an agreement that had appeared so near five weeks earlier was in a shambles. President [Richard Nixon](#) then launched Operation Linebacker II, a final eleven-day bombing campaign which was one of the heaviest aerial assaults of the war. The United States Air Force used [F-105](#), [F-4](#), [F-111](#), and for the first time [B-52](#) aircraft to attack Hanoi and Haiphong. Tactical aircraft flew more than 1,000 [sorties](#) and the [B-52s](#) about 740, most them against rail yards, power plants, communication facilities, air defense radar sites, docks and shipping facilities, petroleum stores, ammunition supply depots, air bases, and transportation facilities.

The North Vietnamese retaliated with most of their inventory of about 1,000 surface-to-air missiles ([SAM](#)) and a heavy barrage of anti-aircraft fire. The countermeasures were ineffective. Only twenty-seven aircraft were lost; however, eighteen B-52s were destroyed or badly damaged by missiles. In spite of this, the air attacks continued, and by December 28 North Vietnamese defenses had been all but obliterated. During the last two days of the campaign American aircraft flew over Hanoi and Haiphong without suffering any losses. The North Vietnamese lost eight aircraft in aerial fighting during the Linebacker II campaign, as well as suffering substantial collateral damage in the raids.

Partially as a result of Linebacker II's success, negotiations resumed with [Henry Kissinger](#) and [Le Duc Tho](#) in Paris on January 8, 1973. While the diplomats talked, American air attacks were restricted and confined south of the twentieth parallel. United States Air Force, [Navy](#), and [Marine fighters](#) flew about twenty sorties per day with B-52s, adding thirty-six to the daily total. On January 23, 1973, the Paris negotiators signed a nine-point cease-fire agreement effective January 28, 1973. The [air power](#) displayed in Linebacker II had played a significant role in extracting this agreement to end the war.

Sources: W. Hays Parks, "Linebacker and the Law of the War," *Air University Review* 34 (January-February 1983), 2-30; Robert Frank Futrell et al., *Aces and Aerial Victories: The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1965-1973*, 1976.

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## OPERATION MACARTHUR

Operation MacArthur was the codename for combat operations of the [4th Infantry Division](#) in the western highlands of [South Vietnam](#) between October 12, 1967, and January 31, 1969. It began as Operation Greeley back in June 1967 when two paratrooper battalions of the [173rd Airborne Brigade](#) were airlifted into [Dak To](#) to relieve a [Special Forces](#) camp there. Elements of the [1st Cavalry Division](#), the 42nd ARVN Regiment, and the 5th and 8th ARVN Airborne battalions (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) were also engaged in the early campaign. Operation Greeley became part of Operation MacArthur in October 1967. Operation MacArthur then became the battle for Dak To in 1967. United States and ARVN forces ultimately prevailed at Dak To, driving the [North Vietnamese Army](#) back into [Laos](#), but in 1968 they returned, and Operation MacArthur continued until early in 1969. When the operation ended, [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) claimed a total of 5,731 enemy [casualties](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION MALHEUR

Operation Malheur was the codename for two operations of Task Force Oregon (see [23rd Infantry Division](#)) in the spring of 1967. To help fight [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) elements in the southern reaches of [I Corps](#), General [William Westmoreland](#) decided early in 1967 to bring together three separate army brigades. Dubbed Task Force Oregon, the division-sized unit consisted of the 1st Brigade of the [101st Airborne Division](#), the [196th Light Infantry Brigade](#), and the 3rd Brigade of the [25th Division](#). Westmoreland hoped Task Force Oregon would increase security in the coastal areas, keep Route 1 open to commercial and military traffic, and relieve pressure in the northern reaches of Binh Dinh Province. Operation Malheur I, the first combat operation of the task force, was launched on May 11, 1967. It continued through July 1967 in the area of Duc Pho. Although they engaged in numerous firefights and called in repeated air strikes, they had little more success than uncovering large amounts of Vietcong and NVA food and ammunition. Operation Malheur II, launched late in July and concluded early in August 1967, was equally unsuccessful in engaging any large enemy forces. Task Force Oregon, however, did meet Westmoreland's objective of increasing security in southern I Corps and maintaining the integrity of Route 1.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985, and *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975.

## OPERATION MARKET TIME

Operation Market Time was the codename for United States [Navy](#) operations in the South China Sea to prevent the North Vietnamese from supplying the [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) by coastal [infiltration](#). Operation Market Time began on March 11, 1965, and placed a picket line of ships from the United States [Navy](#), United States [Coast Guard](#), and [South Vietnamese Navy](#) along the 1,000-mile coast of the South China Sea in [South Vietnam](#). They regularly boarded and inspected the more than 50,000 junks operating off the coast and along the major rivers. General [William Westmoreland](#) estimated that Operation Market Time was so successful that between 1965 and the end of 1966, the Vietcong lost the ability to resupply themselves by sea. In 1965 70 percent of their supplies came in through the South Vietnamese coast and 30 percent along the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#), but by 1967 only 10 percent of their supplies were being infiltrated from the coast.

Source: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1956-1975*, 1984.

## OPERATION MASHER/WHITE WING

In January 1966 Major General Harry W. O. Kinnard received orders to use his [1st Cavalry Division \(Airmobile\)](#), stationed near An Khe, to eliminate [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) forces from four valleys in northeastern Binh Dinh Province. The 1st Cavalry Division was assisted by the [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) [Airborne Brigade](#), the 22nd ARVN Division, and the 1st Regiment of the [Republic of Korea's Capital Division](#). Known as the Bong Son campaign, the mission was codenamed Operation Masher. That codename was changed to Operation White Wing on February 4, 1966. The operation lasted from late January to March 6, 1966, by which time the North Vietnamese had abandoned the region. They would return, and the United States would subsequently launch Operations Davy Crockett, Crazy Horse, [Irving](#), and Thayer to attack them again.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975; *The 1st Air Cavalry Division: Vietnam, August 1965 to December 1969*, 1970.

## OPERATION MASSACHUSETTS STRIKER

Operation Massachusetts Striker was the codename for the [101st Airborne \(Airmobile\) Division](#)'s activities in the [A Shau Valley](#) between March 1 and May 8, 1969. In their sweep operations through the valley, the 101st discovered an enormous [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) logistical base, complete with ammunition dumps, underground oil depots, motor pool repair facilities, and a field hospital, all concealed in the jungles. The discovery of such a large NVA logistical investment convinced the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) to launch a larger combat operation in the area, which led to [Operation Apache Snow](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION MAYFLOWER

Operation Mayflower was the codename for a diplomatic initiative President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) launched on May 13, 1966, in an attempt to bring the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table. He stopped the bombing of [North Vietnam](#) and instructed Foy Kohler, the U.S. ambassador to the [Soviet Union](#), to meet with the North Vietnamese delegation in Moscow and propose peace negotiations. The North Vietnamese summarily refused to even meet with Kohler, and on May 15, 1968, Johnson terminated Operation Mayflower and resumed the bombing.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; *New York Times*, May 13-15, 17-19, 1966.

## OPERATION MENU

On March 18, 1969, the U.S. Air Force began Operation Menu, a series of secret, illegal [B-52](#) bombings of National Liberation Front (NLF; see [Vietcong](#)) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) [sanctuaries](#) in eastern [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). It continued for fifteen months until the Cambodian invasion (May 1970), when it was renamed Operation Freedom Deal and expanded to include ``targets" throughout Cambodia. Freedom Deal continued until Congress prohibited funds for bombing Cambodia effective August 15, 1973. By their end 16,527 [sorties](#) had been flown and 383,851 tons of bombs dropped.

General [Creighton Abrams](#) had wanted to attack sanctuaries for some time; however, President [Lyndon Johnson](#) repeatedly refused permission. When [Richard Nixon](#) became president in January 1969, these requests were resubmitted with the justifications that striking sanctuaries would reduce NLF-NVA offensive capabilities and the [Central Office for South Vietnam](#) (COSVN) (the NLF-NVA command structure) had been located and could be destroyed by either ground or air attack. After initial hesitation, Nixon approved, for reasons of his own. The bombing was to ``signal" [Hanoi](#) that Nixon was ``tougher" than Johnson and to lend credence to the ``mad man" image he wanted to create among North Vietnamese leaders.

``Menu" was a series of attacks (meals) against NLF-NVA Base Areas: ``Breakfast", Base Area 353, 25 square kilometers near the [Fishhook](#), inhabited by 1,640 Cambodians (U.S. military population estimates) and the supposed headquarters of COSVN; ``Lunch", Base Area 609, located on the Laotian-Cambodian-Vietnamese borders and inhabited by 198 Cambodians; ``Snack", Base Area 351, 101 square kilometers in the Fishhook including one town and 383 Cambodians; ``Dinner", Base Area 352, located in the Fishhook including one town and 770 Cambodians; and ``Dessert", Base Area 350, located north of the Fishhook with 120 Cambodians. The military did not recommend bombing Base Areas 354, 704, and 707 because they had substantial Cambodian populations. Nonetheless, Base Area 704 was authorized as ``Supper" with 247 B-52 missions flown against it. In March 1970 Nixon authorized expanded bombing of [Laos](#), including B-52 raids against the Plain of Jars.

Officially, [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) claimed the Base Areas were not inhabited by Cambodian civilians, but private military reports indicated awareness of civilian presence and expectations of civilian [casualties](#). These reports contended that although casualties should be light because the Base Areas were sparsely populated and Cambodians lived apart from the NLF-NVA, ``some Cambodian casualties would be sustained (and) the surprise effect of attacks would tend to increase casualties (due to) probable lack of protective shelter around Cambodian homes." The number of Cambodians killed is unknown.

Nixon, very concerned that Operation Menu not become public knowledge, ordered elaborate security measures which included falsification of military records, an offense punishable by court-martial under Article 107 of *The Uniform Code of Military Justice*, so there was absolutely no record of the bombings having occurred. Nixon and [Henry Kissinger](#)'s justification was that secrecy was necessary to protect Cambodia's Prince [Norodom Sihanouk](#), who gave his ``tacit consent." They do not provide evidence to support this proposition, and Prince Sihanouk vehemently denies he consented, tacitly or otherwise.

Sources: William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience. Rain of Fire: Air War, 1969-1973*, 1984.

Samuel Freeman



## OPERATION NEUTRALIZE

Operation Neutralize was the codename for the combined United States Air Force, Army, and [Navy](#) operation to relieve the siege of [Con Thien](#) in September and October of 1967. To relieve the [Third Marine Division](#) at Con Thien from the assault by the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) 325C and 324B [divisions](#), General [William Momyer](#), commander of the [Seventh Air Force](#), developed the [SLAM](#) approach (seek, locate, annihilate, and monitor). It involved a coordinated heavy fire support, using naval [artillery](#) bombardment, tactical air support, [B-52](#) bombing, and artillery fire, leveled at NVA forces outside Con Thien. Operation Neutralize became the codename. Launched on September 11, 1967, Operation Neutralize lasted until October 31, 1967, during which 4,000 aircraft [sorties](#) unloaded 40,000 tons of bombs on an area about the size of Manhattan. North Vietnamese forces could not stand the firepower, and they ended the siege of Con Thien at the end of October.

Sources: Terrence Maitland and Peter McInerney, *The Vietnam Experience: A Contagion of War*, 1983; John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience. Thunder From Above: Air War, 1941-1968*, 1985.

## OPERATION NEVADA EAGLE

Operation Nevada Eagle was the codename for the activities of the [101st Airborne Division \(Airmobile\)](#) in Thua Thien Province of [I Corps](#) between May 17, 1968, and February 28, 1969. During those eight and a half months of combat, often involving heavy booby-trap [casualties](#) and search and destroy sweeps, the 101st Airborne claimed to have inflicted 3,299 casualties on [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) forces.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION NIAGARA

Operation Niagara was the codename for a joint U.S. Air Force, [Navy](#), and [Marine](#) air assault on [Khe Sanh](#) between January 14 and March 31, 1968. [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) forces had put the marine base at Khe Sanh under siege, and President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) feared that a defeat there would resemble the French debacle at [Dien Bien Phu](#) fourteen years earlier. Committed to maintaining the marine base at Khe Sanh, the United States launched Operation Niagara. Air force, navy, and marine pilots flew more than 5,000 tactical fighter-bomber (see [fighters](#)) and [B-52 sorties](#) over Khe Sanh during the next ten weeks, unloading more than 100,000 tons of bombs on NVA forces and eventually forcing the North Vietnamese to end the siege.

Sources: Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973*, 1977; Rober Pisor, *The End of the Line: The Siege of Khe Sanh*, 1982; Moyers S. Shore II, *The Battle for Khe Sanh*, 1969.

## OPERATION PAUL REVERE

Operation Paul Revere was the codename for four combat operations (I, II, III, and IV) of the [4th Infantry Division](#), [25th Infantry Division](#), and [1st Cavalry Division \(Airmobile\)](#) in [Pleiku](#) Province in 1966. Operation Paul Revere I commenced on May 19, 1966, and Operation Paul Revere IV concluded on December 30, 1966. Fighting with the [North Vietnamese Army](#) 1st Division was conducted near the Cambodian border (see Kampuchea) throughout the campaigns, but American forces were unable to cross the border in pursuit of North Vietnamese forces. When the Paul Revere operations were concluded at the end of the year, the 4th and 25th Infantry [divisions](#), along with the 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) were claiming more than 4,000 enemy [casualties](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975; Tom Carhart, *Battles and Campaigns in Vietnam*, 1984.

## OPERATION PEGASUS

Operation Pegasus was the codename for the [1st Cavalry Division \(Airmobile\)](#) operation to relieve the siege of [Khe Sanh](#) in April 1968. United States [Marine](#) and [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) units assisted in the operation. The ARVN dimension was codenamed Operation Lam Son 207. Operation Pegasus was launched on April 1, 1968, and concluded on April 15, 1968, when the siege of Khe Sanh was over.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; *The 1st Air Cavalry Division: Vietnam, August 1965 to December 1969*, 1970.

## OPERATION PENNSYLVANIA

Operation Pennsylvania was the codename for an unofficial but State Department-approved visit to [Hanoi](#) by Herbert Marcovich, a French biologist, and Raymond Aubrac, a worker with the Food and Agriculture Organization. Aubrac knew [Ho Chi Minh](#) personally and offered to visit with him in Hanoi. [Henry Kissinger](#) knew of the visit and acted as a go-between for the State Department and Aubrac. Aubrac and Marcovich went to Hanoi in July 1967, visited with Ho Chi Minh and [Pham Van Dong](#), and returned expressing positive hopes for a negotiated settlement, although little came of the visit. The North Vietnamese were committed to reunification of the two countries, and were willing to negotiate if that goal was a real possibility. In 1967 it was not, at least given the diplomatic position of the United States.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1979.

## OPERATION PERSHING

Operation Pershing was the codename for the combat activities of the [1st Cavalry Division \(Airmobile\)](#) in Binh Dinh Province of [II Corps](#). Launched on February 11, 1967, Operation Pershing was designed to attack the [Vietcong](#) (VC) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) 610th Division. Operation Pershing continued for nearly a year, inflicting more than 5,400 [casualties](#) on VC and NVA forces. The 1st Cavalry Division's activities had been so successful that when the [Tet Offensive](#) erupted in February 1968, Binh Dinh Province was one of the quietest areas in South Vietnam.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975; *The 1st Air Cavalry Division: Vietnam, August 1965 to December 1969*, 1970.

## OPERATION PIRANHA

Operation Piranha was the codename for a joint United States [Marine](#) and [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) amphibious-heliborne assault on [Vietcong](#) positions on the Batangan Peninsula in September 1965. It was an attempt to repeat the success of [Operation Starlite](#) and was marked by the destruction of a major Vietcong stronghold.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army. U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

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## OPERATION PRAIRIE

Operation Prairie was the codename for the combat activities of the [Third Marine Division](#) in the [Con Thien](#) and Gio Linh regions of [I Corps](#) in 1966 and early 1967. The Marines were concerned with stopping the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) 324B Division from crossing the [Demilitarized Zone](#) and invading [Quang Tri](#) Province. Operation Prairie, following on the heels of [Operation Hastings](#), was launched on August 3, 1966, and continued until January 31, 1967. A second stage of Operation Prairie commenced on February 1, 1967, and concluded on March 18, 1967. In both stages of the operation, the Third Division killed more than 2,000 NVA soldiers. The marines succeeded in driving the North Vietnamese back across the [Ben Hai River](#), but the NVA units only regrouped, reequipped, and recrossed back into [South Vietnam](#) later in 1967.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975; Jack Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War 1966*, 1982.

## OPERATION RANCH HAND

Operation Ranch Hand, the codename for a U.S. Air Force mission to spray herbicides in Southeast Asia between 1961 and 1971, arose out of the military necessity of destroying the jungle cover and food of the [Vietcong](#). Herbicides, or weed-killing chemicals, had long been used in American agriculture, spread both by ground and aerial methods. Many American military leaders also recognized the potentials of such chemicals for combat situations, but refrained from using them either because of legal restrictions made in treaty or because of possible in-kind retaliations. In 1961, President [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) of [South Vietnam](#) ended this long-standing proscription, however, and asked the U.S. Air Force to conduct such defoliant operations in his nation.

Diem's request launched a debate over the morality of using herbicides that raged for years. On one side, some policymakers argued that herbicides offered an economical and efficient means of defoliating enemy hiding areas. Others, however, doubted the chemicals' effectiveness, suggested that their use would needlessly alienate South Vietnamese villagers, and argued that the chemicals posed serious ecological problems for all living organisms coming in contact with them. Virtually all individuals noted that the use of such defoliants could lead to terrific adverse publicity; almost certainly it would foster charges of barbarism and brutality. Accepting these risks, President John F. Kennedy approved the use of herbicides in southeast Asia in November 1961.

Operation Ranch Hand officially commenced in January 1962. The U.S. Air Force's Tactical Air Command was initially directed to deploy six C-123 transports modified with crop-dusting equipment and sufficient supplies for four-month operations to South Vietnam to conduct this mission. After movement to [Bien Hoa](#) Air Base, outside [Saigon](#), the Ranch Hand pilots flew their first familiarization flights over targeted areas on January 10 and 11, 1962. The first air force operational Ranch Hand missions took place on January 13, 1962, as two C-123 aircraft sprayed land near Route 15 south and east of Saigon.

At first the use of herbicides was very carefully governed by the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV), but gradually limitations were relaxed and the spraying became more frequent and covered larger areas. In addition to the use of defoliants in South Vietnam, the air force conducted Ranch Hand missions in [Laos](#) between December 1965 and September 1969. From the beginning of this operation until its official termination in February 1971 by General [Creighton W. Abrams, Jr.](#), MACV commander, the air force disseminated 19.22 million gallons of herbicides in South Vietnam, according to a 1974 National Research Council study. Approximately 5.96 million acres in the nation had been sprayed during the operation, including 36 percent of its mangrove forests. An additional 417,420 gallons were sprayed on 65,972 hectares in Laos between 1965 and 1969.

Sources: William A. Buckingham, Jr., *Operation Ranch Hand: The United States Air Force and Herbicides in Southeast Asia, 1961-1971*, 1982.

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## OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER

Operation Rolling Thunder was the codename for American bombing attacks on strategic targets within [North Vietnam](#). The raids began in an effort to persuade the North Vietnamese to cease their support of the war in the south by forcing them to pay a direct and increasing cost. Since American political leaders hoped to persuade the North Vietnamese quickly and at little cost to either side, President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) rejected a plan for a concentrated sixteen-day campaign and opted instead for a program of gradually escalated raids beginning in March 1965. There were seven phases to the Rolling Thunder campaign, separated by halts to see if the North Vietnamese were willing to begin negotiations, and usually marked by changes in the type and geographic location of the targets being attacked.

Before May 1965, only targets south of the twentieth parallel could be attacked. When Phase II began in May, American pilots were still ordered to hit no targets within 30 miles of [Hanoi](#) or the [Chinese](#) borders, or within 10 miles of Haiphong. For a brief period in early 1966 American air strikes were once again confined to the area just north of the seventeenth parallel (see [Geneva Accords](#)), but in April 1966 the operational area was expanded to all of North Vietnam, while the target list was expanded to include oil storage facilities near Hanoi. Phase Five, which began in February 1967, consisted of intensive bombing attacks on Hanoi area factories, railroad yards, power plants, and airfields. Following another Christmas halt, attacks on Hanoi resumed in January 1968, but American aircraft were hampered by bad weather and by the need to support ground operations in the south in the wake of the [Tet Offensive](#). On April 1, 1968, all attacks north of the nineteenth parallel ceased, and all Rolling Thunder raids stopped on November 1. Throughout the Rolling Thunder campaign, target selection was closely controlled by the White House (from a list of potential targets supplied by the Joint Chiefs of Staff; (see [Chairman, JCS](#))). During the entire campaign, American aircraft dropped over 640,000 tons of bombs; 922 American aircraft were lost.

Sources: R. Frank Futrell et al., *Aces and Aerial Victories: The U.S. Air Force in Southeast Asia*, 1981; John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience. Thunder From Above: Air War, 1941-1968*, 1985.

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## OPERATION SCOTLAND

Operation Scotland was the codename for two [Third Marine Division](#) actions in [I Corps](#) in 1967 and 1968. Launched on November 1, 1967, Operation Scotland centered on the [Khe Sanh](#) region of [Quang Tri](#) Province. It continued until March 31, 1968, inflicting 1,561 [casualties](#) on [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) forces. Operation Scotland came to an end when [Operation Pegasus](#) began on April 1, 1968. Elements of the [Third Marine Division](#) and the 7th Cavalry engaged North Vietnamese regulars near Khe Sanh. South Vietnamese paratroopers joined the action. Operation Pegasus was the codename for the relief of the siege of Khe Sanh. When Operation Pegasus ended in April 1968, Operation Scotland II began, with the Third Marine Division continuing its operations around Khe Sanh. Operation Scotland II lasted until February 28, 1969. Operations Scotland and Scotland II accounted for a total of nearly 4,900 NVA casualties.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975.

## OPERATION SEA DRAGON

A U.S. [Navy](#) counterpart to the Air Force's Rolling Thunder campaign, Operation Sea Dragon was the codename for an operation to cut North Vietnamese supply lines. Operation Sea Dragon began in October 1966 and ended in October 1968. Cruisers and destroyers dominated the operation, except for a brief stay by the battleship *New Jersey*. The naval vessels ranged up and down the coast of North Vietnam, shelling shore batteries, supply routes, and communication stations, and sinking small North Vietnamese ships running supplies south. Operation Sea Dragon came to an end when President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) was trying to secure a negotiated settlement at the [Paris peace talks](#).

Source: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

## OPERATION SHINING BRASS

Operation Shining Brass was the codename for the first U.S. [Special Forces infiltration](#) of [Laos](#) to locate and disrupt the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#). In October 1965 a Special Forces team conducted the operation and, after locating an ammunition depot, called in a series of [F-105](#) air strikes. They withdrew after several days, satisfied that they had located the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) and destroyed an ammunition cache, but disappointed that they had not encountered any [Vietcong](#) or North Vietnamese soldiers, except for sniper fire.

Sources: Terrence Maitland and Peter McInerney, *The Vietnam Experience: A Contagion of War*, 1983; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Green Berets at War*, 1985; Charles M. Simpson, *Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years*, 1983; Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971*, 1973.  
OPERATION SILVER BAYONET See Ia Drang Valley, Battle of

## OPERATION SOMERSET PLAIN

Operation Somerset Plain was the codename for a combined [101st Airborne Division](#) and [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) 1st Regiment combat operation in the [A Shau Valley](#) in August 1968. The ARVN portion of the operation was codenamed Lam Son 246. Little contact was made with [North Vietnamese Army](#) forces, and the allied force evacuated the area on August 18 and 19, 1968.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION STARLITE (STARLIGHT)

Operation Starlite was the codename for a U.S. [Marine](#) combined land-air-amphibious operation aimed at destroying the 1st Vietcong Regiment on the Van Tuong Peninsula in August 1965. The operation began on August 18 when the 3rd Battalion of the Third Marine Division came ashore while the 2nd Battalion of the [Fourth Marine Division](#) flew into landing zones to the west. Fighting was fierce as the marines moved from one [Vietcong](#) defensive position to the next. Nevertheless, by August 19 the 1st Vietcong Regiment was pinned along the coast and destroyed through a combination of ground fire, air strikes, and naval gunfire. Operation Starlite marked the first large battle between American forces and Vietcong main force groups. Its success encouraged the marines to follow up with a similar operation (codenamed [Operation Piranha](#)) the following month.

Sources: Shelby Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army. U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Jack Shulimson and Charles M. Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Landing and the Buildup 1965*, 1978.

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## OPERATION STEEL TIGER

Operation Steel Tiger was the codename for U.S. air operations over the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) in the northern Laotian panhandle. Operation Steel Tiger began in April 1965 and involved both U.S. Air Force and [Navy](#) aircraft flying from bases in [Thailand](#) and [South Vietnam](#), as well as [aircraft carriers](#) in the South China Sea. Although all types of aircraft flew on these interdiction missions (including [B-52](#) bombers), the most effective aircraft were air force fixed-wing [gunships](#), particularly the [AC-130](#) Spectre.

A subsidiary operation intended to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the southern Laotian panhandle was codenamed Operation Tiger Hound. Operation Tiger Hound began in December 1965. In 1968 both Operation Steel Tiger and Operation Tiger Hound were increased to cover the entire Ho Chi Minh Trail. At that time the codename was changed to [Operation Commando Hunt](#). Commando Hunt campaigns were numbered in series, and American military officials estimated that some 20,000 trucks were destroyed in Commando Hunt 5. Although at times the flow of men and supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail was slowed to a trickle by the air campaigns, the trail was never completely closed.

Sources: William W. Momyer, *Airpower in Three Wars*, 1978; Thomas D. Boettcher, *Vietnam: The Valor and the Sorrow*, 1985; John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience. Thunder From Above: Air War, 1941-1968*, 1985, and *The Vietnam Experience. Rain of Fire: Air War, 1969-1973*, 1984.

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## OPERATION SUNRISE

Operation Sunrise was the codename for an early attempt at pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)). In March 1962, [South Vietnam](#) leader [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) launched a pilot project in Binh Duong Province north of [Saigon](#). [ARVN](#) troops (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) attempted to establish five strategic hamlets and move peasants off their ancestral homelands to the new communities in the Ben Cat district. The peasants were reluctant to move, however, because of religious ties to ancestral land, coercive ARVN methods, government corruption and unwillingness to deliver the promised payments and resources, and the fact that the hamlets were located far from market areas where rice could be sold. Operation Sunrise was a failure.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972.

## OPERATION TEXAS

Operation Texas was the codename for a combined [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN) and United States [Marine](#) combat operation to relieve the [North Vietnamese Army](#) siege of a South Vietnamese [Regional Forces](#) outpost at An Hoa, approximately fifteen miles south of Chu Lai in Quang Ngai Province. On March 19, 1966, the [Vietcong](#) 1st Regiment attacked the An Hoa base, and marine helicopters quickly brought reinforcements and evacuated the wounded. On March 20, the 3rd Battalion of the 7th Marines and the 5th ARVN [Airborne](#) Battalion joined in the engagement. The 2nd Battalion of the Fourth Marines came in later, trapping the enemy between the base and the new marine positions. The Vietcong were annihilated.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975.

## OPERATION TEXAS STAR

Operation Texas Star was the codename for combined U.S.-ARVN (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) military operations in [I Corps](#) between April 1 and September 5, 1970. In cooperation with the [ARVN 1st Infantry Division](#), the [101st Airborne Division \(Airmobile\)](#) conducted pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) and development programs as well as offensive operations against [North Vietnamese Army](#) forces in [Quang Tri](#) and Thua Thien provinces. At the conclusion of Operation Texas Star, the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) claimed 1,782 [casualties](#) inflicted on the North Vietnamese.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## OPERATION TOAN THANG

Operation Toan Thang was the codename for a massive allied combat operation outside [Saigon](#) in 1968. The [Tet Offensive](#), with its attacks on Saigon, had shown how vulnerable and tentative the American presence in South [Vietnam](#) still was, and U.S. military officials were determined to prevent any repetition of the successful [Vietcong](#) raids on the capital. [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) launched Operation Toan Thang on April 8, 1968, using seventy-nine U.S. and [ARVN](#) battalions (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam). The units formed a security ring around Saigon and set out to destroy all Vietcong and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) troops in what was known as the Capital Military District. When the NVA and Vietcong launched the Mini-Tet Offensive in May 1968, Operation Toan Thang successfully prevented any major successful attacks on Saigon, except for the detonation of 100 pounds of explosives outside a Saigon radio and television complex. When Operation Toan Thang was concluded on May 31, 1968, when the Mini-Tet Offensive ended, MACV claimed to have inflicted 7,645 [casualties](#) on Vietcong and NVA forces.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981 and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Tom Carhart, *Battles and Campaigns in Vietnam*, 1984.

## OPERATION TRAN HUNG DAO

Operations Tran Hung Dao I and Tran Hung Dao II were conducted by the South Vietnamese during and just after the [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968. Both involved several Vietnamese marine, ranger, and [airborne](#) battalions fighting [Vietcong](#) in the [Saigon](#) area. The [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) 5th Ranger Group encountered particularly bitter fighting in [Cholon](#). Tran Hung Dao I commenced on February 5 and concluded on February 17, 1968, and Tran Hung Dao II started on February 17 and finished on March 8, 1968, the day after the last Vietcong resistance in Cholon had been eliminated. In both operations, ARVN forces claimed credit for 1,666 enemy [casualties](#). Although Operations Tran Hung Dao I and II had successfully repelled Vietcong forces from Saigon and Cholon, they had indicated how vulnerable [South Vietnam](#) still was to guerrilla activity.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Don Oberdofer, *Tet!*, 1971.

## OPERATION UNION

Operations Union I and II were codenames for combat activities of the [1st Marine Division](#) in Quang Nam and Quang Tin provinces during 1967. The [Vietcong](#) were particularly strong between Chu Lai and [Da Nang](#) in the Phuoc Ha Valley, as was the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) 2nd Division. Operation Union I, involving the 1st and 3rd battalions of the 1st Marines and the 3rd Battalion of the 5th Marines, began on April 21, 1967, and continued until May 17, 1967. Operation Union II commenced on May 25, 1967, and concluded on June 5, 1967. The marines claimed to have inflicted 1,566 [casualties](#) on the enemy in both operations before the NVA retreated.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

## OPERATION UNIONTOWN

Operation Uniontown was the codename for the combat activities of the [199th Light Infantry Brigade](#) in [Bien Hoa](#) Province. Launched on December 17, 1967, Operation Uniontown had as its objective a clearing of the [Vietcong](#) from the Bien Hoa area. Operation Uniontown became part of the larger American reaction to the [Tet Offensive](#) in February 1968, and when the operation was concluded on March 8, 1968, the 199th Infantry Brigade claimed 922 Vietcong [casualties](#). As for clearing the Vietcong out of Bien Hoa Province, Operation Uniontown dealt them a savage, but not a lethal, blow.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.



## OPERATION UTAH

Operation Utah was the codename for a combined U.S. [Marine](#) and [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) assault in Quang Ngai Province between March 4 and March 8, 1966. [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) regular troops of the 36th NVA Regiment were operating south of Chu Lai. Five marine battalions from the 1st, 4th, and 7th Marines air-assaulted into an area just outside Quang Ngai City, and after several days in heavy fighting, they drove the NVA out of the region, inflicting more than 600 [casualties](#) on them.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Jack Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War 1966*, 1982.

## OPERATION VULTURE

Late in March 1954, General [Paul Ely](#), the French chief of staff, flew to Washington to request American air support in [Indochina](#) if the [Chinese](#) intervened on the side of the [Vietminh](#). Admiral [Arthur W. Radford](#), chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)), then unveiled to Ely what he called Operation Vulture, a series of American air strikes around [Dien Bien Phu](#) aimed at severing Vietminh communications, destroying their [artillery](#), and ending the siege there. Radford told Ely the French would have to make a formal request for such assistance. If such a request came through, 200 American aircraft from the carriers *Essex* and *Boxer*, both stationed in the South China Sea, would conduct the air strike. But when Operation Vulture encountered congressional opposition, President [Dwight Eisenhower](#), over Radford's objections, argued that he would approve the air strike only with formal congressional approval as well as verbal support from NATO allies. At that point the French withdrew their request, afraid that any multinational approach would reduce their control over the military campaign in Indochina. Operation Vulture never came to pass.

Sources: Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture. *End of a War: Indochina, 1954*, 1969; Bernard B. Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu*, 1967; Melvin Gurtov, *The First Vietnam Crisis: Chinese Communist Strategy and United States Involvement, 1953-54*, 1967; John Prados, *The Sky Would Fall: Operation Vulture, The U.S. Bombing Mission in Indochina*, 1983.

## OPERATION WHEELER/WALLOWA

Operation Wheeler/Wallowa was the codename for the yearlong operations of the Americal Division ([23rd Infantry Division](#)) in Quang Nam and Quang Tin provinces of [I Corps](#). Launched on November 11, 1967, Operation Wheeler/Wallowa continued until November 11, 1968, and resulted in more than 10,000 [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army casualties](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975.

## OPERATION WHITE STAR

Operation White Star was the codename for the 1959 [Special Forces](#) program to organize [Hmong](#) (Meo) tribesmen in [Laos](#) to serve as a resistance force against [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese [infiltration](#) and supply routes in Laos and along the Laotian-Vietnam border. Operation White Star formally ended in 1962 after the Geneva agreements settling the Laotian controversy, but U.S. Special Forces continued to work closely with Hmong tribesmen throughout the 1960s.

Sources: Douglas Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance*, 1977; Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 1985; John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986.

## OPERATION YELLOWSTONE

Operation Yellowstone was the codename for combat operations of the [25th Infantry Division](#) in [War Zone C](#) between December 8, 1966, and February 24, 1967. Although they encountered frequent [Vietcong](#) mortar attacks, ground combat was relatively light, except for some intense confrontations early in January. The major consequence of Operation Yellowstone, aside from the 1,254 [casualties](#) the 25th Division claimed to have inflicted on the Vietcong, was to confirm that Tay Ninh Province (War Zone C) continued to be a major stronghold of the Vietcong.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.



## P

``PASSAGE TO FREEDOM''

``POINT''

PACIFIC COMMAND

PARIS PEACE ACCORDS (1973)

PARIS PEACE TALKS

PARROT'S BEAK

PATHET LAO

PATHFINDERS

PENTAGON PAPERS

PENTAGON PAPERS TRIAL

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

PEOPLE'S SELF-DEFENSE FORCE

PHAM HUNG

PHAM NGOC THAO

PHAM VAN DONG

PHAN BOI CHAU

PHAN CHAU TRINH

PHAN DINH PHUNG

PHAN HUY QUAT

PHAN KHAC SUU

PHAN QUANG DAN

PHILIPPINES

PHOENIX PROGRAM

PHU BAI

PHUOC BINH

PIASTER

PIGNON, LEON

PLAIN OF REEDS

PLATOON

PLATOON

PLEIKU

POL POT

POPULAR FORCES

PORTER, WILLIAM JAMES

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

POULO CONDORE

PRISONERS OF WAR

PROJECT DELTA

PROJECT OMEGA

PROJECT PRACTICE NINE

PROJECT SIGMA

PROTECTIVE REACTION STRIKES

PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM

PROXMIRE, WILLIAM

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

PUNJI STAKES





## **``PASSAGE TO FREEDOM''**

In 1954, when the [Geneva Accords](#) divided [Indochina](#) at the seventeenth parallel into [North](#) and [South Vietnam](#), [Roman Catholic](#) leaders in the north openly urged Catholic peasants to relocate to South Vietnam, where they thought the Church would have a more hospitable reception. Approximately 900,000 Roman Catholics relocated to South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese government, headed by northerner [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), received the [refugees](#) with [open arms](#), and the United States assisted the relocation by providing a task force of fifty ships to help move the people. Reception centers, financed by the United States and the South Vietnamese government, offered the refugees food, clothing, and medical assistance. The program to relocate the refugees was called the ``Passage to Freedom'' by U.S. officials.

Source: Gertrude Samuels, ``Passage to Freedom," *National Geographic* 107 (June 1955), 858-74.

## **``POINT''**

``Point" was a term used during the Vietnam War to describe an individual or unit advancing in front of the main body of troops. The purpose of the ``point" was to draw enemy fire and allow the main body of soldiers to then attack.

Source: Al Santoli, *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War By Thirty-Three Soldiers Who Fought It*, 1981.

## **PACIFIC COMMAND**

Pacific Command, or PACOM, was located in Hawaii. It was a unified command headquarters responsible for joint military operations in Asia and the Pacific. Four individuals served as commander in chief of the Pacific Command during the Vietnam War: Admiral Harry D. Felt until June 1964; Admiral [Ulysses S. Sharp](#) until July 1968; Admiral [John S. McCain](#) until September 1972; and Admiral Noel Gayler until the end of the war.

Sources: George S. Eckhardt, *Command and Control, 1950-1969*, 1974; Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam*, 1984.

## PARIS PEACE ACCORDS (1973)

In the aftermath of the so-called Christmas bombing (see [Operation Linebacker II](#)) of [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong in December 1972, American [Henry Kissinger](#) and North Vietnamese [Le Duc Tho](#) resumed peace talks on January 8 in Paris and after two weeks of intensive negotiations finally settled on an agreement on January 23. Two days later, on January 25, 1973, cease-fire agreements were formally signed in Paris, and another chapter in the fighting in [Indochina](#) had closed.

The agreement of January 1973 differed little from an abortive one of October 1972 which had been unacceptable to South Vietnamese President [Nguyen Van Thieu](#). The agreement called for a cease-fire, American [troop withdrawal](#), prisoner exchanges (especially of the American pilots shot down over [North Vietnam](#)), but permitted Vietnamese troops on both sides to remain in place. That tacit recognition of Communist military strength meant that the South Vietnamese government had to maintain its territorial integrity without American ground support against an enemy with more than 100,000 main force troops in the south. The agreement also called for an eventual compromise government reflecting the military balance in the south.

Years later the North Vietnamese claimed that the United States reneged on the agreement, for they claimed in secret protocols, for which there is no proof save for their claims, that [Richard Nixon](#) agreed to supply billions of dollars in economic assistance to rebuild the North. Still it is clear that the North Vietnamese never intended to live by the agreements, merely waiting for the propitious time to invade the South. Nixon accepted the agreement and felt he could intervene with [air power](#) and military supplies. Such intervention would maintain the balance of power in Vietnam.

Sources: Allan E. Goodman, *The Lost Peace: America's Search for a Negotiated Settlement of the Vietnam War*, 1978; Walter Scott Dillard, *Sixty Days to Peace*, 1982; Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*, 1983.

Charles Dobbs

## PARIS PEACE TALKS

Formal discussions between representatives of the United States and the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) began in Paris on May 13, 1968, and continued intermittently until January 25, 1973, when [Henry Kissinger](#) and [Le Duc Tho](#) signed the [Paris Peace Accords](#) ending the war. The talks developed out of a painful reassessment of American policy by President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) in the aftermath of the Communist [Tet Offensive](#) in 1968. After receiving [Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford](#)'s report in mid-March that the United States could not win the war, Johnson stunned a nationwide audience on March 31, 1968, announcing he would seek peace in Vietnam and not seek renomination or reelection in 1968. After several weeks of preparatory talks, the Paris peace talks commenced on May 13, 1968.

From the outset, the talks were fraught with difficulties. The chief American negotiator was [W. Averell Harriman](#) until January 1969 and then [Henry Cabot Lodge](#). Le Duc Tho headed the North Vietnamese delegation throughout the negotiations. [Nguyen Thi Binh](#) headed the National Liberation Front (NLF; see [Vietcong](#)) delegation. During Johnson's presidency, the United States approached the talks believing it held the advantage in Vietnam and thus continually insisted on mutual [withdrawal](#) of American and North Vietnamese forces, leaving the [Saigon](#) government in control. The North Vietnamese and NLF, of course, refused to accept an arrangement. The impasse in the two negotiating positions was symbolized by a month-long debate over the size and shape of the table the two sides would sit at once formal negotiations began. Later, during the Nixon administration, the United States operated from a belief that, whether it held the advantage or not, it had to remain firm to impress the [Soviet Union](#) and the [People's Republic of China](#) that the United States had not lost its will to resist Communist aggression. Meanwhile, the North Vietnamese remained unyielding in their negotiating position. They wanted all foreign military forces removed from [Indochina](#), and they would not admit to any division of Vietnam. Eventually this test of wills would prove uneven: the United States would weaken while the North Vietnamese leadership would accept tremendous losses in manpower and devastation of their homeland to stay the course.

By 1971 Henry Kissinger and [Richard Nixon](#) had decided to pursue secret negotiations to end the war. The Paris peace talks were too public, and since the United States was willing to make concessions to the North Vietnamese and NLF point of view, Kissinger and Nixon felt secret negotiations would better preserve American credibility. Those secret negotiations reached fruition in the fall of 1972 and the final arrangement was signed on January 25, 1973.

Sources: Allan E. Goodman, *The Lost Peace: America's Search for a Negotiated Settlement of the Vietnam War*, 1978; Walter Scott Dillard, *Sixty Days to Peace*, 1982.

Charles Dobbs

## PARROT'S BEAK

The Parrot's Beak illustrates the complexities, both political and logistic, surrounding the war in Vietnam. The Parrot's Beak is a region of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) jutting into [South Vietnam](#) west of [Saigon](#) and north of the [Mekong](#) River. [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese units established a presence in the region early in the Vietnam War, giving them a safe haven close to major population centers in South Vietnam. After becoming independent from [France](#), Cambodia had been ruled by Prince [Norodom Sihanouk](#). Early in his rule, Sihanouk had sought close ties with the United States to offset Cambodia's two centuries-old enemies: [Thailand](#) and Vietnam. As American interests became increasingly identified with South Vietnam, Sihanouk sought closer ties with the [People's Republic of China](#) as a means of countering Vietnamese influence. At the same time, he allowed the North Vietnamese to establish a presence along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border, with a major presence in the Parrot's Beak. Sihanouk believed that the [Chinese](#) would restrain them from violating Cambodian sovereignty. This strategy came apart as China sank into increased isolation during [Mao Zedong's](#) Cultural Revolution.

In late 1967, the North Vietnamese were building up forces inside Cambodia in preparation for 1968's [Tet Offensive](#). General [William Westmoreland](#) pressed President [Lyndon Johnson](#) to approve American ground assaults against the enemy in Cambodia. Sihanouk began once again to court American support. In an interview with the *Washington Post* in December 1967, Sihanouk stated he would grant the United States the right of "hot pursuit" against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong inside Cambodia, as long as no Cambodians were harmed. Sihanouk suggested that Johnson send Senator [Mike Mansfield](#), whom he labeled "a just and courageous man whom we consider a friend," to Cambodia to discuss the issue. Johnson, however, was reluctant to expand the war, and nothing came of this overture.

After [Richard Nixon's](#) inauguration, the question of [sanctuaries](#) in Cambodia became a major policy issue. General [Creighton Abrams](#), Westmoreland's successor, reported that the Communists had recently moved forty thousand fresh troops into the area, and were supplying them largely by sea through the port of Sihanoukville, on the Gulf of Siam. In February 1969, Nixon ordered the bombing of Cambodia in retaliation for increased Communist attacks from that area. The bombing, dubbed [Operation Menu](#), was seen as a short-term operation. In fact, it continued for fourteen months.

The operation was conducted in total secrecy, with only a few sympathetic members of Congress informed of the actions. Then an enterprising *New York Times* correspondent broke the story. Finally acknowledged in 1973, the air strikes fueled demands for impeachment of Nixon in Congress, and helped win the support needed to pass the [War Powers Resolution Act](#).

As a result of American air action in the Parrot's Beak, the North Vietnamese began preparing for Sihanouk to turn against them completely by arming and training guerrillas of the [Khmer Rouge](#), the Cambodian Communist movement. At the same time, Sihanouk was losing the support of the Cambodian military and middle class. In 1970, while Sihanouk was in France, he was removed by [Lon Nol](#), setting Cambodia on a long downward road from which it has yet to recover.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

Nolan J. Argyle

## PATHET LAO

Nominally led by Prince Souphanouvong, the Pathet Lao (Land of the Lao) evolved from [Ho Chi Minh's](#) Indochinese Communist party (see [Lao Dong party](#)). Educated in [France](#) as an engineer, Prince Souphanouvong affiliated with the [Vietminh](#) while working in [Vietnam](#). The deplorable conditions resulting from French colonial rule made Souphanouvong a radical nationalist in favor of armed revolt. With Vietminh assistance, he helped build nationalist political and military organizations which briefly governed [Laos](#) in 1945. During the First [Indochina](#) War, the Pathet Lao worked closely with the Vietminh. At [Dien Bien Phu](#) Pathet Lao forces occupied blocking positions to prevent French reinforcements. Although the Vietminh argued determinedly for Pathet Lao and [Khmer Issarak](#) (pro-Vietminh Cambodian nationalists) representation at the 1954 Geneva conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)), France and the United States absolutely refused. Pressured by China and the Soviets, the Vietminh yielded amid charges by Laotian and Cambodian nationalists that they had been sold out to gain Western acceptance of Vietminh control of at least northern Vietnam. Pathet Lao exclusion resulted in a Laotian settlement which reflected neither its political nor military strength.

Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, Prince [Souvanna Phouma](#) and his half brother Prince Souphanouvong tried to establish a unified government. Their efforts were sabotaged repeatedly by American determination to deny the Pathet Lao any participation in the national government. The unwillingness of premier Souvana Phouma to deploy the Royal Laotian Army against the Pathet Lao promoted U.S. funding of a rightist mercenary army, led by General Phoumi Nosavan, which attacked both the Pathet Lao and the Royal Laotian Army. To American dismay, the brothers joined forces, defeating Phoumi's mercenaries, and provoking the "Laotian Crisis" and the 1962 Geneva agreements on Laos.

Continued American intervention prevented Pathet Lao participation in the coalition government agreed upon at Geneva. The Pathet Lao retreated to two northern provinces and the eastern border where [North Vietnamese Army](#) forces controlled the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#). The United States initiated a "secret war" against both the Trail and the Pathet Lao through extensive bombing (over two million tons, slightly less tonnage than was dropped in all of World War II), establishing [Special Forces](#) camps, and raising a mercenary army among [Meo Hmong](#) tribesmen. These actions effectively partitioned Laos until a Pathet Lao-dominated coalition government was established in 1974. It was replaced by the Lao People's Democratic Republic in December 1975.

Sources: Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *End of A War*, 1969; Peter Poole, *Eight Presidents and Indochina*, 1978; Wilfred Bruchett, *The Second Indochina War*, 1970; [Bernard Fall](#), *The Two Viet Nams*, 1967; Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao: Partners in the Struggle for Laos*, 1970; Charles A. Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere: American Policy Toward Laos Since 1954*, 1973.

Samuel Freeman



## PATHFINDERS

Trained at the [Airborne](#) School at Ft. Benning, Georgia, Pathfinders (known as "black hats" because of their black baseball caps) were the U.S. Army's equivalent of combat air traffic controllers. Working in small teams, they were parachuted or helicopter-inserted into hostile terrain to direct air traffic. They were utilized anytime an operation employed substantial numbers of aircraft, including airborne or heliborne combat assaults, major search and destroy operations, establishing forward [artillery](#) fire bases, or extracting large enemy caches. Since ground travel was time-consuming and forfeited the element of surprise, and since roads were subject to mining and ambush, the United States relied heavily on [airmobile operations](#). The skies were often crowded with [gunships](#), helicopters, and helicopter-gunships; and without Pathfinders serious accidents were likely. Pathfinders' responsibilities included identifying drop zones for airborne operations, [landing zones](#) or LZs, for heliborne operations, supervising the clearing and securing of LZs for heliborne operations, determining [flight](#) approaches to these zones, establishing and operating navigational aids, coordinating various types of aircraft and the [sorties](#) of aircraft over their operational area, and occasionally fire direction for tactical aircraft and artillery, especially final preparation fires prior to heliborne combat assault operations. Pathfinders were used most extensively by airborne and airmobile forces including the [82nd](#), [101st](#), and [ARVN](#) (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) [Airborne Divisions](#), the [173rd Airborne Brigade](#), and the U.S. [Marines](#).

Sources: Bernard W. Rogers, *Cedar Falls, Junction City: A Turning Point*, 1974; John J. Tolson, *Airmobility, 1961-1971*, 1973; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Green Berets at War*, 1985.

Samuel Freeman

## PENTAGON PAPERS

On Sunday, June 13, 1971, the *New York Times* began publishing a series of articles based upon a several-thousand-page, secret Defense Department account of American involvement in [Indochina](#). Within a few days the Justice Department obtained a temporary restraining order barring further publication on the grounds of national security, and the so-called Pentagon Papers became another flash point between liberals and conservatives in the great Vietnam debate. In 1967, [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#) had ordered a history of U.S. involvement, and the project was completed in 1968. In 1971, the secret history became public knowledge. The previous year, one of the coauthors of the history, a [Rand](#) Corporation employee named [Daniel Ellsberg](#), had begun photocopying thousands of pages and giving them to [J. William Fulbright](#), chairman of the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#). The next year Ellsberg provided a complete set to the *New York Times*. Efforts by the [Nixon](#) administration could not dissuade the paper from publishing excerpts of the history.

By a vote of 6 to 3, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the temporary restraining order on June 30, 1971, and permitted publication, noting that the freedoms of speech and press were at stake. Publication of the Pentagon Papers became a cause celebre primarily because they revealed duplicity in the [Johnson](#) administration, government officials telling the public one thing and actively pursuing different military and political policies, in particular being involved in Indochina sooner and to a greater extent than the public had once assumed.

Sources: John P. Roche, "The Pentagon Papers," in *Sentenced to Life*, 1974; Peter Schrag, *Test of Loyalty*, 1974.

Charles Dobbs

## PENTAGON PAPERS TRIAL

The [Pentagon Papers](#) Trial was the popular name given to the 1972-73 trial of [Daniel Ellsberg](#) and [Anthony J. Russo](#). The defendants were charged with conspiracy, espionage, and conversion of government property (theft) for photocopying in 1969 substantial portions of a forty-seven-volume study commissioned by U.S. [Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara](#) in 1967 and entitled *History of U.S. Decision-making Process on Vietnam Policy*, otherwise known as the [Pentagon Papers](#). Criminal charges against Ellsberg came after the *New York Times* and other newspapers published excerpts of the Pentagon Papers in June and July 1971. Contrary to common belief, Ellsberg and Russo were not indicted for giving the Pentagon Papers to any newspapers. They were indicted for temporarily removing the Pentagon Papers from the premises of the [Rand Corporation](#) in Santa Barbara, California, and for photocopying the documents at an advertising agency owned by Russo's friend, Lynda Sinay. Ellsberg was first indicted on June 25, 1971. He surrendered to federal authorities in Boston on June 28.

A new indictment was returned in secret on December 29, 1971, charging Ellsberg and Russo with fifteen counts of conspiracy, espionage, and theft. Listed as unindicted coconspirators were Lynda Sinay and Vu Van Thai, a former South Vietnamese ambassador to the United States. The charges against Ellsberg carried maximum penalties of 115 years imprisonment and \$120,000 in fines. Those against Russo carried maximum penalties of 35 years imprisonment and \$40,000 in fines. During the trial, however, federal district court judge William Byrne directed an acquittal on one espionage count against Ellsberg and Russo. The trial began in Los Angeles on July 10, 1972, with selection of the jury. On July 24, Judge Byrne revealed that the United States had filed a wiretap transcript of a conversation by a member of the defense team, but ruled that the contents need not be disclosed because they did not bear on the case. The Supreme Court upheld the judge in November. Jury selection began in January 1973. Several key questions animated the four-month trial: (1) Can citizens be prosecuted for conspiracy to obstruct the executive branch's function of controlling the dissemination of classified documents when there is no statute authorizing the president to classify general national security information or making it a crime to duplicate or release such information to the public? (2) Can a citizen lawfully be prosecuted for duplicating or disseminating information that was improperly marked "Top Secret"? (3) Since the defendants had not given the Pentagon Papers to a foreign nation, could they be prosecuted for espionage? (4) Can citizens be prosecuted for espionage for leaking classified information if their only intent is to inform the public of what they believe is government misconduct? (5) Did photocopying the documents constitute theft? (6) What was stolen, physical documents or information? (7) Who owned the copied documents: the federal government, the Rand Corporation, or the three former Defense Department officials who possessed the documents and gave Ellsberg permission to study them? Key testimony in the trial centered on these questions as well as the judge's instruction that the government prove that the published information injured the United States or helped a foreign nation. On May 11, 1973, however, at the close of testimony, Judge Byrne dismissed all charges against Ellsberg and Russo and declared a mistrial because of "improper government conduct" which offends a "sense of justice." Among other things, a White House unit, with [Central Intelligence Agency](#) assistance, had burglarized the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist in 1971 in search of information damaging to Ellsberg; FBI wiretap transcripts of telephone conversations by Ellsberg in 1969 and 1970 had disappeared; and presidential assistant John Ehrlichman had offered Judge Byrne the directorship of the FBI during the trial. A poll of jurors after the mistrial indicated that most would have voted for acquittal.

Source: Peter Schrag, *Test of Loyalty*, 1974.

John Kincaid

## PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

On October 1, 1949, [Mao Zedong](#)'s victorious Communist forces proclaimed the People's Republic of China in Beijing, the traditional capital. The next twenty-five years would be as tumultuous as the preceding twenty-five years of civil war. After the [Chinese](#) intervention in the Korean War, the United States attempted to freeze the People's Republic out of the international community, erecting a series of regional security pacts and mutual defense treaties among surrounding nations. In return, the Chinese predicted the demise of capitalism and American global hegemony, declaring "wars of national liberation" throughout the world. Their own People's Liberation Army was a model. Although the People's Liberation Army eventually became huge and questionable in quality, it was unsurpassed in its ability, through tightly controlled discipline and mass appeal, to politicize large numbers of people. Mao Zedong predicted that mass uprisings and guerrilla wars in capitalist countries would bring about the revolution Karl Marx had predicted.

[Ho Chi Minh](#)'s People's Army of Vietnam was modeled on the People's Liberation Army, but after that the resemblance stopped. Although the United States feared the intervention of the Chinese in the Vietnam conflict, just as had happened in Korea, the People's Republic of China was not inclined to do so. For centuries an intense and often bloody rivalry had raged between the Vietnamese and the Chinese, and the North Vietnamese would have viewed any Chinese military intervention into [Indochina](#) as simply a pretext for renewing the domination of the peninsula they had once enjoyed. Also, in 1962 Mao had plunged the Chinese people into the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Mao gained control of the army and let loose a rampaging horde of young Red Guards to terrorize government officials, scientists, and teachers. The Cultural Revolution so destabilized Chinese society that concerted military effort in Indochina was not really possible. Finally, by 1971 the Chinese began to fear Soviet and even Vietnamese power more than American power, which seemed to be ebbing. With increasingly powerful Vietnamese forces to her south and Soviet forces aligned all along her long northern borders, Chinese leaders decided to seek a rapprochement with the United States. [Richard Nixon](#) and [Henry Kissinger](#) exploited that decision and normalized diplomatic relations in 1972. Although the Chinese provided some weapons and economic assistance to the North Vietnamese during the course of the war, they never posed the threat to the United States that they had twenty years earlier in Korea.

Sources: *China, Vietnam, and the United States*, 1966; King C. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954*, 1969; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

Charles Dobbs

## PEOPLE'S SELF-DEFENSE FORCE

The People's Self-Defense Force (PSDF) was an unpaid, part-time militia in the [Republic of Vietnam](#) designed to prevent [Vietcong infiltration](#) and village dominance. Although the Republic of Vietnam claimed there were more than four million members of the PSDF in 1972, those numbers were highly inflated because they included all men between the ages of 16 and 17 and 39 and 50. Commitment to the PSDF was often weak and the Vietcong were known for infiltrating the group.

Sources: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; Ngo Quang Truong, *Territorial Forces*, 1981.

## PHAM HUNG

Pham Hung was born in [Hanoi](#) in 1911. He joined the Communist party just after he turned twenty and spent the next forty years fighting against the succession of French, Japanese, and American forces occupying Vietnam. By 1963 Hung was a member of the central committee of the [Lao Dong party](#). When the final assault on [South Vietnam](#) began in 1975, Hung was the senior North Vietnamese politburo member in the south. General [Van Tien Dung](#) was military commander of the final assault, and Hung was the chief political commissar. He became part of the Provisional Revolutionary Government in 1975 and of the ruling politburo of the new [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#).

Source: *Who's Who in the Socialist Countries*, 1978.

## PHAM NGOC THAO

Pham Ngoc Thao was born in 1922 to [Roman Catholic](#) parents. While still a student Thao began absorbing anti-French attitudes, and after World War II he joined the [Vietcong](#). When the [Geneva Accords](#) were concluded in 1954, Thao decided to stay in [South Vietnam](#) and he became a captain in the army. Loyal to General [Nguyen Khanh](#) and opposed to [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), Thao enjoyed a brief popularity in 1964 when Khanh was in control of the military junta in [Saigon](#), but after Khanh's resignation later in the year, Thao was exiled to the United States as press attache to ambassador [Tran Thien Khiem](#). When Thao tried to return to South Vietnam in 1965 to lead a coup against the government, he disappeared under mysterious circumstances and was never seen again. Most political observers in Saigon assumed that General [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) had seen to his death.

Sources: *Newsweek*, 65 (March 1, 1965), 21-22; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972.

## PHAM VAN DONG

Pham Van Dong was born on March 1, 1906, in Quang Nam Province. At the time Quang Nam Province was part of the French protectorate of [Annam](#). Dong's family had an educated, mandarin background, and he was educated at the French lycee academy at [Hue](#), where two of his classmates were [Vo Nguyen Giap](#) and [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). As a student Dong became active in nationalist groups and eventually defined himself as a revolutionary bent on the expulsion of the French. In 1930 French authorities arrested him for sedition, and he spent the next eight years in prison. He finally fled to [China](#) where he met [Ho Chi Minh](#) and became one of the founding fathers of the [Lao Dong party](#). For the next four decades, along with Ho Chi Minh and [Vo Nguyen Giap](#), Dong was among the triumvirate which dominated North Vietnamese politics.

Pham Van Dong was active in the [Vietminh](#) during their struggle against the Japanese during World War II and the French between 1946 and 1954, and he served as the leader of the Vietnamese delegation to the Geneva Conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)) in 1954. Dong was Ho Chi Minh's prime minister from 1950 to Ho's death in September 1969, and after his death Dong emerged as the most public figure in [North Vietnam](#). Between 1969 and 1975 Dong released several diplomatic initiatives, always insisting on an American [withdrawal](#), and frequently gave interviews to the Western press. Pham Van Dong played a key role in the [Paris Peace Accords of 1973](#) in which the United States agreed to withdraw from [South Vietnam](#) with a concurrent withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces. After the conquest of South Vietnam in 1975, Pham Van Dong was appointed prime minister of the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#). He remained at that post until December 1986, when a series of economic setbacks in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam forced his resignation.

Sources: *Who's Who in the Socialist Countries*, 1978; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967; *Washington Post*, December 18, 1986.



## PHAN BOI CHAU

Originally named Phan Van San, Phan Boi Chau was born in 1867 in the central province of Nghe An, Vietnam. After passing the mandarin examinations in 1900, Phan Boi Chau began organizing resistance movements against the French. At first he wanted the restoration of a royal Vietnamese government, and he threw his support behind Prince [Cuong De](#), a direct descendant of [Gia Long](#) of the [Nguyen](#) dynasty. After the Japanese victory over Russia in 1904, Phan Boi Chau felt the support of [Japan](#) was necessary to Vietnam, so both he and Cuong De went to live in Japan and study. Phan Boi Chau met with Japanese leaders who urged him to send young men to Japan for military and political training, and in 1907 he organized the "Exodus to the East," a program which sent more than two hundred young Vietnamese to study in Japan.

By then, however, Phan Boi Chau was growing more sympathetic with [Chinese](#) philosophers committed to democratic reform, and his royalist schemes to restore Cuong De to the Vietnamese throne waned. Instead of a return to the inflexibility of the mandarin bureaucracy, Vietnamese independence would come only through mass participation. He attempted a rebellion against the French which failed late in 1907, and led to the execution of thirteen of Phan Boi Chau's followers. He had remained in Japan during the revolt, but fled to Siam after the French began demanding his extradition. Phan and his resistance group, Duy Tan Hoi (founded in 1904), continued to play an important role in Vietnamese nationalism. He was imprisoned between 1912 and 1917 for establishing a new nationalist group, the Viet Nam Quang Phuc Hoi, and the unsuccessful assassination attempt on Albert Sarraut. Phan Boi Chau was a major figure in Vietnamese rebellion against the French because his political organizations rallied mass insurgency and his East Asia United League at least gave the Vietnamese a visible profile among nationalists in Japan, [China](#), [Korea](#), India, and the [Philippines](#).

French agents constantly tracked Phan after the 1907 revolt, and he maintained his freedom, albeit a furtive one, until 1925 when they caught up with him in Shanghai. Charged with sedition, Phan Boi Chau was extradited to [Hanoi](#), tried and convicted of sedition, and placed under house arrest in [Hue](#). He died fifteen years later in 1940.

Sources: *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary*, 1983; David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 1971; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 1, *From Colonialism to the Vietminh*, 1967.

## PHAN CHAU TRINH

Born in central Vietnam in 1872, Phan Chau Trinh came from a wealthy, scholarly, landowning family. His father was loyal to Emperor Ham Nghi, fought in the Scholar's Revolt, but was killed in 1885 by other dissidents who considered him a traitor. Phan Chau Trinh studied the [Chinese](#) classics under the tutorship of his brother, and by 1901 he had earned the most prestigious mandarin degree. He met [Phan Boi Chau](#) in 1903 and in 1905 resigned his position in the mandarin bureaucracy. He quickly split company with Phan Boi Chau because he had no faith in Japanese benevolence, and instead of viewing the French as the major enemy of Vietnamese independence, he blamed the mandarin bureaucracy and imperial family. Phan Chau Trinh preferred the French to the [Nguyen](#) clan. Allying himself with French anticolonialists, Phan Chau Trinh called for the destruction of the mandarin bureaucracy and its replacement with a modern educational and legal system. He also advocated industrialization of Vietnam. Phan Chau Trinh eschewed the radical violence of Phan Boi Chau, but his trust in the power of French liberals proved naive. [France](#) arrested him for revolutionary activity in 1908 and kept him in prison until 1911, when he went to live in France. For the next ten years Phan Chau Trinh met with French liberals and journalists, and became a symbol of Vietnamese nationalism, but he lacked broad peasant support. Phan Chau Trinh died in 1926.

Sources: Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, 1958; *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary*, 1983.

## PHAN DINH PHUNG

Born in 1847, Phan Dinh Phung became one of the most prominent of the nineteenth-century Vietnamese nationalists. He rose to power at the imperial court of Tu Duc. Although he was banished from the imperial court because of his eventual opposition to the accession of Ham Nghi to the imperial throne, Phan Dinh Phung organized his own guerrilla army, retreated into the mountains of central Vietnam, and for nearly a decade regularly attacked the French throughout a region extending from Thanh Hoa Province in the north to Quang Binh in the south. Phan Dinh Phung died of dysentery in 1896, but his life and career became a rallying point and patriotic memory for three generations of Vietnamese nationalists.

Sources: *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary*, 1983; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 1, *From Colonialism to the Vietminh*, 1967.

## PHAN HUY QUAT

From February 16 to June 12, 1965, Phan Huy Quat was prime minister of [South Vietnam](#). An able and reform-minded civilian politician, Quat served as a transitional leader between General [Nguyen Khanh](#) and Air Marshal [Nguyen Cao Ky](#). Born in 1901 in northern Vietnam, Quat received a medical degree in [Hanoi](#) in 1937 and operated a maternity clinic there until 1945. He became one of the founders of the [Dai Viet](#) Quoc Dan Dang, or [Nationalist party of Greater Vietnam](#). In the early 1950s, he held several cabinet posts including minister of defense. [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) viewed him as a serious rival and refused to give him a cabinet post after 1954. In 1955 the United States came very close to endorsing Quat as a replacement for Diem. Quat was one of the signers of the "Caravelle" petition urging reform in April 1960 and was arrested but later released by Diem's government in November 1960.

After Diem's death in 1963, Quat was finally included in South Vietnam's cabinet. Early in 1965 the Armed Forces Council forced [Nguyen Khanh](#) out of power, and the military [group](#) supported the selection of Quat as prime minister. Quat attempted to structure a representative cabinet and to cultivate the goodwill of the military, but he was unable to overcome the factional intrigues among [Buddhists](#), Catholics, and other groups in [Saigon](#). When Quat finally came to an impasse with elderly Chief of State [Phan Khac Suu](#), the military forced Quat to resign, and [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) became prime minister. Quat was a well-known opponent of communism. After Hanoi's victory in 1975, attempts to get him out of Vietnam proved unsuccessful, and he was killed.

Source: Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution*, 1965.

David L. Anderson

## PHAN KHAC SUU

Phan Khac Suu was born in [My Tho](#) in the [Mekong Delta](#) in 1905. The son of a prosperous farmer, Suu studied engineering in Paris during the 1920s. He returned to [Saigon](#) in 1930 and took an engineering job with the French government, but at night he was actively engaged in anti-French nationalist activities. The French imprisoned him at [Poulo Condore](#) between 1940 and 1945. Suu was a devout member of the [Cao Dai](#) religion who served briefly in 1954 as minister of agriculture under [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). After cooperating in the abortive coup against Diem in 1960, Suu spent three more years in prison. He was released after Diem's assassination and became chief of state of [South Vietnam](#) in 1964-65 and president of the Constituent Assembly in 1966-67. During the last years before his death in 1970, Suu was an opponent of Generals [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) and [Nguyen Van Thieu](#).

Source: *New York Times*, May 25, 1970.

## PHAN QUANG DAN

Phan Quang Dan was born on November 6, 1918, in Nghe An. He received an M.D. degree from the University of [Hanoi](#) in 1945 and later studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and at Harvard University. An intense anti-Communist, Phan Quang Dan was a political adviser to [Bao Dai](#) in the late 1940s. He relocated to [South Vietnam](#) after 1954 and taught at the Medical School of [Saigon](#). He practiced medicine in a working-class neighborhood in Saigon and won election to the Constituent Assembly in 1955. An outspoken opponent of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), he was not allowed to assume his seat in the Assembly and instead spent time undergoing torture as a political prisoner. Later in the 1960s Phan Quang Dan spoke out against the corruption of the Thieu-Ky government even while opposing the Communists.

Sources: *Asia Who's Who*, 1960; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## PHILIPPINES

The Philippines played a dual role in the Vietnam War. The location of the giant military complexes of Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base within the Philippines virtually assured that this country would serve as the primary non-U.S. staging area for the war. Virtually all naval aircraft and ordnance passed through Subic. It served as the main repair station for the [Seventh Fleet](#), playing host to 1,600 military personnel and 9,000 sailors at any one time. Similarly, Clark Air Base saw such an increase in traffic that a reserve air base on Mactan Island was made operational in order to handle some of the volume. Clark became the hub for all U.S. military air traffic in the western Pacific and the operational hope of the 13th Air Force.

The second role for the Philippines was support for the war effort. Manila had always been a strong champion of [South Vietnam](#), which the Philippines considered the key to the future political direction of Southeast Asia. In June 1964 Defense Minister [Tran Thien Khiem](#) of South Vietnam visited the Philippines in return for which Manila sent thirty-four Filipino doctors to [Saigon](#). Later in 1964 the Philippines reiterated its support for the defense of Southeast Asia in general and Vietnam in particular under the [SEATO](#) agreements. In September 1965, Manila served as the center for the American-sponsored Asian People's Anti-Communist League, which condemned North Vietnamese aggression in South Vietnam. In October 1966, the Philippines hosted a summit of all the nations that had troops in South Vietnam to assess the prospects for peace there. [North Vietnam](#), of course, refused to attend.

Increasing American military involvement in South Vietnam led to the "Many Flags Program" of 1965, in which the United States asked for troop commitments from its allies. [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), and [South Korea](#) quickly responded. President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) especially wanted Filipino participation. The new president of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, initially refused; but after visits from Vice President [Hubert Humphrey](#), Senator [Mike Mansfield](#), [Secretary of State Dean Rusk](#), and Ambassador [W. Averell Harriman](#), he relented. On February 19, 1966, Marcos announced that a combat engineering [battalion](#) of 2,000 men would be sent. They served until October 4, 1969, when increasing Filipino opposition to the Vietnam War forced their [withdrawal](#). Marcos's support for the war, however, was not motivated simply by feelings of national security. He negotiated aggressively for \$39 million in additional American aid as well as sizable contributions of equipment to the Philippine military. Marcos also made sure that Filipino troops had full access to U.S. military PXs, which they exploited, and that the United States employ Filipino civilians in Vietnam.

The Philippines contributed to the Vietnam War in another, less direct way. During the 1950s, the United States had supported the highly successful Filipino fight against the Communist-led Hukbalahap (Huk) insurrection. This included engineering the ascendancy of the strongly pro-U.S. Ramon Magsaysay to the Philippine presidency. As Paul Nitze noted in 1965, the Philippine experience demonstrated conclusively that guerrillas could be suppressed. In a very real sense, the Philippines became a model for the American role in South Vietnam.

After the end of the war and the triumph of North Vietnam in 1975, the Philippines became even more important to U.S. interests. The [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#) permitted a large Soviet naval presence in [Cam Ranh Bay](#) and a significant Soviet air presence at [Da Nang](#). Subic Bay and Clark military facilities are now considered a counterweight of inestimable importance.

Sources: William J. Pomeroy, *An American Made Tragedy: Neo-Colonialism and Dictatorship in the Philippines*, 1974; James Gregor, *Crisis in the Philippines: A Threat to U.S. Interests*, 1984; Man Mohini Kaul, *The Philippines and South East Asia*, 1978.

## PHOENIX PROGRAM

An effort by the government of (South) Vietnam (GVN; see [Republic of Vietnam](#)) and the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA) to gather intelligence on the [Vietcong](#) infrastructure (VCI) and to coordinate a [counterinsurgency](#) effort against that VCI, Phoenix was actually an attempt to use the same techniques and tactics that had proven effective for the Vietcong. The three basic objectives of Phoenix were to identify Vietcong (VC), gain the support and cooperation of local Vietnamese in combatting the VC, and eventually reduce the military and political activities of the enemy. Phoenix was characterized primarily by its bureaucratic nature. To be successful, it had to decrease the endemic political contests that so characterized South Vietnam. A unified and coordinated effort was necessary before the GVN could gain legitimacy and loyalty, which were essential factors in diminishing the enemy's political and military effectiveness.

Phoenix was aimed at the VC "shadow government" (policymakers and policy implementers). Its first task was to identify individual members of the VCI. It then sought to "neutralize" those individuals, through arrest, conversion, or death. While basically a GVN program, Phoenix relied heavily on American support. The CIA provided essential advice and personnel for the intelligence-gathering aspects of the program. The [Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support](#) (CORDS) assisted in the effort to coordinate Phoenix activities both among the numerous and varied GVN governmental units and with the village and hamlet officials.

The Phoenix Program faced major obstacles. Coordination was a continuing difficulty, corruption was prevalent, and the quota system adopted for identifying members of the VCI meant that any Vietnamese was at risk. Begun in 1968 under the direction of [Robert Komer](#) and [William Colby](#), Phoenix lasted until 1972 and was only marginally successful. Although these years coincided with a precipitous decline in VC activity and effectiveness, Phoenix was not a major factor in that decline. Rather, the debilitation of the VC was due to normal losses of a military nature, especially the [Tet Offensive](#), which was a disaster for the Vietcong, who lost approximately 80 percent of their military forces in a six-week period of massive conventional attacks.



## PHU BAI

Located 45 miles north of [Da Nang](#) near [Hue](#), Phu Bai was an important American military installation between 1965 and 1972. An air and [marine](#) base was established at Phu Bai in the spring of 1965. In April the [9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade](#), along with the 3rd Battalion of the [Fourth Marines](#), was stationed at Phu Bai, along with ten UH-34 helicopters. Eventually Phu Bai became home to Marine Air Group 39, with its seventy-five helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. Phu Bai fell to the [Vietcong](#) after the American [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam in 1972.

Sources: Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience: America Takes Over, 1965-1967*, 1985; Carroll H. Dunn, *Base Development in South Vietnam 1965-1970*, 1972.

## PHUOC BINH

Phuoc Binh (also known as "Song Be" after the Be River), capital of Phuoc Long Province, was located in the northern tip of [II Corps](#), at the foot of the [Central Highlands](#) in mountainous terrain. Almost due west of Snoul, [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), a major [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) supply base, Phuoc Binh was a frequent target for enemy attack. Surrounded by mountains which were never cleared of Vietcong-NVA forces, the city and military compounds were rocketed so frequently that it was appropriately called "rocket alley."

In May 1965 Phuoc Binh was defended by an [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) Ranger Battalion and an American [Special Forces](#) detachment. A Vietcong attack put the Rangers to rout. The Special Forces held their compound only after hand-to-hand combat. In October 1967, as a prelude to the 1968 [Tet Offensive](#), Vietcong-NVA forces mounted a series of attacks in rural areas including Phuoc Binh to draw U.S. forces away from population centers. The Phuoc Binh attack was successfully repelled, but the city was attacked again during the Tet Offensive. The city was virtually destroyed in the fighting.

Engineers, supported by U.S. infantry, opened the road from [Long Binh](#) to Phuoc Binh early in 1969 for the first time in three years. Phuoc Binh's remoteness, coupled with difficult terrain and proximity to the [Iron Triangle](#), made continuous Vietcong-NVA interdiction of the main highway easy, necessitating resupply by air. Phuoc Binh was the first provincial capital to fall during the 1975 Final Offensive (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)). The province was lightly defended, making it an ideal diversion for the main offensive in II Corps. Phuoc Binh's fall reportedly was facilitated by ARVN corruption so great that infantry units had to pay [artillery](#) units for fire support.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army. U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-Year War*, 1984.

Samuel Freeman

## PIASTER

Before World War II, the currency used throughout French [Indochina](#) was the piaster, a money directly tied to the franc. Issued by the Bank of Indochina, the piaster was the first currency used nationwide in Vietnam. A severe inflation hit the piaster during the Japanese occupation of World War II because the Vichy [France](#) government issued large volumes of unsecured piasters. The French revalued the piaster to 17 francs in 1946, an official rate of 21 piasters to the U.S. dollar, but it actually sold on the free market for 65 piasters to the dollar. A new piaster was issued in 1949 after the unification of Vietnam, [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), but it was devalued in 1952. In 1954 the [Republic of Vietnam](#) withdrew from the franc zone, and in 1955 the South Vietnamese government began issuing a new, independent piaster, whose value was supported by the United States.

Source: Harvey H. Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967.

## PIGNON, LEON

Leon Pignon was born on April 19, 1908, and educated at the Ecole Coloniale. During the 1930s he worked for the Ministry for the Colonies and spent time in [Tonkin](#). Strongly committed to the idea of the French Empire, Pignon always saw independence for [Vietnam](#) as the height of folly. Pignon spent time in a German prison during World War II, and after the war was federal commissioner for foreign affairs in 1946-47 and commissioner of the republic in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) in 1947-48. He succeeded [Georges d'Argenlieu](#) and Emile Bollaert as high commissioner for [Indochina](#) in 1948-50. Pignon hated the [Vietminh](#) and would not hear of negotiating with them. Between 1950 and 1954 he served as a delegate to the United Nations Trusteeship Council, and between 1954 and 1959 as director of political affairs for the Ministry of French Overseas Territories. Leon Pignon died on April 4, 1976.

Sources: *International Who's Who 1976-77, 1977*; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War*, 1967.

## **PLAIN OF REEDS**

The Plain of Reeds was a flat, brush-covered region covering nearly 2,500 square miles in Kien Phong and Kien Tuong provinces and parts of Dinh Tuong, Long An, and Hau Nghia provinces. The [Vietcong](#) used the Plain of Reeds as a base area for military operations against American and South Vietnamese forces.

Source: Danny Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976.

## PLATOON

Commanded by a lieutenant, a [platoon](#) is an organizational unit composed of two or more [squads](#). A sergeant is usually second in command.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## PLATOON

*Platoon* is a gritty, grunt's-eye view of the Vietnam War. Directed by Oliver Stone, a Vietnam veteran, the film focuses on the war in 1967 as two sergeants, one brutal and the other compassionate, struggle for influence and as a new recruit witnesses combat and [atrocities](#) committed by and against his platoon. Unlike the surrealistic [Apocalypse Now](#), the jingoism of [Rambo](#), and the overt antiwar attitudes of [Coming Home](#), *Platoon* was widely recognized by critics during its late 1986 release as the best and most realistic of the Vietnam War films.

Source: "Vietnam Images," *USA Today*, January 2, 1987.

## PLEIKU

Located in the [Central Highlands](#) and bordered by [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), Pleiku City is the capital of Pleiku Province and was [II Corps](#) Tactical Zone headquarters. Pleiku City also was regional market for mountain tribes, and its strategic location made it the center of a large U.S.-ARVN (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) military complex. The province endured heavy fighting throughout the war. On February 7, 1965, National Liberation Front (NLF; see [Vietcong](#)) forces attacked Camp Holloway and Pleiku's airfield, killing 9 and wounding 128 Americans. Coupled with NLF attacks on American personnel at [Qui Nhon](#), this served as [Lyndon Johnson's](#) justification for regularizing the air war and committing U.S. combat units to [South Vietnam](#). Why the NLF attacked Pleiku and why the United States responded as it did are debatable. Some say the attack was the logical consequence of guerrilla war. Others see an attempt by [North Vietnam](#) to gain leverage with the Soviets, and as a "coup" for [China](#). Some, citing Johnson's "I've had enough of this," see the American response resulting from having been pushed too far. Others, citing [McGeorge Bundy's](#) "Pleikus are like streetcars" (one comes along every few minutes), contend the Americanization of the war had already been decided, the attack was only a pretext.

The first major battle between U.S. and [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) forces occurred in Pleiku Province's Ia Drang Valley in November 1965. Elements of the [1st Cavalry Division](#) and the NVA's 32nd, 33rd, and 66th regiments were locked in heavy combat for three days before NVA forces withdrew. Pleiku City was rocketed and mortared in the summer of 1967 as the NLF and NVA prepared for the 1968 [Tet Offensive](#). It also was the scene of heavy fighting during Tet. In the Final Offensive (see [Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)), the NVA made a diversionary attack against Pleiku and Kontum while three [divisions](#) prepared for the main assault against [Ban Me Thuot](#). After Ban Me Thuot fell, [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) ordered Pleiku's abandonment. The rout had begun.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Jean Lacouture, *Vietnam Between Two Truces*, 1966; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman



## POL POT

Born in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) as Saloth Sar in 1928, Pol Pot left his peasant background and as a teenager during the 1940s joined the forces of [Ho Chi Minh](#) in fighting both the Japanese and the French. He became secretary of the Cambodian communist party in 1963, and during that same year he retreated into the Cambodian jungles and formed the [Khmer Rouge](#) guerrillas. They opposed the government of [Norodom Sihanouk](#), and the American invasion of Cambodia in 1970 (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) greatly swelled their numbers, giving them the strength to depose the government of [Lon Nol](#) in 1975. At that point Pol Pot initiated a genocidal campaign matched only by Adolf Hitler's World War II assault on Jews and East Europeans. Dreaming of a preindustrial, agricultural utopia, Pol Pot decided to eliminate cities, intellectuals, professionals, and the Cambodian middle class. He completely evacuated the capital city of Phnom Penh and declared "Year Zero." During the next three years the Khmer Rouge obliterated libraries, temples, cities, schools, and colleges, and turned the entire country into a large concentration camp. An estimated two million people perished in his crusade for utopia. In 1978, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and deposed Pol Pot, creating the People's Republic of Kampuchea in its place. Pol Pot retreated into the jungles with what was left of the Khmer Rouge and continued guerrilla warfare against the new government.

Sources: Michael Vickery, *Cambodia, 1975-1982*, 1984; John Barron and Paul Anthony, *Murder of a Gentle Land*, 1977; Ben Kiernan, "How Pol Pot Came to Power," Ph.D. diss., 1986; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979, and *The Quality of Mercy: Cambodia, Holocaust, and the Modern Conscience*, 1984.

## POPULAR FORCES

The Popular Forces were paramilitary units, along with the [Regional Forces](#), and helped constitute the [Territorial Forces](#) of [South Vietnam](#). Unlike the Regional Forces, they were nonuniformed, static units charged with village and hamlet defense. They were first activated in 1955 and were under the operational control of the province chief. In 1964 they became part of the South Vietnamese Army, commanded by the [Joint General Staff](#). After 1969, when U.S. military units began their gradual [withdrawal](#), the Popular Forces were often removed from their home villages and attached to main [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) units for combat with the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese. Along with the Regional Forces, the Popular Forces suffered more than eighty thousand killed between 1965 and 1973.

Source: Ngo Quang Truong, *Territorial Forces*, 1981.

## PORTER, WILLIAM JAMES

Born in England in 1914, Porter obtained a clerk's position in the American diplomatic mission in Baghdad, and for the next ten years served in Beirut, Lebanon, Baghdad, Damascus, and Jerusalem. A specialist in the Middle East, Porter became ambassador to Algeria in 1962, and later was assigned in 1965 as deputy ambassador to [South Vietnam](#). This unusual position was created so that Porter, an experienced diplomat, could work with the ambassadors assigned to that post.

Porter's assignment was to bring order to the so-called pacification program (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) recently established in South Vietnam. The object was to attract the loyalty of the Vietnamese people through the efforts of trained workers in health, education, and agriculture strategically located throughout the country. The program was not working efficiently because there were different agencies involved, including the [Central Intelligence Agency](#), the United States Information Agency, and the Agency for International Development, which were duplicating one another's efforts. Porter's attempt to coordinate the program was short-lived because, after eighteen months, it was transferred from the embassy to the [Military Assistance Command](#), and he was reassigned as ambassador to [South Korea](#).

Porter's most significant role in the Vietnam War was as provider of information and advice to President [Lyndon Johnson](#) and as negotiator in the [Paris peace talks](#). Porter, drawing upon his earlier experience with insurgency in Morocco and Algeria, pointed out that in the uprisings in those two countries, there had been considerable popular support. The [Vietcong](#), he noted, had not mobilized such support. His reports buttressed Johnson's belief that a policy of escalation was in order because the struggle against the Vietcong could be won.

In 1970, the aggressive diplomatic style that Porter had developed stood him in good stead, for he was called on to explain to a Senate subcommittee the expenditure, kept secret, of one billion dollars on the 50,000 troops sent to South Vietnam since 1965. Again, in the following year, he drew upon his skill at negotiation when asked to explain to the South Vietnamese the [withdrawal](#) of 20,000 of the 50,000 American troops located in Vietnam.

In 1971, he was named as a delegate to the Paris peace talks with [North Vietnam](#) then in progress. His task was to work out detailed arrangements to buttress the broad agreements between [Henry Kissinger](#) and [Le Duc Tho](#), the North Vietnamese negotiator. Porter's most significant contribution to the Paris talks was his unwillingness to allow his opponents to use them as a stage for propaganda statements. His unconventional approach helped to break the deadlock that had stalled progress in these negotiations. According to a *Time* report, Porter "changed the once patient and restrained U.S. style in Paris" by taking the verbal offensive and talking tough. In 1973, President [Richard Nixon](#) named him as under [secretary of state](#) for political affairs and in 1974, ambassador to [Canada](#). His last post, 1975 to 1977, was as ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

Sources: *Current Biography Yearbook*, 1974; "People," *Time*, January 17, 1972, 26-27; *International Who's Who*, 1983-1984, 47th ed., 1983.

Joanna D. Cowden

## POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Between 1954 and 1975, more than 2,800,000 Americans served in Vietnam, and nearly one million of them saw combat. Because of its unique nature, a guerrilla conflict (see Vietcong), a [war of attrition](#), intense opposition at home, and the youthful age of the average soldier (nineteen), the Vietnam War exacted a high toll from its participants. Most of the American combatants experienced to one degree or another a serious psychological disorder characterized by emotional numbness, severe flashbacks and recurring nightmares, periodic panic and depression, and sometimes violent behavior. In earlier wars the disorder had other names, "shell shock" in World War I, "battle fatigue" in World War II, "operational exhaustion" in the Korean War, but the Vietnam variety was more severe because the war was such a traumatic event in American society. Risking their lives, sometimes killing and maiming civilians, the Vietnam veterans then came home to a hostile country convinced their sacrifice had been a waste at best and murder at worst. In 1980, with the third edition of its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the American Psychiatric Association named the Vietnam veteran disease PTSD, or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In December 1979 the Veterans Administration opened the first Vet Center staffed with social workers, psychologists, and paraprofessionals. By January 1985 there were 135 Vet Centers across the country and more than 200,000 veterans had sought treatment there.

Source: John Langone, "The War That Has No Ending," *Discover* 6 (June 1985), 44-54.

## POULO CONDORE

Poulo Condore is an island approximately 75 miles off the southeast of the Ca Mau Peninsula in the South China Sea. In February 1861 a French invasion force reached Vietnam, and by July they had seized [Saigon](#). After one year they were firmly in control of the three surrounding provinces: Dinh Tuong, Gia Dinh, and [Bien Hoa](#). In June 1862 Emperor Tu Duc agreed to a peace treaty. He had little choice, since a dynastic rebellion against him had erupted in [Tonkin](#). As part of the treaty, [France](#) gained control of Poulo Condore, \$4 million, religious freedom, free access to port facilities at Tourane ([Da Nang](#)), and the right to veto any foreign alliances Vietnam tried to establish. The French constructed an infamous prison on Poulo Condore to incarcerate politically rebellious nationalists. Such prominent anti-imperialists as Phan Chu Trinh, [Pham Van Dong](#), and [Le Duc Tho](#) all spent years in the underground cells, suffering from heat, hunger, and disease. After the expulsion of the French, the South Vietnamese government used the prison to hold [Vietcong](#) guerrillas, Communist sympathizers, and North Vietnamese [prisoners of war](#). By that time Poulo Condore was known by its Vietnamese name, Con Son Island. It became famous in 1970 when revelations of the ["tiger cages"](#) received international press coverage. The "tiger cages" were the prison cells at the Con Son Correctional Center.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; *New York Times*, July 8, 1970.

## PRISONERS OF WAR

The question of American prisoners of war (POWs) in Southeast Asia was one of the most difficult and controversial of the war. Return of the POWs was a central demand in the American negotiating position with the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) between 1965 and 1972, and [North Vietnam](#) exploited that bargaining chip for all it was worth. Eventually, the United States compromised on its opposition to a coalition government in South Vietnam and its insistence on a [withdrawal](#) of North Vietnamese troops, but continued to insist on the return of all American POWs. That was arranged in the 1972 [Paris Peace Accords](#), and between February and April 1973, North Vietnam returned 566 American military POWs and 25 civilian POWs (see [Operation Homecoming](#)). Although the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) said it agreed with the 1949 Geneva Convention on treatment of prisoners of war, the American POWs were subject to torture, malnutrition, inadequate medical treatment, political manipulation, and generally inhumane treatment.

Despite the return of the POWs, there were still another 2,483 Americans still unaccounted for during the Southeast Asian conflict. They were either captured or killed, or were [deserters](#) somewhere in North Vietnam, [South Vietnam](#), [Laos](#), or [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). By mid, 1986, North Vietnam had returned the remains of 104 Americans who allegedly died during captivity or in aircraft crashes and firefights. The problem of these Americans listed as missing in action (MIA) continues to remain a controversial issue for two reasons. (1) There are continuing rumors of Americans still held captive in Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia, and the American public, as well as the families of those listed as missing in action, maintains pressure for a resolution of the issue. Groups such as the National League of Families of American POWs and MIAs in Southeast Asia keep political pressure on government officials to demand cooperation from the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#). (2) The large discrepancy between the number missing and the number of prisoners actually returned leaves a huge question about just how many American POWs died during confinement in North Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, or Vietcong prisons, how many died of starvation, torture, murder, and neglect.

Sources: Reader's Digest, *POW: A Definitive History of the American Prisoner of War Experience in Vietnam, 1964-1973*, 1976; Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; Department of Defense, *POW-MIA Fact Book*, 1985.

## PROJECT DELTA

In May 1964 the [Studies and Observation Groups](#) launched Project Leaping Lena, a program to train [Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) and elite Vietnamese troops in [long-range reconnaissance patrol](#) (LRRP) tactics. One year later the LRRP training program was reassigned to the [Fifth Special Forces Group](#), which redesignated it Project Delta. Composed of 450 troops divided into twelve reconnaissance teams, twelve Roadrunner teams (indigenous South Vietnamese who dressed as [Vietcong](#) or North Vietnamese and infiltrated their units), a security [company](#) composed of ethnic [Nung](#) troops, and the 91st ARVN Ranger Battalion (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)). They gathered intelligence on North Vietnamese and Vietcong units, evaluated bomb and [artillery](#) damage, and conducted raids. Project Delta was also known as Detachment [B-52](#). After September 1966, Project Delta also included training regular U.S. infantry in LRRP tactics.

Source: Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971*, 1973.

## PROJECT OMEGA

Encouraged by the success of [Project Delta](#) in 1965, General [William Westmoreland](#) had the [Fifth Special Forces Group](#) launch Project Omega in August 1966. Known as Detachment B-50, Project Omega consisted of approximately 900 [Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) troops and 125 U.S. personnel. It was headquartered at [Ban Me Thuot](#) in [II Corps](#). Project Omega gathered intelligence on enemy positions, called in air strikes and evaluated bombing damage, and conducted special raids against the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#). Project Omega evolved into the Mobile Guerrilla Force concept in 1967 and was absorbed into the Studies and Observation Group's program in November 1967.

Source: Francis J. Kelly. *U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971*, 1973.



## PROJECT PRACTICE NINE

Project Practice Nine was the codename for the Department of Defense's plan to install an electronic [infiltration](#) barrier across [Vietnam](#), just south of the [Demilitarized Zone](#) (DMZ), from the South China Sea to [Laos](#). Popularly known as the "Electric Fence" or "McNamara's Wall," the barrier was to consist of a strip of bulldozed jungle laced with mines, electronic sensors, [booby traps](#), and obstacles. The Defense Department was convinced that construction of the barrier would eliminate the need for larger [troop](#) reinforcements in [I Corps](#), so [William Westmoreland](#) and the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) endorsed the concept. The [Marine Corps](#) was totally opposed. They thought it would be expensive and probably unworkable, that the technology would not really stop infiltration. Worse, they were convinced Project Practice Nine would drastically change their role in the war, taking them away from mobile assaults to requiring them to defend static positions along the barrier. But the Defense Department rejected the marine arguments, and in the spring of 1967 the [Third Marine Division](#) began preparing for construction of the barrier.

In order to prepare for construction of the barrier, the Third Marine Division had to launch sweep and clear operations in May 1967. On May 18, a combined Marine-ARVN (see [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#)) force attacked into the southern reaches of the DMZ. Five ARVN battalions invaded in the [Lam Son 54](#) portion of the operation. The 1st Battalion of the Third Marines pushed into the DMZ in Operation Beau Charger, and in the west, Operation Hickory saw the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 9th Marines, the 2nd Battalion of the 26th Marines, the 3rd Battalion of the Fourth Marines, and the 2nd Battalion of the Third Marines engaged in the sweep. They were fighting the 31st, 32nd, and 812th NVA Regiments of the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA). They evacuated large numbers of civilians from the area, engaged in hard fighting with the NVA, and destroyed massive bunker and tunnel complexes. The initial sweep operations were concluded at the end of May. In June 1967 Project Practice Nine was renamed Project Illinois City, and it was renamed again in July 1967, this time Project Dye Marker. Although some test stages of the barrier were constructed, [Secretary of Defense](#) Robert McNamara's dream of a barrier all the way across Vietnam never came to be. It was too ambitious, too expensive, and too naive, all of which became abundantly clear in 1968 with the [Tet Offensive](#) and the siege of [Khe Sanh](#).

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Gregory Palmer, *The McNamara Strategy and the Vietnam War: Program Budgeting in the Pentagon, 1960-1968*, 1978; Lloyd Norman, "McNamara's Fence: Our Eyes and Ears Along the DMZ," *Army* 18 (August 1968), pp. 28-33.

## PROJECT SIGMA

Encouraged by the success of [Project Delta](#) in 1965, General [William Westmoreland](#) had the [Fifth Special Forces Group](#) launch Project Sigma in August 1966. Known as Detachment-56, Project Sigma consisted of approximately 900 [Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) troops and 125 U.S. personnel. It was head-quartered at Ho Ngoc Nau outside [Saigon](#). Project Sigma gathered intelligence on enemy positions, called in air strikes and evaluated bombing damage, and conducted special raids against the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#). Project Sigma evolved into the Mobile Guerrilla Force concept in 1967 and was absorbed into the Studies and Observation Group's program in November 1967.

Source: Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971*, 1973.

## PROTECTIVE REACTION STRIKES

On October 31, 1968, as part of a general, informal agreement reached in Paris between negotiators for the United States and North Vietnam, naval and air force ``offensive" strikes against the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) were stopped. The United States continued reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam, and when those flights were fired upon, the U.S. Air Force began sending armed escorts with them. Those escorts fired on the anti-aircraft installations attacking the reconnaissance planes, although the U.S. strikes had to be confined to areas south of the nineteenth parallel. In April 1970, the United States authorized air strikes on North Vietnamese [SAM](#) and anti-aircraft installations protecting the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) from American bombing. Those strikes had to occur south of the twentieth parallel. Department of Defense spokesmen referred to them as ``protective reaction strikes." Other ``protective reaction strikes" were used in 1970 to stop North Vietnamese [infiltration](#) across the [Demilitarized Zone](#). More than 1,100 [sorties](#) occurred in 1970 as part of the ``protective reaction" program.

Sources: John Morrocco, *The Vietnam Experience. Rain of Fire: Air War, 1969-1973*, 1984; Peter Mersky and Norman Polmar, *The Naval Air War in Vietnam*, 1981.

## **PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM**

The Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam was the name taken by the National Liberation Front (NLF; See [Vietcong](#)) in 1969. It was the Communist government in [South Vietnam](#) until 1975 when North Vietnamese forces reunited the country. Its primary spokesperson was [Nguyen Thi Binh](#), longtime foreign minister for the NLF.

Sources: Douglas Pike, *History of the Vietnamese Communist Party*, 1978, and *The Viet Cong Strategy of Terror*, 1970.

## PROXMIRE, WILLIAM

When Republican Senator [Joe McCarthy](#) died in 1957, Wisconsin voters replaced him with Democrat William Proxmire, a former state assemblyman and three-time gubernatorial loser. Born in 1915 in Illinois, Proxmire attended the Hill School, majored in literature at Yale and finance at Harvard, rose to master sergeant before receiving a commission in the Army Counter Intelligence Corps in World War II, and in 1946 married Elsie Rockefeller (John D.'s granddaughter) before earning an M.A. in public administration at Harvard.

In the Senate Proxmire quickly gained a reputation as a maverick, he opposed both "excessive" military spending and liberal domestic legislation (except civil rights) and even attacked small projects dear to his party's leadership. He supported intervention in Vietnam through 1965 and, according to an authorized biography, "was flying with the fiercest of hawks." Proxmire criticized [Lyndon Johnson](#)'s handling of the war in 1966 and after the [Tet Offensive](#) in early 1968 broke completely with administration policy. "Tet," he said later, "made me very suspicious." Unsuccessful attempts to legislate an end to the war followed, with Proxmire urging that funding cease for [B-52](#) and [defoliation](#) missions. Through the [Nixon](#) years he continued to speak against the war and also led Senate opposition to the C-5A cargo plane. While Proxmire's transition from hawk to dove roughly paralleled shifting public opinion on the war, a skeptical approach to Pentagon spending has been and remains a consistent feature of his work in the Senate.

Sources: *Who's Who in American Politics, 1985-1986*, 1986; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War. The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*, 1986; *New York Times*, 1957-1975.

Dudley Acker

## PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

During the war in Vietnam, the United States Information Agency (USIA), directing the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, and several military units invested an enormous amount of resources in "psyops," or psychological operations, propaganda campaigns aimed at the North Vietnamese, the [Vietcong](#), and the South Vietnamese. Between 1965 and 1972, the United States dropped fifty billion leaflets on [North](#) and [South Vietnam](#), and on the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) in [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), all with the goal of building an anti-Communist nationalism, supporting the [Chieu Hoi](#) program, or breaking the will of the North Vietnamese to resist. They inundated South Vietnam with posters, banners, newspaper articles, magazines, brochures, comic books, bumper stickers, and matchbook covers, all urging the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese to end the fighting. The USIA also filled the available airwaves with anti-Communist radio broadcasts.

Military operations were also extensive. The Psychological Operations Directorate of the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) coordinated propaganda campaigns. The U.S. Air Force dropped leaflets and the [Navy](#) handed out brochures during routine searches of merchant craft and used loudspeaker broadcasts from patrol craft. The U.S. Army eventually had four psyops battalions, the 6th Psychological Operations Battalion in [III Corps](#), the 7th Psychological Operations Battalion in [I Corps](#), the 8th Psychological Operations Battalion in [II Corps](#), and the 10th Psychological Operations Battalion in [IV Corps](#). Each battalion had its own printing plant, photographic and tape recording production equipment, and loudspeaker trucks.

Sources: Robert W. Chandler, *War of Ideas: The U.S. Propaganda Campaign in Vietnam*, 1981; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## PUNJI STAKES

Until 1965 the [Vietcong](#) made or captured 90 percent of its weaponry, necessitating imaginative utilization of natural resources, including bamboo. [Punji stakes](#) were lengths of bamboo cut into strips, sharpened to a point, and hardened over flame. These hardened sticks, which could penetrate soles of combat boots and which might be coated with feces or some infection-causing substance, were used as passive and offensive weapons. They were excellent substitutes for concertina (coils of barbed wire) in defending fixed positions. Punji stakes were often driven into the bottoms of shallow holes, then carefully camouflaged so an unsuspecting soldier would step on them, impaling his foot. Holes often were dug near obstacles, channeling a person's foot to that spot. Sticks were driven into rice paddies, to be stepped on as troops moved through them, and mounted on saplings which were bent over and camouflaged. An unwary soldier would activate a trip mechanism, releasing the sapling which would fly up, piercing him with sticks. They were mounted on platforms suspended in trees. Activating the trip mechanism caused the platform to sail down, perforating another victim.

Such [booby traps](#) were highly effective because they took both a physical and psychological toll. The Vietcong were more interested in wounding soldiers than killing them because wounded soldiers required attention. Units stopped their movement; medevacs were called in for more seriously wounded soldiers, giving away a unit's position. Booby traps were a major advantage for the Vietcong and often helped compensate for lack of firepower.

Sources: George McTurnan Kahin and John w. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, 1967; Al Santoli, *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-Three Americans Who Fought It*, 1981; Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984.

Samuel Freeman





## Q

QUANG TRI, BATTLE OF (1972)

QUEEN'S COBRAS

QUI NHON



## QUANG TRI, BATTLE OF (1972)

On March 30, 1972, as part of the [Eastertide Offensive](#), four North Vietnamese [divisions](#) attacked across the [Demilitarized Zone](#) into Quang Tri Province. The [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) had moved long-range 130mm [artillery](#) just north of the Cam Lo-Cua Viet River bringing Quang Tri City and an area five miles south of the city under bombardment. NVA forces, backed by that artillery and amphibious PT-76 tanks, brought Quang Tri City under siege from three separate directions. Internecine rivalries between the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN) and South Vietnamese Marine commanders, as well as friction between U.S. advisers and ARVN officers, weakened the defensive effort. Cloud cover during the first two weeks of April inhibited American air support, and even though the weather cleared in mid-April and [B-52](#) strikes were heavy, the North Vietnamese crossed the Cam Lo-Cua Viet River barrier and invaded on a broad front. NVA artillery were also striking hard at ARVN forces south of Quang Tri City. On April 27, 1972, the cloud cover returned and the NVA 304th Division attacked Quang Tri City. Thousands of South Vietnamese [refugees](#) began fleeing the city along Highway 1 (see "[Street Without Joy](#)") toward [Hue](#), and the North Vietnamese targeted the 130mm guns on the road. By April 30 the North Vietnamese were indiscriminately shelling the capital city. On May 1 they took the city. The rest of the province fell under North Vietnamese control two days later.

But the Eastertide Offensive then stalled and degenerated into a stalemate. Not until the end of the summer did the South Vietnamese, buoyed by massive B-52 air support, launch the counteroffensive. In house-to-house combat, the South Vietnamese recaptured Quang Tri City on September 15, 1972, suffering more than five thousand [casualties](#) in the process. The fighting and bombing almost completely obliterated Quang Tri City.

Source: G. H. Turley, *The Easter Offensive: Vietnam, 1972*, 1985.

## QUEEN'S COBRAS

“Queen's Cobras” was the name used to describe the crack infantry [regiment](#) sent to [South Vietnam](#) by [Thailand](#) in the fall of 1967. The troops fought alongside American soldiers in [III Corps](#) before their removal almost one year later.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## QUI NHON

Qui Nhon was the capital city of Binh Dinh Province in [South Vietnam](#). At the peak of the fighting in Vietnam during the late 1960s, Qui Nhon had a population of more than 188,000. Located on the coast just off Highway 1 (see "[Street Without Joy](#)"), Qui Nhon is 420 miles north of [Saigon](#). Before the arrival of large numbers of American ground troops, Qui Nhon was a small fishing and commercial port. Military engineers deepened the harbor, constructed supply and petroleum depots, and transformed Qui Nhon into a major supply base. Service support for the nearly 100,000 American, South Vietnamese, and Korean troops operating in the northern reaches of [II Corps](#) came from Qui Nhon. The [Capitol Division](#) of the South Korean army had its headquarters in Qui Nhon. The port and supply depot was part of the American effort to keep land routes open between the coast and the [Central Highlands](#).

Sources: Harvey H. Smith, et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Carroll H. Dunn, *Base Development in South Vietnam, 1965-1970*, 1972.



## R

``THE ROCKPILE''

RADFORD, ARTHUR WILLIAM

RAMBO

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RUSSELL, RICHARD BREVARD

RUSSO, ANTHONY J., JR.





## ``THE ROCKPILE''

On July 4, 1966, about ten miles from the southern boundary of the [Demilitarized Zone](#) (DMZ) and sixteen miles west of [Dong Ha](#), a small [marine](#) reconnaissance patrol made note of ``a sort of toothpick-type mountain stuck out in the middle of an open area'' with a ``sheer cliff straight up and down.'' The 700-foot ``Rockpile,'' often manned by a marine [squad](#), became a key post from which to observe [North Vietnamese Army](#) activity in the central and western sectors of northern [I Corps](#). Located at a fork in the Cam Lo River, the Rockpile was supplied by helicopter, and within a kilometer of Route 9 it dominated the landscape between Camp Carroll to the east and [Khe Sanh](#) to its southwest. [Marines](#) launched numerous operations from the Rockpile area, and the peak was a familiar landmark for those fighting the DMZ war.

Sources: Jack Shulimson, *Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War, 1966*, 1982; Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience: America Takes Over, 1965-1967*, 1985.

Dudley Acker

## RADFORD, ARTHUR WILLIAM

As chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS; see [Chairman, JCS](#)) in 1954, Admiral Arthur W. Radford played a central role in the determination of American options during the decisive French battle of [Dien Bien Phu](#). Radford was born on February 27, 1896, and was a 1916 graduate of the Naval Academy. After World War I he became an aviator, and his own career advancement and the growth of naval aviation formed a virtually parallel history. During World War II he commanded a carrier group and a carrier division. After the war he rose to the command of the Pacific Fleet and to the chairmanship of the JCS in August 1953.

Radford had great confidence in the key role of [air power](#) in modern warfare, and he was a forceful advocate of this view in the [Eisenhower](#) administration's deliberations on Vietnam in 1954. In March 1954 the [Vietminh](#) army began its attack on the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu. Washington already was considering the implications of a French defeat, and as the battlefield conditions worsened, a decision on how to help the French was urgent. French Chief of Staff General [Paul Ely](#) came to Washington and conferred directly with Radford. The admiral discussed a plan, [Operation Vulture](#), in which American carrier-based aircraft could inflict a massive air strike on the Vietminh forces besieging Dien Bien Phu. Upon his return to Paris, Ely believed that Radford had made a commitment to the plan, but Radford insisted that he had only raised the possibility. [President Eisenhower](#) refused to authorize an American bombardment without allied support, and in early May the Vietminh overran the outpost. Radford was chairman of the JCS until his retirement in August 1957. He died in 1973.

Sources: Arthur W. Radford, *From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: The Memoirs of Admiral Arthur W. Radford*, 1980; John Prados, *The Sky Would Fall: Operation Vulture, The U.S. Bombing Mission in Indochina, 1954*, 1983.

David L. Anderson

## RAMBO

Written and directed by Sylvester Stallone, *Rambo* is a sequel to Stallone's 1983 hit *First Blood*. In the film *Rambo*, Stallone plays the role of a Vietnam veteran imprisoned for wrecking a small Oregon town after the local police chief and deputies harassed him. Richard Crenna, playing the role of Rambo's former Green Beret commander, springs him, literally, from a rock pile for a special mission in ``Nam." Single-handedly, Rambo reenters Vietnam and rescues a group of American [prisoners of war](#) (POWs) still languishing in bamboo cage cells. As it turns out, the rescue project had only been intended as a political gesture by politicians back home to do something about the POW-MIA issue. Rambo surprises them by winning another Congressional Medal of Honor, bringing home his comrades, and threatening the mission chief whom he considers a stooge for the politicians who lost the first war in Vietnam. Riding a crest of American patriotism and nationalism, *Rambo* was a runaway box-office smash in 1985, the most successful of the Vietnam-genre films spawned in the 1980s.

## RAND CORPORATION

Rand Corporation is a nonprofit think tank designed to analyze issues of national importance to the United States. Rand emerged at the end of World War II when it was organized as an adjunct of Douglas Aircraft Company in Santa Monica, California. The name was derived from combining the words *Research and Development*. Rand separated from Douglas Aircraft in 1948 and was incorporated under the laws of California as a private, nonprofit corporation. Rand concentrated on "operation research," first focusing on the operational employment of existing weapon systems and later broadening out into more general tasks concerned with the allocation of resources for national security purposes. By the 1950s Rand was developing "systems analysis" as its major focus for such clients as the U.S. Air Force, Department of Defense, and the State Department. During the 1960s, Rand's major effort was on the Vietnam War. It provided copious studies of [Saigon](#) politics, the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)), the organization of combat villages, command structures in North Vietnam, weapons effectiveness, and negotiation strategies. Rand studies were heavily employed by American officials in developing military and political policy in Southeast Asia.

Sources: L. R. Smith, *The Rand Corporation*, 1966; [Mike Gravel](#), ed., *Pentagon Papers*, 1971.

Linda Casci

## REEDUCATION CAMPAIGNS

The term "Reeducation" has become a euphemism for concentration camps, imprisonment, and brainwashing by totalitarian states in the twentieth century. After the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, both the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#) and the [Pol Pot](#) government in [Kampuchea](#) (Cambodia) implemented widespread reeducation campaigns to punish and/or reorient citizens closely associated with the U.S. war effort or the governments of the [Republic of Vietnam](#) and [Lon Nol](#) in Cambodia. In Vietnam, more than 400,000 Vietnamese were placed in reeducation camps, most of whom died there. The government of Pol Pot in Kampuchea was even more brutal, placing more than one million citizens into camps before executing them in a genocidal orgy.

Sources: Nguyen Long, with Harry Kendall, *After Saigon Fell*, 1981; Ginette Sagan and Stephen Denney, *Violations of Human Rights in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*, 1983; Michael Vickery, *Cambodia, 1975-1982*, 1984.

## REFUGEES

Throughout and even after the war in Vietnam, the issue of displaced [refugees](#) posed a critical economic, political, and military problem for the United States. As part of the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#), a one-year period was established for relocation across the seventeenth parallel dividing [North](#) and [South Vietnam](#). Between 80,000 and 100,000 South Vietnamese, mostly [Vietminh](#), moved from the south to the north, while nearly one million northerners, mostly [Roman Catholics](#), moved into South Vietnam. Both the United States and [France](#) provided ships to assist the mass migration. Many of them ended up for a time in refugee camps, but they eventually became an intense anti-Communist constituency in South Vietnam.

But the refugee situation became a critical problem after the American escalation of the war in 1965. Between December 1965 and June 1967, more than 1,200,000 people in South Vietnam were officially listed as refugees. Between 1964 and 1969, a total of 3,500,000 South Vietnamese had been refugees for a period of time. Several million others were temporarily displaced from their homes by the war itself. They were placed in refugee camps where living conditions were abominable. The migration began in earnest in 1964 when severe flooding drove 100,000 people from their homes in South Vietnam. In 1965, when the fighting increased, tens of thousands more were displaced. Finally, the United States and the government of South Vietnam began large-scale relocations of the population. Between 1966 and 1970 they pursued the policy of creating [free fire zones](#), areas where peasants had been removed and military commanders could attack with abandon, assuming any people left behind had to be North Vietnamese or [Vietcong](#). The relocations supposedly denied the Vietcong sources of income, food, and labor and military recruits; cleared the battlefield of innocent civilians; and allowed military commanders a free hand in the use of firepower. The relocated people, however, often ended up in dismal refugee camps where resentment and alienation accumulated against the United States and the [Republic of Vietnam](#).

Finally, the fall of South Vietnam in 1975 created new waves of refugee migrations. From the time the North Vietnamese attacked [Quang Tri](#) to the final flight of the last Americans in 1975, widespread population dislocations occurred throughout South Vietnam. Between 1975 and 1985, more than 1,500,000 people fled [Indochina](#), with more than half of them settling in the United States.

Sources: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; "No More Room for Refugees," *Time*, May 10, 1982; Barry Winn, *The Refused*, 1981; Gertrude Samuels, "Passage to Freedom," *National Geographic* 107 (June 1955), 858-74.

## REGIMENT

A regiment is a basic military organizational unit in the United States [Marine Corps](#), and in the United States Army's armored cavalry units. During the Vietnam War the [11th Armored Cavalry Regiment](#) was the only army regiment in the country. It consisted of three armored cavalry squadrons and an [air cavalry troop](#). Three infantry battalions constitute a marine regiment. Between 1965 and 1975, the marines used ten regiments in the Vietnam War: the 1st, 5th, and 7th regiments of the [1st Marine Division](#); the 3rd, 4th and 9th regiments of the [Third Marine Division](#) the 26th and 27th regiments of the [5th Marine Division](#); and the 11th and 12th [artillery](#) regiments.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## REGIONAL FORCES

The Regional Forces, part of the [Territorial Forces](#) of the South Vietnamese Army, were paramilitary troops organized at the province level to protect villages, hamlets, and such fixed positions as bridges and ferries. The Regional Forces were first activated in 1955 under the control of the Interior Department of South Vietnam to protect critical positions in the [Mekong Delta](#), and by 1960 they were defending over nine thousand posts, more than half of which were in the Delta. At first they were called the Civil Guard. In 1960 the Regional Forces were transferred to the Defense Department and in 1964 to the South Vietnamese Army. Instead of being controlled by the province chief, they were under the command of the [Joint General Staff](#). The basic combat unit of the Regional Forces was the [company](#), and by 1973 the Regional Forces totaled more than 1,800 companies. Between 1965 and 1973, the Regional Forces and [Popular Forces](#) lost more than eighty thousand dead.

Sources: Ngo Quang Truong, *Territorial Forces*, 1981; Harvey H. Smith, et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967.



## **REINHARDT, GEORGE FREDERICK**

G. Frederick Reinhardt was born on October 21, 1911, in Berkeley, California. After graduating from the University of California in 1933, he went on to Cornell University where he earned a master's degree in 1935. Reinhardt attended the Cesare Alfieri Institute of Diplomacy in Florence, Italy, in 1937, and then received an appointment to the U.S. Foreign Service. During the 1930s Reinhardt had minor posts in Austria, Latvia, Estonia, and the [Soviet Union](#), and during World War II he was a staff aid with General [Dwight Eisenhower](#). Between 1945 and 1948 he served as first secretary and consul general in Moscow and then held a variety of positions with the State Department in Washington until 1955. Reinhardt became ambassador to the [Republic of Vietnam](#) in 1955 and held the post until 1957. He later held ambassadorships to the United Arab Republic, Yemen, and Italy. Reinhardt retired from public life in 1968.

Source: John E. Findling, *Dictionary of American Diplomatic History*, 1980.

## REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

The term "Republic of Vietnam" was the name given to the government of South Vietnam. After the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#) had divided North from South Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel, [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) became prime minister in a government headed by Emperor [Bao Dai](#). After consolidating his power, Diem called for a national referendum on October 23, 1955, to determine whether Bao Dai should remain emperor or whether the country should become a republic under Diem's leadership. Diem reported after the referendum that 98 percent of the people of South Vietnam wanted a republic. So on October 26, 1955, Diem proclaimed establishment of the Republic of Vietnam and named himself president. A new constitution was promulgated on October 26, 1956.

Source: Harvey Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967.

## RHEULT CONTROVERSY

In 1969 Colonel Robert Rheault, commander of the [Fifth Special Forces Group](#), was arrested for ordering the execution of Thai Khac Chuyen, a Special Forces employee Rheault discovered was a double agent for the [Vietcong](#). Because of the highly secret nature of the project Chuyen was working, the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) refused to release classified information and the case against Rheault had to be dismissed. He resigned from the Special Forces in 1969.

Source: Charles M. Simpson III, *Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years*, 1983.

## ROGERS, WILLIAM PIERCE

William P. Rogers was born at Norfolk, New York, on June 23, 1913. He graduated from Colgate University in 1934, and in 1937 he earned a law degree at Cornell University, where he edited the law review. Rogers worked briefly with a Wall Street firm in 1937 before joining the staff of New York County District Attorney Thomas E. Dewey, who was about to launch his campaign against racketeers. While serving on Dewey's staff, Rogers gained extensive experience as a trial lawyer. He was an officer with the United States Naval Reserve in the Pacific during World War II. After the war Rogers returned to Dewey's staff briefly and then went to work as counsel to several congressional committees. During those years he became to know Congressman and later Senator [Richard Nixon](#) and worked on the Alger Hiss case. In 1950 Rogers returned to private law practice and continued as a Nixon adviser. When [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) was elected president in 1952, Rogers became deputy attorney general. In October 1957 he became attorney general in the Eisenhower cabinet.

Between 1960 and 1968 Rogers practiced law, but when Nixon entered the White House in 1969, Rogers became [secretary of state](#). But while naming Rogers to the State Department, Nixon also named [Henry Kissinger](#) to the post of special White House assistant on foreign affairs. From the beginning, Kissinger's influence was dominant. Nixon tended to be suspicious and secretive, and he distrusted the "Ivy League types" at the State Department. Rogers was always upstaged by Kissinger. The making of foreign policy had definitely shifted to the White House. Thus, William Rogers was often put in the position of explaining and defending policies before Congress and the nation which had been formulated by Nixon and Kissinger with little or no input from the State Department. This was especially true in the areas of Sino-Soviet and Vietnam policy. Rogers himself was often the subject of unkind chatter on the cocktail circuit. But he continued to serve until 1973, when he resigned to return to his private law practice. In 1986, he was chosen by the Reagan administration to head the investigation of the Challenger disaster.

Sources: *Current Biography*, 1969, pp. 372-75; Thomas G. Paterson, *American Foreign Policy*, 1983; *U.S. News and World Report*, February 24, 1986.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Roman Catholicism came to Vietnam in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the arrival of Portuguese, French, and Spanish missionaries. Dominican priests from Portugal arrived in the [Mekong Delta](#) in 1550 and in Quang Nam Province in central Vietnam in the 1580s. French Jesuits, the most prominent of whom was Alexandre de Rhodes, worked throughout Vietnam in the seventeenth century, and by 1700 there were nearly one million converts there. Perhaps 25 percent of them were in [Tonkin](#) and the rest in [Annam](#) and [Cochin China](#). During the eighteenth century [Confucians](#) and [Buddhists](#) throughout Vietnam campaigned against Catholicism as an alien religion tied closely to European imperial expansion. Persecution of Catholics was widespread.

With the French conquest of Vietnam in the nineteenth century, Catholicism was liberated from nationalist opposition, built a native clergy, and received great support from the French colonial bureaucracy. After 1954, when [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) took control of the government of South Vietnam, Catholicism got an even stronger foothold in the country. The French had encouraged Catholicism as a counter to [Buddhism](#), and Diem filled his government with Roman Catholics. Diem's brother, [Ngo Dinh Thuc](#), was the archbishop of [Hue](#) and leader of the Catholic clergy in Vietnam. Although the dominant position of Catholics in the government of South Vietnam declined after the assassination of Diem in 1963, they still exerted extraordinary influence because of their dominance of the officer corps of the South Vietnamese military, the higher levels of the government bureaucracy, and the professions. Roman Catholics were better educated and more prosperous than the rest of the country.

There were actually two Catholic communities in South Vietnam during the years of the Vietnam War. Of the 1.5 million Roman Catholics in the country, approximately 900,000 of them in the 1960s were [refugees](#) from the Red River Delta area of North Vietnam. Led by Father Hoang Quynh, they were more anti-Buddhist and anti-Communist than their southern counterparts. Father Hoang Quynh's lay organization, the Luc Luong Dai Doan Ket, or Greater Unity Force, was an activist organization in South Vietnam. Southern Catholics were led by Paul [Nguyen Van Binh](#), the archbishop of [Saigon](#). Southern Catholics were more sympathetic to Buddhist grievances, not nearly as militant as the northerners, and received less support from the Diem regime. As a whole, however, Catholics in Vietnam were pro-Western and anti-Communist, and wanted little compromise with the [Vietminh](#) and later the [Vietcong](#). The northern Catholic refugees came into the South after the Geneva Accords in 1954, and migrated in village units with their local priest. The government established 319 refugee villages for them. Nearly 400,000 refugees settled in villages in the [Mekong Delta](#), 60,000 in the Central Lowlands, and 70,000 in the [Central Highlands](#). Others ended up in slums of Saigon or [Cholon](#). Northern Catholics were consequently more impoverished than southerners.

The northern refugees were for the most part poorly educated peasants who had lived in exclusively Roman Catholic villages in North Vietnam and who had rarely had contact with non-Catholics. Catholics born in South Vietnam lived mainly in cities and coastal areas of the northern provinces. In Saigon the Catholic community was upper middle-class and virtually controlled the military, civil service, and professions. South Vietnam by the 1960s was divided into 13 dioceses with 700 local parishes. In the late 1960s there were more than 1,700 priests, 4,000 nuns, and 625 seminarians in the country. The church enrolled 400,000 students in parochial schools, maintained a college at Dal Lat, operated 26 hospitals, 7 leper sanitariums, and 55 orphanages.

Sources: Harvey Smith, *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Virginia Thompson, *French Indochina*, 1937; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, 2 vols., 1967; Pierro Gheddo, *The Cross and the Bo-Tree: Catholics and Buddhists in Vietnam*, 1970.

## **ROME PLOW**

Manufactured by the Rome Caterpillar Company of Rome, Georgia, the Rome plow was used to clear jungle areas during the Vietnam War, especially potential ambush locations along supply routes. The huge tractor had a large, cutting blade more curved than most bulldozer blades and extending out at the bottom. The blade was sharp and powerful enough to cut easily through tree trunks up to 36 inches in diameter, and a spike at one edge of the blade could split even larger trees.

Source: John H. Hay, Jr., *Tactical and Materiel Innovations*, 1974.

## ROMNEY, GEORGE

George Romney was born on July 8, 1907, in the Mormon colonies in Chihuahua, Mexico. He attended the University of Utah and George Washington University in the 1920s but never graduated. In 1929 Romney went to work as a tariff specialist for Senator David Walsh of Massachusetts, and in 1930 he became a lobbyist for the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). Romney spent the next twenty-three years working for ALCOA, and the Automobile Manufacturers Association, and in 1954 he became president of American Motors. In 1962 Romney ran on the Republican ticket and won the governorship of Michigan. He was reelected in 1964 and 1966. Romney had a reputation as a moderate to liberal Republican, and in 1968 he made a run for the Republican presidential nomination. At the time he was harboring serious reservations about the war in Vietnam, and after traveling there on a fact-finding mission, he returned to the United States and, during the New Hampshire presidential primary campaigning, claimed that the Pentagon had tried to "brainwash" him. Although subsequent events would prove he was correct, use of the term "brainwash" hurt him politically in New Hampshire; and [Richard Nixon](#) won the primary, the Republican nomination, and the White House. In January 1969, Nixon named Romney to his cabinet as secretary of housing and urban development. Romney retired from public life in 1973.

Sources: Clark Mollenhoff, *George Romney, Mormon in Politics*, 1968; Theodore White, *The Making of the President*, 1968, 1969.

## ROOSEVELT, FRANKLIN DELANO

Franklin D. Roosevelt, the thirty-second president of the United States, was born in Hyde Park, New York, on January 30, 1882. Raised amidst family wealth, he developed a paternalistic liberalism, graduated from Harvard in 1904, and studied law at Columbia University. He was admitted to the New York bar in 1907 and practiced law privately. After serving a term in the state legislature between 1911 and 1913, Roosevelt was appointed assistant secretary of the navy, a post he occupied until 1920. Roosevelt was James Cox's running mate in the presidential election of 1920, but they lost by a landslide to the Republican ticket of Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. After being attacked by polio in 1921, Roosevelt spent much of the rest of the decade trying to restore his health, and in 1928 he was elected governor of New York. He served in Albany until 1933, when he entered the White House as president of the United States. Roosevelt's presidency was one of the most important in U.S. history; his New Deal attempted to ease the Great Depression of the 1930s, and his leadership of the country during World War II made him a beloved figure until his death on April 12, 1945.

Midway through World War II, Roosevelt realized that colonialism was dead and that the United States would best be served by aligning itself with the forces of nationalism in the Third World. He had little faith in Charles de Gaulle and thought [France](#) had badly mismanaged its affairs in [Indochina](#). By 1944 Roosevelt was advocating placing Indochina under an international trusteeship. Early in 1945, however, as the [British](#) contemplated returning to their former colonies in Asia, Roosevelt amended his point of view, and at the Yalta Conference in 1945 agreed to a proposal calling for trusteeships only with the approval of the mother country. The Yalta agreement killed any hope for a trusteeship over Indochina. After Roosevelt's death in 1945, [Harry S. Truman](#) took over as president of the United States, and Truman shared none of Roosevelt's concerns about imperialism and colonialism, and American policy shifted strongly toward French policies in Indochina.

Sources: George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; Chester Bain, *Vietnam: The Roots of Conflict*, 1967; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972.



## ROSTOW, WALT WHITMAN

W. W. Rostow, an economist with extensive service in the federal government, began advising [John F. Kennedy](#), then a senator from Massachusetts, on foreign policy in 1958 and was active in Kennedy's successful 1960 presidential campaign. Kennedy appointed Rostow deputy special assistant to the president for foreign security affairs in the incoming administration, and as such Rostow participated throughout 1961 in the formulation of U.S. policy toward [Laos](#) and [Vietnam](#). He generally advocated a strong diplomatic and military role in opposing Communist insurgents operating in Asia. Later, Rostow moved to the State Department, where he was placed in charge of long-range analysis and planning in a broad range of foreign policy areas.

Beginning in June 1964 Rostow began to exert direct influence upon President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) by serving as one of his principal advisers on Southeast Asia. During this period W. W. Rostow developed his unique foreign policy perspective on Vietnam and like situations, which came to be called the "Rostow thesis." Essentially, he argued that externally supported insurgencies could be stopped only by military action against the source of external support. As a result, he urged a series of escalating military measures designed to impart the maximum possible psychological blow and thereby force a cessation of the external support. This policy approach flowed from Rostow's belief that modernization, expressed in his important 1960 study, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, created certain dislocations and discontents which, although transitional, could be used by Communists to gain support. He commented that it was necessary to hold off any Communist challenge until full modernization was achieved.

Consistent with this general approach to the problem in Southeast Asia, Rostow argued in June 1964 that the United States commit both military force and a strong public stance against North Vietnamese support for rebel forces in Laos and [South Vietnam](#). Although not without critics, according to the [Pentagon Papers](#), "the outlook embodied in the 'Rostow thesis' came to dominate a good deal of Administration thinking on the question of pressures against the North in the months ahead."

Although Rostow had previously worked in the background, on March 31, 1966, President Johnson appointed him special assistant to the president for national security affairs, succeeding [McGeorge Bundy](#). In this post Rostow worked closely with Johnson for the remainder of the administration on virtually all foreign policy issues. One of these involved the bombing of the North Vietnamese industrial base. In May 1966, for instance, Rostow argued for the "systematic and sustained bombing" of petroleum-product facilities in [North Vietnam](#). This goal was realized in the bombing campaigns that followed in the [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong areas.

Throughout the remainder of the Johnson administration Rostow continued to support the large-scale bombing program, although the president chose to limit aerial attacks during the latter months of his term. During this time, overtures were reportedly made in Rostow's behalf to MIT and several other leading universities to secure for him a teaching position after the administration's end. Eventually, he accepted a position as professor of economics and history at the University of Texas at Austin, where a Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs was planned. In the final hours of his presidency, Johnson awarded Rostow and nineteen others the Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian honor.

Sources: W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, 1960; Seyom Brown, *The Faces of Power: Constancy and Change in United States Foreign Policy from Truman to Johnson*, 1968; Eric F. Goldman, *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson*, 1969; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; W. W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power, 1957-1972*, 1972.

Roger D. Launius

## ROWE, JAMES NICHOLAS

[Special Forces](#) adviser and early prisoner of war in Vietnam, James N. Rowe was born in 1938 at McAllen, Texas. He graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1960, B.S., and was commissioned second lieutenant, United States Army. An early volunteer for the Special Forces (Green Berets), Rowe was sent to Vietnam in 1963 as an adviser to an [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN) unit. On October 29, 1963, Lieutenant Rowe accompanied his ARVN unit on a raid of a [Vietcong](#) village in the [Mekong Delta](#). But the plan of attack went awry when the Vietcong (VC) declined to react in the prescribed manner. As a contingent of the ARVN unit surged through the village firing into the huts, the VC were expected to flee into the forest, where an ambush awaited them. But the VC moved in the opposite direction, regrouped and counterattacked. The ARVN unit soon found itself in desperate straits. When help failed to arrive from other units in the area, the ARVN was cut off and decimated. Lieutenant Rowe and two other Green Berets were among the survivors taken prisoner.

For the next five years, Rowe was held a captive in the field, forced to live the life and share the squalor and privation of his captors. Three attempts to escape failed, resulting in punishment and closer confinement for a while. Finally, on December 31, 1968, Lieutenant Rowe was able to break away from his captors in the confusion when American helicopter [gunships](#) attacked the VC. Fortunately, a gunship crewman spotted him in a clearing, and he was rescued.

In 1971, Rowe (by then Major) published a detailed autobiographical account of his service and captivity in Vietnam. Reaction to his book reflected the intensity of the domestic discord over the Vietnam War. On the one hand, Rowe was hailed as a genuine hero and his book was commended for its "shattering impact," a revelation of the evils of communism. But other reviewers called it self-serving and parochial, a revelation of American attitudes of superiority and disdain for the Vietnamese people. One reviewer cast doubts on the author's integrity, questioning how Rowe could have recalled all the minute details of his service and captivity years after the fact. The details of his imprisonment were called "boring." The comments no doubt reflected the reviewer's attitude toward the war more than toward Rowe himself.

Rowe continued to serve in the army until 1974, when he resigned. In 1975, he ran on the Republican ticket for state office in Texas, but lost. He then turned his attention to writing as a career.

Sources: See James N. Rowe, *Five Years to Freedom*, 1971; *Contemporary Authors*, 1st rev., vols. 37-40, 1979, pp. 469-71.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## RUBIN, JERRY

Jerry Rubin was born on July 14, 1938, in Cincinnati, Ohio. He graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 1961, and in 1964 he was active in Mario Savio's Free Speech Movement at the University of California at Berkeley. As the Free Speech Movement was transformed into an anti-Vietnam campaign, Rubin emerged as a radical leader and organizer of the Vietnam Day Committee (VDC), a prominent antiwar group. VDC demonstrations took on the image of radical insurgency in 1966 when they tried to block trains carrying Vietnam-bound soldiers to training and embarkation posts. Early in 1968, Rubin joined with [Abbie Hoffman](#) in forming the Youth International party, or "Yippies," to promote counterculture ideas and oppose the war in Vietnam. The Yippies sponsored large and disruptive demonstrations in Chicago during the Democratic National Convention in August 1968, and Rubin was arrested as one of the Chicago 7. His behavior at the subsequent trial, where he was charged with conspiracy to riot, was outrageous and he was found guilty of contempt. Convicted of conspiracy, Rubin appealed and won in the federal appeals court in 1972. When the war ended in 1973, Rubin's public personality lost some of its attraction, and he disappeared from the public scene. By the early 1980s Jerry Rubin was a successful stockbroker on Wall Street, the ultimate symbol of the transformation of 1960s Yippies into 1980s Yuppies.

Sources: Jerry Rubin, *Growing Up at 37*, 1976; Thomas Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home*, 1984; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the Vietnam War, 1963-1975*, 1984.

## **RUNG SAT SWAMP**

The Rung Sat Swamp consisted of the swamp deltas of the [Saigon](#) and Dong Nai rivers. [Vietcong](#) sappers harassed the flow of supplies to Saigon by placing mines in the deep ship lanes. The Rung Sat Swamp was the area from which the sappers operated.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

By 1968, a "two pincers" strategy dominated the American war effort. The "violence" pincer consisted of attacking main force [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) and National Liberation Front (NLF; see [Vietcong](#)) units, pushing them into uninhabited regions, breaking their ties with local NLF guerrilla and political cadres, and eliminating local NLF infrastructures. Main force units would address the first three "violence" objectives, while local units and the [Phoenix Program](#) would address the fourth. The second pincer would be Rural Reconstruction, a comprehensive pacification program developed by Colonel Nguyen Be. Rather than win people to the government's side, Rural Reconstruction was intended to put the government on the side of the people. The program failed for three basic reasons: (1) U.S.-GVN (see [Republic of Vietnam](#)) commitment to "conventional" military thinking; (2) inability to change the attitudes of civilian officials; and (3) the resulting corruption and misallocation of resources. The program's heart consisted of fifty-nine member Rural Reconstruction cadres trained largely by former [Vietminh](#). Cadres had the following assignments: (1) to live in villages cleared of NLF military units; (2) to gain villagers' trust and cooperation by hearing their grievances against the government; (3) to recommend or take action redressing those grievances; (4) to assist villagers in education, health, public works, and agricultural projects; and (5) to root out the NLF political and local guerrilla infrastructure. Gaining villagers' confidence was often difficult because of GVN corruption and memories of past pacification programs such as Strategic Hamlets. Villagers often feared that cadres would force them to build new strategic hamlets or force them to do other work, such as erecting defensive positions for [Regional Forces](#).

Teams were created too rapidly. Many were inadequately trained. Many were assigned to inadequately secured villages only to be driven out or killed by the NLF. Adequate security was dependent upon ridding the area of main force units and training [Popular Forces](#) to protect villages against local guerrilla attack. Such forces generally were poorly trained and poorly armed. In some instances local officials refused to arm them at all. Unable to defend themselves, much less their village, they often ran away at any perceived threat. This was a major failure since studies of the effectiveness of previous pacification programs indicated that an inability to establish adequate security precluded any meaningful decision on whether pacification programs could work (apparently overlooking the possibility that necessary security could not be established because the populace was unwilling to be "pacified"). Village chiefs and GVN officials often failed to cooperate with cadres by refusing to furnish necessary resources or to act on cadre recommendations. Complaints about corruption in particular went unheeded. Military considerations almost always took precedence over reconstruction priorities; sometimes the military destroyed reconstruction projects during their operations. Without cooperation of either villagers or GVN officials, cadres' morale plummeted. One-fourth deserted within their first year.

While the primary objective of the American effort in Vietnam officially was always pacification, the allocation of resources and the options considered indicated clearly that pacification programs were secondary to the military effort, demonstrating a curious Catch-22 logic. The United States insisted that the underlying problems were political and required a political solution. However, before a political solution could be found, stability and order had to be established. Consequently, political solutions had to be postponed until a military solution to the insurgency produced stability and order. At that point energies could be directed to development of political solutions which redressed the original causes of instability.

Ultimately, Rural Reconstruction evolved into military control with a few welfare programs. This is not because the military mentality dominated thinking on Vietnam. The military position dominated largely by default. American non-military planning was woeful, and policymakers were ignorant of the history and culture of the Vietnamese people. Furthermore, the Vietnamese High Command and GVN officials themselves were virtually out of touch with their own people. French- or American-educated, living primarily in [Saigon](#), Vietnamese officials and commanders knew little about the people and conditions of the countryside. The NLF excelled because of its intimate

knowledge of both. Rural Reconstruction was designed to copy the tactics of the NLF. The effort failed because Reconstruction cadres ultimately were dependent on Saigon and the United States, whereas NLF cadres were dependent on the people, a difference in dependency not lost on the Vietnamese peasant.

Sources: [David Halberstam](#), *The Making of a Quagmire*, 1964; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army in Vietnam*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman

## RUSK, DAVID DEAN

Dean Rusk was born on February 9, 1909, in Cherokee County, Georgia. He grew up barefooted and poor in rural Georgia, graduated from Davidson College in 1931, and then attended Oxford University as a Rhodes scholar. Rusk joined the United States Army during World War II, received a commission as an infantry officer, and saw combat as operations officer under General Joseph Stilwell in the [China](#)-Burma theater. Between 1946 and 1962 Rusk worked for the State Department as an assistant [secretary of state](#) for Far Eastern affairs, becoming a dedicated anti-Communist and advocate of the [containment](#) policy. Rusk became head of the Rockefeller Foundation in 1952 and remained there until 1960, when president-elect [John F. Kennedy](#) nominated him as his new secretary of state.

Known as "the Buddha," Rusk rarely spoke up in general meetings and had a penchant for loyalty, giving it to his superiors and expecting it from his subordinates. At first Rusk hoped to leave Vietnam to the Department of Defense as essentially a military question, but by 1963 he had lost hope in the ability of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) to govern [South Vietnam](#). Throughout 1963 Rusk became increasingly outspoken that Diem had to initiate serious reforms or be removed from office. In the process, Rusk became a more and more visible advocate of a hard-line approach to Vietnam, taking a Cold Warrior position.

During the years of the Johnson administration, Rusk's reputation as a hawk became even more obvious. He opposed any negotiated settlement to the conflict, especially as long as the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese held any military advantages in the field, and he favored an aggressive bombing campaign against [North Vietnam](#). Unlike [Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara](#) and his successor [Clark Clifford](#), Rusk never wavered in support of American policies in Vietnam, at least never publicly. Rusk refused to accept the growing conviction in 1967 that the Vietnam conflict was essentially an internal civil war originating in a nationalist rebellion, preferring instead to see it in Cold War terms as a clear case of Communist aggression, this time orchestrated by the [People's Republic of China](#). Rusk consistently supported military demands for increasing [troop](#) commitments to Vietnam, including the request after the [Tet Offensive](#) for another 200,000 soldiers. He urged President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) to stay with the war despite the increasing strength of the [antiwar movement](#) at home and the counsel of the "[Wise Old Men](#)" that the United States disengage. Rusk was disappointed with the president's decision late in March 1968 not to seek reelection. Rusk became closely associated in the public mind with administration policy in Vietnam, perhaps paying a price of sorts upon leaving office in January 1969 when most prestigious universities refused to even consider him for a faculty appointment. Ultimately, Rusk accepted a teaching post at the University of Georgia.

Sources: [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, 1965; Richard J. Walton, *Cold War and Counterrevolution: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy*, 1972; Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, 1976; Warren Cohen, *Dean Rusk*, 1980.

Charles Dobbs

## **RUSSELL, RICHARD BREVARD**

A native Georgian, Richard Russell was born on November 2, 1897, and received a law degree from the University of Georgia in 1918. He practiced law for three years and then was elected as a Democrat to the state legislature. Ten years later, at the age of thirty-three, he became the youngest governor in the history of Georgia. Russell won a seat in the U.S. Senate in the election of 1932, where he remained for the next thirty-eight years. He became a master of parliamentary maneuver and a formidable debater. Although he fought social welfare and civil rights legislation, Russell nevertheless kept great respect among liberal senators because of his ability and integrity. By 1952 Russell was a major figure in the Democratic party. He lost the presidential nomination to Adlai Stevenson that year, but as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and of the military expenditures subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, Russell wielded vast influence over military policy.

As early as 1954, Russell warned [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) against sending arms and technicians to bolster French forces in [Indochina](#). He once told [John Foster Dulles](#) that he was ``weary of seeing American soldiers being used as gladiators to be thrown into every arena around the world." When Eisenhower decided to make the commitment, Russell said that he would ``support the flag," but that ``it is going to be a long drawn-out affair costly in both blood and Treasure." Russell remained faithful to his word. As long as American forces were fighting in Vietnam, he supported the policies of successive presidents. But he regretted the intervention, calling it ``one of the great tragedies of our history."

Throughout the summer and fall of 1970, Senator Richard Russell's health deteriorated. He had to enter Walter Reed Medical Center on December 8, 1970, and died there on January 21, 1971, at the age of seventy-three.

Sources: *Current Biography*, 1949, pp. 536-39; Obituary, *New York Times*, January 22, 1971.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.



## **RUSSO, ANTHONY J., JR.**

Born in Suffolk, Virginia, on October 14, 1936, Anthony (Tony) Russo was codefendant with [Daniel Ellsberg](#) in the [Pentagon Papers](#) Trial of 1972-73. Russo attended the Virginia Polytechnic Institute where he received a B.S. in aeronautical engineering in 1960 and participated in the cooperative engineering program at NASA's Langley Space Laboratory. In 1961, he entered Princeton University and earned an M.S. in aeronautical engineering in 1963 and a master's of public affairs degree from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs in 1964. There he assisted Oskar Morgenstern in the Econometrics Research Program and studied foreign policy under Richard Falk, Edmundo Flores, [George Kennan](#), and Klaus Knorr. In June 1964, Russo joined the [Rand Corporation](#). He then spent twenty-four months in [South Vietnam](#), between February 1966 and January 1968, where he interviewed prisoners for Rand's "Viet Cong Motivation and Morale" study for the U.S. Department of Defense. Russo also participated in a statistical assessment of the U.S.-sponsored crop destruction program. These research experiences led Russo to begin questioning U.S. policy in Vietnam. Independently, Russo also published a study to show that, contrary to some earlier research, local and peasant support for the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)) tended to be strongest in South Vietnam's poorest provinces and hamlets (see Russo, "Economic and Social Correlates of Government Control in South Vietnam," in Ivo K. Feierabend et al., eds., *Anger, Violence, and Politics*, 1972). Russo was dismissed by the Rand Corporation for "budgetary reasons" in July 1968, but was allowed to remain on staff to complete pending work. He left Rand in January 1969 to join the firm of Social Engineering Technology in Los Angeles, California. He also became involved in poverty and civil rights work in Los Angeles. In December 1970, he joined the Research and Information Systems Office of the Los Angeles County Probation Department. Russo and Daniel Ellsberg first met at the Rand villa in [Saigon](#) in 1965 but did not become friends until 1968 when they occupied offices across the hall from each other at Rand's headquarters in Santa Monica, California. When Ellsberg sought a way to copy the Pentagon Papers in 1969, Russo arranged for the rental of a Xerox machine at an advertising agency owned by his friend Lynda Sinay. Russo then assisted Ellsberg in photocopying the "secret" documents. He was first questioned by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) about his role in the publication of the Pentagon Papers on June 19, 1971, but refused to answer FBI questions. On June 23, he was subpoenaed to testify before a federal grand jury in Los Angeles. Despite a grant of immunity, Russo refused to testify unless his testimony could be made public. On August 16, he began serving a forty-seven-day jail term for contempt of court. During portions of his imprisonment, according to Russo, he was shackled and beaten, placed in solitary confinement, and abused for leading a twenty-one-day hunger strike in protest of government actions against prisoners in the Attica state prison in New York. On October 1, U.S. District Court Judge Warren J. Ferguson released Russo from prison and ordered the government to provide Russo with a transcript of any testimony he might be required to give to the grand jury. Assistant U.S. Attorney David R. Nissen held the order to be "unlawful" and refused to comply with it. Russo again declined to testify before the grand jury. On December 29, the grand jury issued a new indictment in the Pentagon Papers case, which added new charges against Ellsberg and also included criminal charges against Russo. The trial of Ellsberg and Russo opened in Los Angeles on July 10, 1972. In October 1972, during a stay in the trial, Russo testified at the third annual session of the Commission of Enquiry into U.S. War Crimes in [Indochina](#), held in Copenhagen, Denmark. On May 11, 1973, U.S. District Court Judge William Matthew Byrne dismissed all charges against Ellsberg and Russo and declared a mistrial in their case because of "improper government conduct." After the trial, Russo continued his antiwar activity, sought to organize a nationwide campaign to impeach President [Richard M. Nixon](#), and ultimately returned to social work.

Sources: [Mike Gravel](#), ed., *Pentagon Papers*, 1971; Peter Schrag, *Test of Loyalty*, 1974.

John Kincaid





## S

``SANITIZE``

``SHORT-TIMER``

``STREET WITHOUT JOY``

II CORPS

II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

SAIGON

SALISBURY, HARRISON EVANS

SAM

SAN ANTONIO FORMULA

SANCTUARIES

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SCHLESINGER, JAMES RODNEY

SEABEES

SEAL TEAMS

SEALORDS

SEARCH AND DESTROY STRATEGY

SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SECRETARY OF STATE

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SEVENTH FLEET

SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE OF 1972

SHARP, ULYSSES S. GRANT

SHOUP, DAVID MONROE

SIGMA II

SIHANOUK, NORODOM

SILENT MAJORITY SPEECH

SLAM

SLICK

SMART BOMBS

SMITH, WALTER BEDELL

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

SON TAY RAID

SORTIES

SOUTH VIETNAMESE MARINE CORPS

SOUTH VIETNAMESE NATIONAL POLICE

SOUTH VIETNAMESE NAVY

SOUTHEAST ASIA TREATY ORGANIZATION (SEATO)

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SPRING MOBILIZATION TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM

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## **``SANITIZE''**

``Sanitize" was one of a number of euphemisms developed to refer to assassination. It became infamous in conjunction with the [Central Intelligence Agency's Phoenix Program](#) in which as many as 20,000 South Vietnamese were killed because of suspected ties to the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)). Still, the term was widely used before the Phoenix Program to describe political assassinations carried out by South Vietnamese and American personnel. Critics charged that use of the term was indicative of the war's degrading and dehumanizing nature. The act of killing people who may or may not have been ``innocent" was masked by a sterile, antiseptic term which occluded its reality even from those actively involved in the deaths. Critics saw development of such terminology as insidious, part of what they perceived as the larger fabric of lies surrounding the war and of how its very nature served to debase and degrade both those who participated in it and the United States as a nation.

Sources: Loren Baritz, *Backfire*, 1985; Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978.

Samuel Freeman

## **``SHORT-TIMER''**

A ``short-timer" was an individual who had a relatively short time remaining on his or her assignment to duty in Southeast Asia. Unlike previous wars, when troops had been in the service ``for the duration," during the Vietnam War, troops were assigned to the Southeast Asia combat area for a limited period, either twelve months (U.S. Army) or thirteen months (U.S. Marines). When the soldier's [365 days](#) in the combat zone ended, he was reassigned. As a result, each individual knew the precise date he would be eligible to leave the combat zone, and those with relatively little time left to serve in Southeast Asia were ``short-timers." The term acquired an ethos and became the subject of countless hours of discussion. ``Short-timers" became focal points of envy in every unit and manifested their high status by publicly demonstrating how soon they would be reassigned. Two common ways of showing how ``short" an individual had were by calendars drawn on helmet covers and the ``short-timer's stick," which was notched so that each day a knob could be removed until there were no knobs remaining.

Source: Al Santoli, *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-three American Soldiers Who Fought It*, 1981.

Stafford T. Thomas



## ``STREET WITHOUT JOY''

Highway 1 is Vietnam's north-south highway. During both [Indochina](#) wars, opposing forces tried to control it. Running south to north, Highway 1 went from [Saigon](#) to [Bien Hoa](#), Phan Rang, [Nha Trang](#), Tuy Hoa, [Qui Nhon](#), Quang Ngai, Chu Lai, Quang Nam, [Da Nang](#), [Hue](#), and [Quang Tri](#), and then across the [Demilitarized Zone](#) to Dong Hoi, Vinh, Ninh Binh, and [Hanoi](#). The stretch from Hue north to Quang Tri City ran through major [Vietminh](#) and later [Vietcong](#) strongholds. French soldiers, used to costly and futile efforts to clear the road, referred to it sardonically as *la rue sans jolie*, ``the street without joy." American soldiers easily understood that perspective.

Sources: Terrence Maitland and Steven Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: Raising the Stakes*, 1982; Danny J. Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976; [Bernard Fall](#), *Street Without Joy: Insurgency in Vietnam*, 1961.

Samuel Freeman

## II CORPS

II Corps was the second allied combat tactical zone in [South Vietnam](#). It included the [Central Highlands](#) and contiguous central lowlands, and was known politically as the Central Vietnam Highlands, one of the four major administrative political units of South Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s. II Corps was also known as Military Region 2 (MR 2). The military and administrative headquarters of II Corps was in [Pleiku](#), and it consisted of the following provinces: Kontum, Binh Dinh, Pleiku, Phu Bon, Phu Yen, Darlac, Khanh Hoa, Quang Duc, Tuyen Duc, Ninh Thuan, Lam Dong, and Binh Thuan. The major [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) units operating in II Corps were the 22nd and 23rd [divisions](#).

Sources: Harvey Smith, et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

Headquartered at [Bien Hoa](#), the II Field Force Vietnam was in the [Republic of Vietnam](#) between March 1966 and May 1971, assisting [ARVN](#) forces (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) in [III](#) and [IV Corps](#), protecting [Saigon](#), controlling U.S. military operations in the [Mekong Delta](#), and directing the invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) in 1970. II Field Force Vietnam was a corps-level military organization. The following individuals commanded II Field Force Vietnam: Major General Jonathan Seaman (March 1966-March 1967); Lt. General Bruce Palmer, Jr. (March 1967-July 1967); Lt. General [Frederick C. Weyand](#) (July 1967-August 1968); Lt. General Walter Kerwin, Jr. (August 1968-April 1969); Lt. General Julian Ewell (April 1969-April 1970); and Lt. General Michael S. Davison (April 1970-May 1971).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## SAIGON

Saigon was the capital city of [South Vietnam](#) during the Vietnam War. Originally settled by Cambodians, Saigon has for centuries been a major port city in Southeast Asia. It is located approximately 45 miles up the Ben Nghe River, or Saigon River, from the South China Sea. The French began using the name Saigon in 1861 when they moved into the city and prepared for their takeover of the rest of the country. By 1980 the city had a population of nearly two million people concentrated into 27 square miles, making it one of the most population-dense areas in the world. Right next to Saigon is the city of [Cholon](#), composed mostly of ethnic [Chinese](#). In 1956 [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) named Saigon the capital city of South Vietnam. When North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) forces overran Saigon in 1975, they renamed it [Ho Chi Minh City](#).

Sources: Virginia Thompson, *French Indochina*, 1968; Ellen J. Hammer, *Vietnam, Yesterday and Today*, 1966.

## SALISBURY, HARRISON EVANS

Harrison Evans Salisbury was born on November 14, 1908, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Between 1930 and 1948 Salisbury worked for the United Press and traveled widely in his assignments. He joined the staff of the *New York Times* in 1948. Salisbury was assigned as Moscow bureau chief for the *Times* and remained there until 1953. He became assistant managing editor of the *Times* in 1964. Late in 1966 Salisbury traveled to [North Vietnam](#) to report on the effects of American bombing. His reports were controversial on two levels: first, he confirmed North Vietnamese claims that civilian [casualties](#) from American bombing were quite high; and second, he argued that the bombing efforts were only increasing the resolve of the North Vietnamese to continue the war effort. During the 1960s and 1970s Salisbury continued to write widely for the *Times*, and has become widely known as the patriarch of American journalism.

Sources: Harrison E. Salisbury, *Behind the Lines: Hanoi, December 23, 1966-January 7, 1967*, 1967; *Who's Who in America, 1976-1977*, 1977.

## SAM

The acronym SAM described surface-to-air missiles employed by the North Vietnamese against United States [Navy](#) and Air Force bombers and [fighter-bombers](#) (see fighters). The standard SAM was the Soviet SA-2 Guideline, a two-stage missile equipped with a 285-pound warhead and a maximum range of 30 miles. The first SA-2 Guidelines were deployed in the summer of 1965, and by the end of the war more than 200 SA-2 sites were operational, most of them protecting [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong. Because of the United States "[Wild Weasel](#)" program and various other electronic jamming efforts, the North Vietnamese used 150 SA-2s for every American aircraft they destroyed.

Source: Anthony Robinson, "Air Forces in Vietnam," in John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*, 1985.

## SAN ANTONIO FORMULA

On September 29, 1967, in San Antonio, Texas, President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) delivered a speech in which he offered to stop the bombing of [North Vietnam](#) if [Ho Chi Minh](#) would agree to begin serious negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, and if he would promise not to use the bombing halt as an opportunity to increase their [infiltration](#) of troops and supplies into [South Vietnam](#). In diplomatic and journalistic circles, the president's offer became known as the San Antonio Formula. [Hanoi](#) never responded positively to the offer, even though Johnson reiterated it on March 31, 1968, after the [Tet Offensive](#) and his own decision not to seek reelection. For six months Johnson unilaterally stopped all bombing of North Vietnam above the nineteenth parallel, but the North Vietnamese did not seriously consider a negotiated settlement at the time.

Sources: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; *New York Times*, September 30, 1986.

## SANCTUARIES

Throughout the war in [Vietnam](#) the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) would use "hit and run" tactics and often fled across the border into sanctuaries in neutral [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea). Although the inability of a neutral nation to keep a belligerent from exploiting its territory allows, according to international law, the other belligerent to use force on neutral territory, the United States had a difficult time with the issue. Periodically regular American military units would cross the border in "hot pursuit," and [Studies and Observation Groups](#) regularly operated in Cambodia and Laos, as did naval and air force units bombing [infiltration](#) routes. But not until the Cambodian invasion of 1970 (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) and the Laotian invasion of 1971 (see [Lam Son 719](#)) did the United States openly assault North Vietnamese and Vietcong strongholds across the border. Although those invasions posed serious threats to the integrity of the sanctuaries, the subsequent [withdrawal](#) of American and South Vietnamese forces allowed the North Vietnamese and Vietcong to return to their original positions.

Sources: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, 1982; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Keith William Nolan, *Into Laos: The Story of Dewey Canyon II/Lam Son 719*, 1986.



## SCHLESINGER, ARTHUR MEIER, JR.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., was born in Columbus, Ohio, on October 15, 1917. The son of distinguished historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, he attended public schools, Phillips Exeter Academy, and Harvard. His senior thesis, a biography of Orestes A. Brownson, was published in 1939. Schlesinger joined the Harvard faculty that same year. He won the Pulitzer Prize for his book *The Age of Jackson* (1945). His trilogy *The Age of Roosevelt* in the late 1950s firmly established Schlesinger as one of America's most outstanding historians. In 1961, President [John F. Kennedy](#) appointed Schlesinger as a special adviser, and he served until Kennedy's assassination in 1963. Schlesinger's book *A Thousand Days*, though essentially an apology, was nevertheless a cogent description of the "Age of Camelot."

Schlesinger, although a supporter of the antipoverty and civil rights thrusts of [Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society](#), broke with the administration over Vietnam. In 1966 Schlesinger wrote *The Bitter Heritage*, a history of American involvement in [South Vietnam](#), and he accused American policymakers of confusing communism and nationalism, backing an essentially fascist dictator in the person of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), and using conventional tactics in a futile guerrilla war (see [Vietcong](#)). Schlesinger denied the reality of the [domino theory](#) and doubted that the [Chinese](#) (see [People's Republic of China](#)), traditionally the enemies of the Vietnamese, had any intention of intervening. After leaving the Kennedy administration, Schlesinger continued teaching and writing. He is currently a professor emeritus of history at the City University of New York.

Sources: Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941-1966*, 1966; *Directory of American Scholars, History*, 1984.

## SCHLESINGER, JAMES RODNEY

James Schlesinger was born in New York City on February 15, 1929. He graduated from Harvard University in 1950 and then took the M.A. and Ph.D. there in economics in 1952 and 1956. Between 1955 and 1963 Schlesinger taught at the University of Virginia. He spent the next six years with the [Rand Corporation](#). During his years at Virginia and Rand, Schlesinger wrote two important books: *The Political Economy of National Security* (1960) and *Issues in Defense Economics* (1967). Schlesinger became assistant director of the Bureau of the Budget in 1969, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission in 1971, head of the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) in 1973, and [secretary of defense](#) later in 1973. He served in that position throughout the [Watergate](#) crisis involving President [Richard M. Nixon](#) and the fall of the [Republic of Vietnam](#) in 1975. Schlesinger left the Pentagon in 1975, served for a time as a visiting scholar at Johns Hopkins University, and then became secretary of energy under President Jimmy Carter in 1977. Schlesinger left the Carter administration in 1979 and became a senior adviser to the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University.

Source: *Who's Who in America, 1984-1985*, 1985.

## SEABEES

Naval construction units, known as Seabees, were active in the Vietnam conflict from the very beginning of the American presence there. As early as 1954, the Amphibious Construction Battalion 1 was constructing refugee camps in South Vietnam, and between 1962 and 1965 they built camps for the [Fifth Special Forces Group](#). During that period they were also heavily engaged in civic action programs building airstrips, bridges, dams, roads, housing, and schools. Naval Mobile Construction Battalions, each staffed with 24 officers and 738 enlisted men, began arriving at [Da Nang](#) in May 1965 as part of the 30th Naval Construction Regiment. The 3rd Naval Construction Brigade arrived in Vietnam on June 1, 1966. The 32nd Naval Construction Regiment was sent to Vietnam on August 1, 1967, to take care of construction needs in the [Hue](#)-Phu Bai region. Most Seabee activities took place in [I Corps](#), where they constructed waterfront facilities, storage areas, ammunition dumps, roads, and bridges. The Seabees were based at Da Nang, Chu Lai, Hue-Phu Bai, Dong Tam, and [Quang Tri](#). At their peak strength in 1968, Seabees totaled more than 10,000 men. The last Seabee unit to leave Vietnam was the 3rd Naval Construction Brigade, which departed on November 1, 1971.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Richard Tregakis, *Southeast Asia: Building the Bases: The History of Construction in Southeast Asia*, 1975.

## SEAL TEAMS

Early in 1961 teams of United States [Special Forces](#) units began arriving in [South Vietnam](#) to train the Vietnamese in [counterinsurgency](#). The first Special Forces teams were army units, but the United States [Navy](#) also established its own counterinsurgency groups, known as sea, air, and land (SEAL) teams. The first SEAL groups arrived in South Vietnam in 1966 and went into the swamps of the [Mekong Delta](#). They engaged in a variety of activities. SEAL teams infiltrated [Vietcong](#) areas in small boats or as frogmen, parachuted in or landed by helicopters, conducted "hunter-killer" raids, worked with [Studies and Observation Groups](#) intelligence teams, and operated from fast-moving airboats and Seawolf helicopters. The SEAL were supported by naval Task Force 116 (see [Mobile Riverine Force](#)).

Source: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1973*, 1984.

## SEALORDS

SEALORDS was an acronym for South East Asian Lake Ocean River Delta Strategy. In February 1969, as part of the [Vietnamization](#) program, the United States [Navy](#) began handing over to [South Vietnam](#) a fleet of nearly 250 patrol craft and 500 motorized junks which had formerly been part of the [Mobile Riverine Force](#) and Task Forces 116 and 117. The [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#), assisted by U.S. naval advisers, took control of the patrol craft and the program was renamed SEALORDS. Virtually all of the craft fell into the hands of the [Vietcong](#) and the North Vietnamese in 1975.

Sources: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asia Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984; William B. Fulton, *Riverine Operations, 1966-1969*, 1973.

## SEARCH AND DESTROY STRATEGY

The term "search and destroy" was the euphemism for the strategy of [attrition](#) the United States employed in Vietnam between 1965 and 1968. Developed primarily by Generals [William Westmoreland](#) and William Depuy, "search and destroy" relied on the naive assumption that superior American technology and firepower would eventually inflict [casualties](#) so severe that the [Vietcong](#) and the [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) would be unable to sustain the war. Instead of the [enclave strategy](#) which would confine the United States to a defensive posture, "search and destroy" meant seeking out the enemy and, with [artillery](#), [air power](#), and ground forces, destroying their base areas and personnel. Once the main NVA regiments had been eliminated, the United States hoped the South Vietnamese would be able to deal effectively with the Vietcong.

But the search and destroy strategy rested on a major assumption, that the United States would be able to inflict massive losses on the North Vietnamese without itself experiencing unacceptable [casualty](#) levels. That assumption, however, was contradicted by two basic facts in Vietnam: first, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese retained the strategic initiative and could pick and choose their battles, including the timing of attacks and the resource investment; and second, more than 200,000 young men reached draft age in North Vietnam each year, allowing them to resupply their military units. Both of these facts together guaranteed that the United States would at best only be able to fight them to a standstill. The irony, of course, was that the Vietcong and North Vietnamese were also banking on their ability to inflict unacceptable losses on the United States until the patience of the American public wore out and the troops were withdrawn. Their scenario proved to be the correct one. The [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968 was a political disaster in the United States, forcing [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)'s decision not to seek reelection and convincing large numbers of Americans that the war in Vietnam was not worth the effort and that the United States might not be capable of "winning" by any means. The [election of 1968](#) turned out to be the strategic watershed of the Vietnam War. Between 1969 and 1973 the United States pursued a policy of staged [withdrawal](#) rather than trying to "search and destroy" the enemy. The [war of attrition](#) had failed.

Sources: Robert Shaplen, *The Road from War: Vietnam, 1965-1970*, 1970; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam 1950-1975*, 1986; W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzell, *The Lessons of Vietnam*, 1977; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, 1982.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

During the course of the war the United States Air Force (USAF) rescue service recovered several thousand American and allied fighting men who went down in the jungles, mountains, and waters of Southeast Asia. The first USAF rescue team, consisting of three officers and three airmen, arrived in [South Vietnam](#) on temporary duty on January 10, 1962. Based at [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#), near [Saigon](#), this unit's mission was to organize a search and rescue (SAR) control center and network throughout the country. In April 1962 the six-man cadre was officially designated Detachment 3, Pacific Air Rescue Center, with overall responsibility for rescue operations within the theater. Its job was especially difficult at first, for the detachment had no aircraft and had to rely on American advisers to provide helicopter assistance for air rescue missions.

In addition to not having its own aircraft, the detachment lacked most of the basic equipment needed for an effective SAR system. For example, in the early days of its operations the SAR center sent requests for help to operational units by bicycle, a method faster and more reliable than trying to use the existing Vietnamese telephone network. Its reliance on the United States Army and later the United States [Marines](#) for helicopter support also created problems because they were not prepared for rescue missions and had other duties which they considered of higher priority.

Very quickly after the establishment of the rescue center in Vietnam, it became clear to air force officials that specialized aircraft and devices were needed to operate effectively over the jungle and mountainous terrain of Southeast Asia. As a result, in November 1963 the commander of the Air Rescue Service pressed for the acquisition of the CH-3 single rotor cargo amphibian helicopter for use in the theater. It had a forward speed of about 150 mph, ability to remain aloft more than four hours, and a range of approximately 500 miles. He reported that the Air Service was not equipped to do the job in Southeast Asia and that, by ``utter default," air force combat crews were ``made dependent upon ill-equipped and ill-trained U.S. Army and Marine Corps helicopter resources diverted to accomplish our mission... Their noble efforts have wrought confusion and even disaster when engaged in some attempts to prosecute Air Service missions."

In response, Headquarters USAF ordered a number of combat-modified CH-3s. But, pending their manufacture, the Air Force was forced to use existing HH-43s and HU-16s, decent helicopters but not as well suited to jungle operations as the CH-3. In March 1964 three USAF HH-43 units were transferred from the [Philippines](#) and Okinawa to Southeast Asia. In June 1964 the first temporary-duty contingent, two HH-43s and thirty-six personnel, was sent to Nakhon Phanom, [Thailand](#). That same month the 31st Air Rescue Squadron at Clark Air Base, the Philippines, deployed two HU-16 amphibian helicopters to [Da Nang](#), South Vietnam, to provide rescue service for American airmen downed in the Gulf of [Tonkin](#). Two HU-16s from the 33d Air Rescue Squadron also were deployed to Korat Air Base, Thailand, to support USAF operations there and in [Laos](#). By January 1, 1965, five helicopter detachments were operating in the theater: at [Bien Hoa](#) and Da Nang, South Vietnam, and at Udorn, Nakhon Phanom, Takhli, and Korat, Thailand.

Air rescue in Vietnam entered a new phase in January 1966 when the air force activated the 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group at Tan Son Nhut Air Base to serve as the primary rescue agency in Southeast Asia. The group eventually directed the activities of four rescue squadrons and ten rescue detachments based throughout South Vietnam and Thailand. These units were solely responsible for the recovery of 3,883 flyers between 1964 and mid-August 1973. Of this number, 2,807 American, 926 army, 680 navy, and 1,201 air force, aircrew members were rescued. The rescuemen also saved 555 allied military flyers, 476 civilians, and 45 other unidentified persons. During the course of the war in Vietnam, 71 American search and rescue men were killed and 45 aircraft destroyed while conducting recovery operations.

Source: Earl H. Tilford, Jr., *Search and Rescue in Southeast Asia, 1961-1975*, 1980.

Roger D. Launius



## SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

In 1946 Congress passed the National Security Act, which coordinated the army, navy, and air force into a Department of Defense, with a secretary of defense enjoying cabinet status. The secretary of defense is in the direct chain of military command, between the president of the United States and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)). During the course of direct American involvement in the Vietnam War, seven men served as secretary of defense. Neil H. McElroy was serving under [Dwight Eisenhower](#) when the U.S. commitment began to escalate, and in December 1959 Thomas S. Gates, Jr., replaced him. When [John F. Kennedy](#) took over the White House in 1961, [Robert S. McNamara](#) became the new secretary of defense. He served under Kennedy and [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) until Johnson let him go in March 1968, replacing him with [Clark M. Clifford](#). When [Richard M. Nixon](#) took over the White House in January 1969, Clifford left the Pentagon and [Melvin Laird](#) became the new secretary of defense. Laird resigned in January 1973 and Elliot Richardson took over. Richardson resigned in July 1973 and [James Schlesinger](#) assumed the post and remained there until the war ended.

Sources: Guenter Lewy, *American in Vietnam*, 1978; Douglas Kinnard, *The Secretary of Defense*, 1980.

## SECRETARY OF STATE

The secretary of state is a cabinet-level position and chief foreign policy officer for the United States. During the years of the war in Vietnam, five men served as secretary of state. [John Foster Dulles](#) (1953-59) and Christian Herter (1959-61) served under President [Dwight Eisenhower](#); [Dean Rusk](#) (1961-69) served under presidents [John F. Kennedy](#) and [Lyndon B. Johnson](#); [William P. Rogers](#) (1969-73) served under President [Richard M. Nixon](#); and [Henry Kissinger](#) (1973-77) served under Presidents Nixon and [Gerald Ford](#).

Source: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978.

## SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Long considered one of the most prestigious of Senate committees, the Foreign Relations Committee has traditionally been identified with bipartisan support of foreign policy. Its leadership has frequently cooperated closely with whatever administration has happened to be in power. [J. William Fulbright](#), the Arkansas Democrat who became chairman in 1959 and remained in that position through 1974, was floor manager for the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) when it passed the Senate in 1964. However, by 1965 Fulbright and others on the committee were having strong second thoughts about [Johnson](#) administration Vietnam policies. The committee became a focal point for the gradually emerging opposition in Washington. Early in 1966 the committee held nationally televised hearings on the war policy. Chairman Fulbright called both administration officials and outside experts to testify, and the hearings served as the first national forum on Vietnam.

As the committee continued to examine Vietnam policy, a confrontational attitude developed between it and the executive branch, and the committee became the stronghold of those favoring a more assertive congressional role in foreign policy. In 1967-68, the committee conducted an inquiry into the events leading up to the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and raised many questions about the accounts provided by the Johnson administration. In March 1968, following the [Tet Offensive](#) and at a pivotal political point, the committee again held highly publicized hearings on Johnson administration policies. When the [Nixon](#) administration took office in 1969, the committee maintained its pressure for an end to American military involvement in Southeast Asia, and particularly opposed the 1970 incursion into [Cambodia](#) (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) and the American bombing in Cambodia (see [Operation Menu](#)). Although the committee was a forum for vigorous discussion, and several of its members became leading dissenters from executive branch policies on Vietnam, the committee did not until 1973-74 begin to impose major legislative restrictions on U.S. activities in Southeast Asia.

Sources: Anthony Austin, *The President's War*, 1971; Thomas M. Franck and Edward Weisband, *Foreign Policy by Congress*, 1979; Haynes Johnson and Bernard Gwertzman, *Fulbright: The Dissenter*, 1968; Edward P. Haley, *Congress and the Fall of South Vietnam and Cambodia*, 1982.

Hoyt Purvis

## SEVENTH AIR FORCE

The presence of the United States Air Force (USAF) in Vietnam began in 1961 when the 4400th Combat Crew Training [Squadron](#) was deployed to [Bien Hoa](#). Their activities were code-named Farmgate, and using B-26 bombers, C-47 transports, T-28D Nomads, and [A-1E Skyraiders](#) they trained Vietnamese pilots and provided close air support for [ARVN](#) operations (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam). Until April 1966, USAF operations in Vietnam were under the direction of the Second Air Division, but the massive buildup of 1965 required command reorganization; and on April 1, 1966, the Seventh Air Force, stationed at [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#) outside [Saigon](#), took over. The Seventh Air Force had tactical fighter wings at Bien Hoa in [III Corps](#), [Cam Ranh Bay](#) and Phan Rang in [II Corps](#), and [Da Nang](#) in [I Corps](#). During the war seven individuals commanded the Seventh Air Force: Lt. General Joseph Moore (April-July 1966); General [William Momyer](#) (July 1966-August 1968); General [George S. Brown](#) (August 1968-September 1970); General Lucius Clay (September 1970-August 1971); General [John Lavelle](#) (August 1971-April 1972); General [John W. Vogt](#) (April 1972-October 1973); and Lt. General Timothy O'Keefe (October 1972-March 1973).

Source: Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973*, 1977.

## SEVENTH FLEET

The Seventh Fleet was responsible for all U.S. naval operations in the Western Pacific in general and Southeast Asia in particular between 1965 and 1973. During the years of the Vietnam conflict, the Seventh Fleet was commanded by Vice Admiral Roy L. Johnson (June 1964-March 1965), Vice Admiral Paul P. Blackburn (March 1965-October 1965), Rear Admiral Joseph W. Williams (October 1965-December 1965), Vice Admiral John J. Hyland (December 1965-November 1967), Vice Admiral William F. Bringle (November 1967-March 1970), Vice Admiral Maurice F. Weisner (March 1970-June 1971), Vice Admiral William P. Mack (June 1971-May 1972), and Vice Admiral James Holloway (May 1972 to the end of the war). In the Seventh Fleet, Task Force 77 was the aircraft carrier attack unit; Task Force 76 was the amphibious unit; Task Force 73 was the logistic support unit; Task Force 70.8 was the group of destroyers and cruisers responsible for shore bombardment; and Task Force 117 was the Riverine Assault Force (see [Mobile Riverine Force](#)).

Source: Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asia Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

## SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE OF 1972

Issued by [Richard Nixon](#) during his precedent-breaking diplomatic mission to the [People's Republic of China](#) in 1972, the Shanghai Communique promised that the United States would reduce its military presence on Taiwan as soon as diplomatic tensions began to ease. The promise encouraged the [Chinese](#) that the United States was finally preparing to recognize them as the legitimate representative of the Chinese people, but the North Vietnamese were extremely suspicious. The last thing they wanted was improved relations between the United States and China. [Mao Zedong](#) had been pressing North Vietnam to consider a reduced military effort in South Vietnam, and the North Vietnamese interpreted the Shanghai Communique as part of a larger Chinese-American conspiracy to reduce their influence in Southeast Asia.

Source: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## SHARP, ULYSSES S. GRANT

U. S. Grant Sharp was born on April 2, 1906, in Chinook, Montana. After graduating from the United States Naval Academy in 1927, Sharp rose through the officer ranks. He commanded a minesweeper during World War II and in June 1964 became [commander in chief, Pacific Command](#) (CINCPAC), with its 400 ships, 3,500 aircraft, and 500,000 men and women spread out over 85 million square miles. Sharp oversaw the Vietnam buildup through the [Tet Offensive](#) early in 1968. Sharp frequently advocated more intensive bombing of [North Vietnam](#), asserting that "toughness" was "the only policy that the Communists understand." He retired in July 1968, and his memoir, *Strategy for Defeat* (1978), gives his alternative to the military policy U.S. forces implemented in Vietnam as well as a general prescription for the future.

Sources: U. S. Grant Sharp, *Strategy for Defeat*, 1978; *Who's Who in America, 1964-1965*, 1965; Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asian Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

Dudley Acker

## SHOUP, DAVID MONROE

An aspiring poet with the world's largest private collection of sake cups and bottles, Shoup became commandant of the [Marine Corps](#) when President [Eisenhower](#) elevated him over several senior generals in 1959. Born in Indiana in 1904, Shoup attended DePauw University on an academic scholarship and after receiving his commission in 1927 spent the prewar years at sea, in naval yards and [China](#). After duty in Iceland in 1941, Shoup was wounded while serving as a [division](#) operations officer on Guadalcanal (1942) and earned a second Purple Heart, plus the Medal of Honor, while commanding the initial assault at Tarawa (1943).

Although Shoup missed service in [Korea](#), top staff and command billets marked his rise to commandant, and once confirmed by the Senate he began issuing pithy, handwritten "Shoupisms" that challenged tradition and abolished "swagger sticks," "drumming out" marines convicted by courts-martial, gun salutes preceding his post inspections, and the custom allowing senior officers to select staffs that would follow them from post to post for years. Shoup also presided over the transition from pure amphibious doctrine to the vertical assault, participated in the Bay of Pigs and Cuban Missile Crisis decisions, and alone among the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)) favored the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963.

Shoup retired after the [Kennedy](#) assassination and held positions with an insurance firm and presidential commissions on amateur athletics and the Selective Service before emerging as a prominent Vietnam War critic in May 1966. "I don't think the whole of Southeast Asia, as related to the present and future safety and freedom of the people of this country," he told a Los Angeles college audience, "is worth the life or limb of a single American." Although often identified as an activist, Shoup published only one article, testified twice before Congress, and gave a few short interviews to the press. In declining health, he loaned his name if not his skills to the peace movement and mostly confined his arguments to practical military concerns: "I was among the first," he said in a final interview in 1971, "to say we could not win because we were not permitted to go to the heart of the war, to [North Vietnam](#). As soon as we get out, North Vietnam will be able to move right in and take over. After all that killing, it is frustrating, frustrating." Shoup died in 1983, less than eight years after the fall of [Saigon](#).

Source: Dudley Acker, Jr., "The World According to Shoup," unpublished manuscript, Northern Arizona University, April 1985.

Dudley Acker



## SIGMA II

In 1963, as the political and military situation in [South Vietnam](#) was deteriorating, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)) staged a series of war games carrying the code name Sigma I. The outcome confirmed some of their worst fears: that a military victory over the [Vietcong](#) in South Vietnam would require more than 500,000 American combat troops. In September 1964, the Joint Chiefs of Staff conducted another war game scenario for South Vietnam, this time with [national security adviser McGeorge Bundy](#) participating. Known as Sigma II, the games were designed to assess the impact of a major air offensive against [North Vietnam](#). The results were no more encouraging than those of Sigma I. Indeed, it seemed, from the results of Sigma II at least, that the United States had little chance of stopping a Vietcong victory. Nevertheless, political and diplomatic events during the next eight months pushed the United States closer and closer to military intervention on a large scale.

Source: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## SIHANOUK, NORODOM

Born in 1922 in [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), Norodom Sihanouk was crowned king of Cambodia by French officials in 1941. He functioned as a puppet ruler until 1954 when, after the French defeat at [Dien Bien Phu](#), Cambodia was given its independence. Between 1954 and 1970, Sihanouk tried to maintain Cambodian [neutrality](#) between the [People's Republic of China](#) and the Vietnamese, and between the United States and the major Communist powers, but it proved to be an impossible task. When the American buildup in [South Vietnam](#) began in 1965, Sihanouk started leaning toward the Vietnamese, but that only lasted until [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) troops began exploiting his neutrality. In 1969 Sihanouk acquiesced to American requests for secret bombing of NVA installations in Cambodian territory, and in March 1970, while he was visiting the [Soviet Union](#) and asking them to assist him in expelling the NVA troops, he was deposed by [Lon Nol](#). Sihanouk then moved to Peking, hoping but failing to get [Chinese](#) support in his attempt to regain power. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Sihanouk periodically tried to regain his throne in Cambodia but failed.

Sources: *International Who's Who, 1971-1972*, 1972; William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1979; Ben Kiernan, "How [Pol Pot](#) Came to Power," Ph.D. diss., 1986.

## SILENT MAJORITY SPEECH

President [Richard Nixon](#)'s November 3, 1969, "silent majority" speech was made in response to the massive antiwar protest of the [Moratorium Day](#) demonstration of October 15 and in anticipation of the moratorium days set for mid-November. In this televised speech, Nixon both attacked the [antiwar movement](#) as subversive of his administration's policies and outlined a plan of action for the future. He made a patriotic appeal to "the great silent majority" of Americans to support his search for a "just and lasting peace" as an alternative to immediate [withdrawal](#) which, he stated, would lead to "a collapse of confidence in American leadership, not only in Asia but throughout the world." Nixon outlined the history of American involvement in Vietnam since his inauguration, and stated that the previous administrations had "Americanized the war," but his administration would henceforth "Vietnamize the search for peace." To this end, he described a plan of withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam to correspond with the buildup and strengthening of South Vietnam's forces. He then attacked the antiwar movement as a "vocal minority" and stated that "North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that." Despite the White House claim of 80,000 letters and telegrams of support following the speech, the Moratorium Day demonstrations of mid-November exceeded their October counterparts. Nevertheless, Nixon's appeal to patriotism and his promise of [Vietnamization](#) and the consequent return of American troops marked the beginning of the end of the massive antiwar demonstrations of the Vietnam era.

Sources: Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 1978; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald L. Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984.

Linda Alkana

## SLAM

SLAM was the acronym for "seek, locate, annihilate, monitor," a concept developed by General [William M. Momyer](#), commander of the [Seventh Air Force](#). First introduced during Operation [Neutralize](#) in September 1967 at the siege of [Con Thien](#), SLAM involved an overall coordination of [B-52](#) air strikes, tactical air support, [naval bombardment](#), [artillery](#) assaults, and ground fire. B-52 Stratofortresses struck first and were followed by tactical air attacks, naval gunfire, and artillery barrages, all of them concentrated in small areas. For the next five years SLAM was the standard approach to concentrating American firepower.

Sources: Terrence Maitland and Peter McInerney, *The Vietnam Experience: A Contagion of War*, 1983; William W. Momyer, *Airpower in Three Wars*, 1978.

## SLICK

The Vietnam War became a [helicopter war](#) for American forces, and a common way for an infantryman to go into action was by slick. ``Slick" was the term used to refer to an assault helicopter used to place troops into combat during [airmobile operations](#). The [UH-1](#) became the premier helicopter for this. Troops could ride in the wide doors of the aircraft, normally in two rows on each side, and could exit quickly when landing in a ``hot [LZ](#)", a landing zone under fire. Often a UH-1 would not touch down during slick operations; instead it would hover a couple of feet above the ground while troops evacuated the aircraft. Troops learned to feel the UH-1 ``bounce" as it came in quickly and went into a hover, and would exit on the bounce, so that slicks spent very little time close to the ground.

Source: Jim Mesko, *Airmobile: The Helicopter War in Vietnam*, 1985.

Nolan J. Argyle

## SMART BOMBS

Because of the increasingly devastating effectiveness of North Vietnamese antiaircraft defenses, the United States developed the so-called smart bombs, which could be dropped from safe distances and would then head toward their targets with the assistance of laser beams, television cameras, and computers. There were two types of smart bombs, laser-guided bombs and computer-directed, electro-optically guided bombs. The first laser-guided "Paveway" bomb was tested in 1966, and in 1967 the first electro-optically guided bomb, known as the "Walleye," was used over [North Vietnam](#). The Walleye, a 2,000-pound bomb with a camera and computer attached to its front, could be dropped more than thirty miles from its target and could be carried by any combat jet. During the Christmas bombing of 1972 (see [Operation Linebacker II](#)), when the United States wanted to make sure that the North Vietnamese lived up to the agreement they had accepted in October, smart bombs were used extensively over North Vietnam, achieving an accuracy rate unknown earlier in the war.

Source: Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984.

## SMITH, WALTER BEDELL

Walter B. Smith was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 5, 1895. After serving in the state national guard between 1910 and 1915, Smith made a career out of the United States Army, seeing action in [France](#) during World War I and attaining the rank of lieutenant general during World War II. He was chief of staff to [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) during the North African campaign in 1942 and 1943. After the war, Smith served as ambassador to the [Soviet Union](#) from 1946 to 1949, director of the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) from 1950 to 1953, and under [secretary of state](#) during the Eisenhower administration. Smith headed the American delegation to the Geneva Conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)) on Vietnam in 1954, and then retired from government service to accept a vice chairmanship of the American Machine and Foundry Company. The author of two books (*My Three Years in Moscow*, 1950, and *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions*, 1956), W. Bedell Smith died on August 9, 1961.

Sources: *Who Was Who in America*, 4:880; *New York Times*, August 10, 1961.

## **SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM**

[Ho Chi Minh](#) had proclaimed establishment of the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) on January 14, 1950, when his [Vietminh](#) forces were struggling for power with the French. At the Geneva Conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)) of 1954, North Vietnam became officially known as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, while South Vietnam was designated the [Republic of Vietnam](#). But when North Vietnamese forces finally conquered South Vietnam in 1975, they changed the name of the entire country to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, by which it is currently known.

Source: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.



## SON TAY RAID

In the summer of 1970 [Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird](#) presented President [Richard Nixon](#) a Pentagon plan for a daring raid to rescue over one hundred American prisoners from the Son Tay prison installation located 23 miles west of [Hanoi](#). Only a few months earlier, in April, the United States's invasion of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) had torn the nation apart. The one issue that still bound the American people was their growing concern for the [prisoners of war](#) (POWs) and servicemen classified as missing in action. Nixon had been receiving reports that American POWs were dying from torture and ill-treatment. In Nixon's view the raid, if successful, would not only be humanitarian; it would also give him some clout at the [Paris peace talks](#). These were stalled, partly because of the POW issue. Therefore, he approved the raid.

Planning for the mission was headed by Army Brigadier General Donald D. Blackburn, the special assistant for [counterinsurgency](#) activities for the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)), and Army Colonel E. E. "Ed" Mayer, the head of Special Operations Division within SACSA (Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities). The plan they developed entailed a helicopter assault on the Son Tay prison compound by a fifty-six-man force. One helicopter would have to crash-land inside the compound to give the assault team enough time to eliminate the guards. The remaining helicopters would land outside the compound. Two would contain security forces to prevent the camp from being reinforced; they would also use satchel charges to breach the walls of the compound. The other helicopters would be empty to accommodate the seventy to one hundred expected POWs. To divert enemy attention away from Son Tay, U.S. [Navy](#) and Air Force planes would pretend to attack Haiphong Harbor. Although not in the original plan, [F-105s](#) were to be used to escort the helicopters in and act as bait for North Vietnamese surface-to-air missiles. The raid would last no longer than thirty minutes because it had been determined that it would take that long for the North Vietnamese to respond with overwhelming force.

The man in overall command of the mission was Air Force Brigadier General Leroy J. Manor, and Army Colonel Arthur D. Simons would lead the actual raid on the prison compound. The fifty-six men who were to comprise the newly designated Joint Contingency Task Force Ivory were carefully selected [Special Forces](#) and Ranger volunteers. The task force underwent six months of training and three months of rehearsal at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. Intelligence for the mission relied heavily on photos from SR-71 high-altitude flyovers and low-altitude drones. Neither of these were able to confirm that POWs were still at Son Tay. Prior to the raid, in fact, intelligence was received from a [Central Intelligence Agency](#) contact, Nguyen Van Hoang, a senior North Vietnamese official who dealt with POW interrogations, that the prisoners had been moved to a new camp called Dong Hoi 15 miles to the east. The move had been made on July 14, 1970, because of severe flooding. Although this intelligence was available, it was decided to proceed with the raid.

After a [flight](#) from [Thailand](#) the raiders were above Son Tay prison camp at a little after 2:00 A.M. on November 21. The raid went off with only a few hitches. One mistake proved fortuitous, however. The helicopter containing Colonel Simons and the support group landed in the wrong compound. They had landed in what had been identified as a "secondary school" but in fact contained Russian or [Chinese](#) troops who were training North Vietnamese air defense technicians. Simons's group was able to eliminate the "primary external ground threat" to the Son Tay assault team. The Americans suffered no [casualties](#), with the exception of one man slightly injured during the crash-landing. Although they found the camp empty of American POWs, General Manor praised the operation as "a complete success with the exception that no prisoners were rescued."

The raid did produce some positive results, however. Prisoners who had previously been scattered throughout the countryside were now concentrated in a prison in Hanoi called the "Hanoi Hilton." This move had a positive effect on prisoner morale if not treatment. The raid also caused serious concern among the North Vietnamese and their allies because it showed their vulnerability to this type of raid.

Source: Benjamin F. Schemmer, *The Raid*, 1976.

Mike Dennis

## **SORTIES**

The word "sortie" is a U.S. Air Force term to describe one round-trip for cargo planes or one attack by [gunships](#), [fighters](#), [fighter-bombers](#), and strategic bombers.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## **SOUTH VIETNAMESE MARINE CORPS**

The South Vietnamese Marine Corps, first organized in April 1965, consisted of one [division](#) divided up into the 147th, 258th, and 369th brigades and nine battalions. They worked closely with United States Marine Corps units in [I Corps](#) but suffered from many of the same liabilities as the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#), low morale, as well as corruption among the officer corps. By 1972 there were more than 13,000 troops in the South Vietnamese Marine Corps.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## **SOUTH VIETNAMESE NATIONAL POLICE**

In addition to maintaining law and order and administering the criminal justice system, the National Police were directly charged with [counterinsurgency](#) efforts against the [Vietcong](#). Beginning in 1967, the United States decided that strengthening the National Police would help the pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) process by replacing military with civilian authority. Between 1965 and 1972 the size of the National Police increased from 52,000 to nearly 121,000 people. The National Police Field Forces and the Provincial Reconnaissance Units were offices of the National Police. Trained by American advisers, the police units were not above the use of terrorism themselves to deal with the Vietcong. Of all the organizations wielding political and military authority in [South Vietnam](#), the National Police were probably the most corrupt and the least respected. Wages were extremely low, and because the South Vietnamese military units had conscription priority, the National Police had a difficult time recruiting or training effective leaders. The National Police were riddled with Vietcong infiltrators. Late in 1969 a reform movement of the National Police began, one which limited the brutal treatment of arrestees and provided for dismissal of corrupt officers, but it was too little and too late to change its reputation.

Source: Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978.

## SOUTH VIETNAMESE NAVY

At the beginning of the war, the South Vietnamese Navy consisted of approximately 500 small junks which had been plying the coast of the South China Sea since 1960. By 1969, after four years of large-scale American participation in the conflict, the South Vietnamese Navy had added 460 other ships, ranging from 640-ton PCEs to patrol the coast down to small riverine craft, LSTs and fiberglass and aluminum patrol boats. In 1969, when the [Mobile Riverine Force](#) was discontinued, the South Vietnamese Navy received another 242 patrol craft. Finally, as part of [Vietnamization](#) between 1969 and 1972, the [United States Navy](#) handed over another 800 ships and craft to the South Vietnamese Navy, minesweepers, patrol craft, [Coast Guard](#) cutters, seaplane tenders, and destroyer escorts. By the time the United States withdrew from Vietnam late in 1972, the South Vietnamese Navy, with 1,500 ships, 40,000 officers and sailors, and 13,000 marines, was one of the largest in the world. It was not, however, one of the most powerful. Morale within the South Vietnamese military in general, including the navy, was poor, and the dumping of so many ships and so much sophisticated technology, without proper training, was more than the Vietnamese could handle. Efficiency was extremely low and the navy unable to seriously cripple the [Vietcong](#) or North Vietnamese assault on the [Republic of Vietnam](#).

Sources: John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Edward J. Marolda and G. Wesley Pryce III, *A Short History of the United States Navy and the Southeast Asia Conflict, 1950-1975*, 1984.

## SOUTHEAST ASIA TREATY ORGANIZATION (SEATO)

Similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), SEATO was created in 1954 as part of the Manila Pact, a regional defense scheme for the South Pacific. Although SEATO calls for consultation in the event of military or political emergencies, it does not include a unified military command or joint forces so important to NATO. The Senate ratified the treaty by an 82 to 1 vote, and SEATO became an important link in U.S. global [containment](#) policy. Along with the United States, SEATO contained [Great Britain](#), the [Philippines](#), [France](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), Pakistan, and [Thailand](#). Conspicuous by their absence from the organization were India, Burma, and Indonesia, each of which preferred a nonaligned status in the conflict between the United States and the [Soviet Union](#). Although President [Lyndon Johnson](#) used SEATO membership to justify the American commitment in Vietnam, President [Richard Nixon](#), in the [Nixon Doctrine](#), denied that SEATO membership guaranteed the commitment of U.S. troops to Asian conflicts. Nevertheless, membership in SEATO greatly increased U.S. involvement in Asian politics. Under the pressure of the conflict in Vietnam, in which SEATO nations had originally supported the American struggle against the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese, strains appeared in SEATO, and the organization dissolved in 1977.

Source: Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1975*, 1975.

Kim Younghaus

## SOUVANNA PHOUMA

Prince Boun Khong fathered twenty children, among them Prince Souvanna Phouma (a middle child) and his half brother Prince Souphanouvong (the youngest), who were raised after Boun Khong's death by his oldest son, Prince Phetsart. All three were educated in [France](#) as engineers, Phetsart as a mechanical engineer, Souvanna as a [marine](#), electrical, and civil engineer, and Souphanouvong as a road and bridge engineer. For years they were the only engineers in [Laos](#), a primitive country of under three million ethnically diverse people. About half the population is Lao, and the remaining is composed of a variety of tribal groups including the [Meo](#) (Hmong) who have clashed with the Lao historically.

Although each was a nationalist opponent of French colonialism, they pursued independence in different ways. Having acquired a taste for Western life, Souvanna Phouma favored a negotiated independence. Since there were no paved roads anywhere in Laos and the French were building neither roads nor bridges, Souphanouvong built roads in Vietnam where he witnessed the abominable living conditions on French-owned rubber plantations and labor camps. He developed contempt for French colonialism and ties with the [Vietminh](#). Phetsart took a middle position, working to maintain an alliance between his two brothers in the face of what became a determined American effort to split them apart.

In August 1945 Souphanouvong, with the support of his brothers, expelled the French and established an independent government with Phetsart and Souvanna Phouma as ministers. However, the French, after reasserting themselves in Vietnam and [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), launched a three-pronged offensive, defeating Lao forces. While Souphanouvong organized Lao resistance groups in the countryside which cooperated with the Vietminh and participated at the siege of [Dien Bien Phu](#), Souvanna Phouma and Phetsart lived in exile in [Thailand](#). Eventually the French enticed him to return to Vientiane to form a provisional government. Phetsart remained in Thailand, refusing all French entreaties.

Souphanouvong's ties with the Vietminh made him a Communist to American officials, who conspired with the French to exclude him from the 1954 Geneva Conference. But the Geneva Accords called for negotiations between all three factions in Laos, the French collaborator rightists under Phoumi Nosovan, Souvanna Phouma's neutralists, and Souphanouvong's [Pathet Lao](#) (Land of the Lao). The brothers quickly reached agreement on a government of "national reconciliation", something they would do repeatedly between 1954 and 1964. Phoumi Nosovan was uncooperative.

Unfortunately for Laos, the United States, while professing desire for a neutral government, was determined that it would be a pro-West neutralism. The Pathet Lao, in addition to being denied a voice in the government, were to be destroyed. Thus Souvanna Phouma and his brother could not be permitted to enter an alliance which unquestionably would control Laos. This prompted a secret war directed by the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA) with the active assent of the State Department and the U.S. Army. Between 1954 and 1960 the United States spent over \$300 million in Laos (over \$100 for every inhabitant, more than Laos's annual per capita income), with \$239 million for military purposes and \$7 million for economic development. In 1959 the United States paid \$100 per vote in the National Assembly to bring down the coalition government, throwing Souvanna Phouma out of office.

The 1961 Laotian "crisis" resulted from a Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong attempt to defeat the mercenary army of the corrupt and incompetent Phoumi Nosovan. The 1962 Geneva Conference, convened to thwart the alliance, produced an agreement giving the Pathet Lao a minor voice in a new government headed by Souvanna Phouma and calling for [neutrality](#), an end to American military activities, expulsion of all foreign military personnel, a prohibition against Laotian military alliances, and election of a National Assembly. This government was subverted by American intrigue, including the assassination of uncooperative political leaders.

While all parties violated the agreements, it is clear the United States never intended anything



more than a pretense of compliance. The Pathet Lao utilized [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) advisers and protected the eastern border so North Vietnam could infiltrate men and supplies south. While only a trickle of southerners and small amounts of supplies moved down the trail between 1959 and 1964, main force NVA units and substantial amounts of materiel were moved through Laos after 1965. The U.S. "secret war" included 5,000 to 12,000 military and CIA personnel and 5,000 Tai soldiers illegally stationed in Laos to lead a mercenary army of Hmong tribesmen against the Pathet Lao, and another 1,000 military personnel running secret training bases in Thailand. Under the pretext of bombing NVA [infiltration](#) routes, the United States began bombing Laos in 1964 before the [Gulf of Tonkin incident](#). The justification for this was that the Pathet Lao would threaten Thailand if they came to power, a weak claim for three reasons. First, there is no way a primitive society such as Laos could threaten a highly developed nation such as Thailand which had a population ten times larger. Second, even the Pathet Lao army, which was generally regarded as better disciplined and more effective than either the neutralist or rightist armies, was poorly trained, poorly equipped, and poorly disciplined. Laotians simply do not have much heart for war, which is one reason why the United States had to resort to building a Meo army. Finally, Laos has yet to threaten Thailand since the Pathet Lao came to power in 1975.

The result, lasting until 1975, was a de facto partitioning with an increasingly rightist government in Vientiane headed (most of the time) by Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong's Pathet Lao controlling two northern provinces, the north-eastern border, and about one-third of the population. In February 1971, the South Vietnamese invaded southern Laos in a disastrous attempt to cut the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#). The invasion, as well as the American [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam and the surging [Khmer Rouge](#) strength in Cambodia, undermined the government of Souvanna Phouma, and in 1975 the Pathet Lao took over in all of Laos, deposing Souvanna Phouma.

Sources: [Roger Hilsman](#), *To Move a Nation*, 1967; Wilfred Burchett, *The Second Indochinese War: Cambodia and Laos*, 1970; Peter Poole, *Eight American Presidents and Indochina*, 1973; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, 1965; John Prados, *Presidents' Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman

## SOVIET UNION

The origins of the Vietnam War reach back to the Cold War assumption on the part of the United States that the Soviet Union was expansionist and inspiring many of the anticolonial rebellions occurring throughout the world. The [containment](#) policy was designed to deal with Soviet aggression, and it resulted in the Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, Berlin airlift, NATO, and the Korean War. The irony is that the Soviet Union was preoccupied with Europe after World War II, and Josef Stalin viewed [Ho Chi Minh](#)'s campaign in Vietnam as more nationalistic than communistic. The Soviet Union did not extend diplomatic recognition to the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) (DRV) until 1950; Vietnam was very much outside the Soviet area of interest. Therefore, Moscow provided rhetorical support but little else to the [Vietminh](#).

In 1954 the Soviet Union cochaired, along with [Great Britain](#), the Geneva Conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)) to settle the Vietnamese question. Actually, the Soviets pursued a pro-Western course at Geneva. At the time they were currying French opinion since French Communists had done well in recent elections. Also, they wanted to dissuade [France](#) from joining the American-led European Defense Community with its plans for rearming [West Germany](#). Finally, the Russians were interested in reaching an accommodation, if possible, with the United States. For these reasons the Soviet Union worked for an armistice acceptable to the French and agreed to a partitioning of Vietnam between a Communist North and a non-Communist South. Later, when [South Vietnam](#) and the United States balked on holding the prescribed elections, the Soviet Union carefully sidestepped Ho Chi Minh's pleas for assistance.

Soviet interest in [Indochina](#) intensified, however, as the independence of the [People's Republic of China](#) increased in the 1950s. Vietnam became an important counterweight to expanding [Chinese](#) influence. Gradually the Soviet Union began to increase its shipment of military equipment, training personnel, and economic assistance to North Vietnam, and by the late 1960s Moscow was far and away the largest supplier of North Vietnam and the [Vietcong](#). The assistance exceeded \$1 billion a year by 1970. At the same time, the Soviet Union hoped that the American preoccupation with Vietnam would distract her from European concerns.

North Vietnam was unusually astute in maintaining a diplomatic balance between the Soviet Union and China, neatly playing them off against each other in a diplomatic minuet. For the Soviets, North Vietnam was maddeningly independent, especially in 1968 when Ho Chi Minh condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Still, the DRV leaned more to Moscow than to Peking, not only because Moscow was a more reliable supplier of military equipment but because of ancient fears of Chinese expansion into Indochina. Also, the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China left China too weak and internally preoccupied to be very reliable.

The United States never appreciated the independence of Vietnamese communism. Presidents [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) and [Richard Nixon](#) both sought to have the Soviet Union restrain North Vietnam, assuming that Moscow had direct influence in [Hanoi](#). What few understood was that Hanoi would pursue policies sanctioned neither by Moscow nor Peking, and in fact notoriously irritated the Russians throughout the war by taking their aid, expressing gratitude for it, but keeping them in the dark about DRV war plans.

As the war concluded in 1975, the Soviets were considered the diplomatic victors internationally. The border skirmishes between the Vietnamese and the Chinese increased Soviet influence, and they secured important military bases at [Da Nang](#) and [Cam Ranh Bay](#). They could now challenge American military superiority in the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific. Moreover, the Soviet line about the inevitable decline of American power received a major boost in the Vietnam defeat. Finally, the Soviets have appreciated the new "realism" in American foreign policy growing out of Vietnam, a development which they believe has given them a freer hand in Angola, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia. A war which began in order to staunch the tide of Soviet communism has had a different result.

Sources: George McT. Kahin, *Intervention. How America Became Involved in Vietnam*, 1986;

Daniel S. Papp, *Vietnam: The View from Moscow, Peking, Washington*, 1981; Robin Edmonds, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1962-1973: The Paradox of a Superpower*, 1975; Leif Rosenberger, *The Soviet Union and Vietnam: An Uneasy Alliance*, 1986.

Gary M. Bell

## SPECIAL FORCES

First organized in 1952 to establish guerrilla warfare capabilities behind enemy lines, the Special Forces eventually evolved into the military's primary [counterinsurgency](#) unit. The 1st U.S. Army Special Forces Group was established in [Japan](#) in June 1957, and they sent personnel to [South Vietnam](#) that year to train [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) commandos at [Nha Trang](#). Later the 5th and 7th U.S. Army Special Forces Groups sent other training personnel into Vietnam. Fascinated with counterinsurgency tactics, President [John F. Kennedy](#) authorized the Special Forces to wear the distinctive Green Beret. Kennedy also expanded the Special Forces from 2,500 to 10,000 men and gave them a counterinsurgency mission, organizing, training, and equipping [Civilian Irregular Defense Group](#) (CIDG) forces. The [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA) had been organizing the [Montagnard](#) tribes into CIDG [troop](#) programs, and by 1963, when there were 12,000 troops in 200 villages, the Special Forces took the program over from the CIA.

The [Fifth Special Forces Group](#) arrived in Vietnam on October 1, 1964, and established headquarters at Nha Trang. The first CIDG border camp had been established at [Ban Me Thuot](#) in 1961, but the Fifth Special Forces Group greatly expanded the program, eventually building the CIDG up to 42,000 troops and dozens of border camps. The camps were located along important supply and [infiltration](#) routes. By 1966 the Special Forces were organizing Mobile Strike Forces to attack [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) bases, reconnaissance teams for the [Studies and Observation Groups](#), and thousands of educational, welfare, and medical projects. The Special Forces left South Vietnam in March 1971.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 1985; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986; Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971*, 1973.

## **SPOCK, BENJAMIN McLANE**

Born in New Haven, Connecticut, May 2, 1903, Benjamin Spock was a prominent figure in the antidraft and anti-Vietnam War movements of the 1960s. He received a B.A. from Yale University in 1925 and an M.D. from Columbia University in 1929. While on active duty as a psychiatrist in the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1944-46, he wrote *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946) which, through subsequent editions, became one of the best-selling books in publishing history. In the early 1960s, Dr. Spock began to speak out against nuclear weapons testing. He supported a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* in 1962 entitled "Dr. Spock is Worried." The ad warned of dangers of radioactive contamination of milk and other food from nuclear bomb tests. From 1963 to 1967, he served as co-chairman of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE). By 1963, he had also become a public opponent of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. He supported President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) as the peace candidate in 1964, but when Johnson increased U.S. military operations in Vietnam in February 1965, Dr. Spock wrote to the president in protest and began to appear at many public demonstrations against the war. In 1967 he retired as supervising pediatrician of the Family Clinic at Case Western Reserve University to devote full time to anti-Vietnam War and antidraft activity. Dr. Spock joined a delegation that turned in 992 draft cards to the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., in October 1967; he was then arrested in December 1967 for an act of civil disobedience outside of the armed forces induction center on Whitehall Street in Manhattan. He also signed a nationally distributed "Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority." In 1968 he and four others, William Sloane Coffin, Jr., Michael Ferber, Mitchell Goodman, and Marcus Raskin, were indicted for conspiring to violate Selective Service laws. In July, Dr. Spock was found guilty, fined \$5,000, and sentenced to two years in prison. The conviction, however, was overturned by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. At the end of the trial, Dr. Spock said: "There is no shred of legality or constitutionality to this war; it violates the United Nations Charter, the Geneva Accords, and the United States' promise to obey the laws of international conduct. It is totally, abominably illegal." Dr. Spock continued to protest the Vietnam War and ran for president in 1972 on the People's party ticket. (He received 78,801 votes.) After the war, he continued to oppose nuclear arms and U.S. military involvement abroad, and remained an active and prominent member of SANE. On December 7, 1978, he was fined \$200 and sentenced to two months in jail for participation in a protest against construction of the nuclear power plant at Seabrook, New Hampshire. On June 2, 1981, he and eleven others were arrested for refusing to leave the White House after a public tour, stopping instead to pray to protest budget cuts proposed by the Reagan administration.

Sources: Jessica Mitford, *The Trial of Dr. Spock*, 1969; Lynn Z. Bloom, *Doctor Spock: Biography of a Conservative Radical*, 1972.

John Kincaid

## SPRING MOBILIZATION TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM

The Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam was organized on November 26, 1966, to sponsor antiwar demonstrations in the spring of 1967. Veteran peace activist A. J. Muste was chairman of the group, and its four vice chairmen were [David Dellinger](#), editor of *Liberation*; Edward Keating, publisher of *Ramparts*; Sidney Peck, a professor at Case Western Reserve University; and Robert Greenblatt, a professor at Cornell University. In January 1967, they named the Reverend James Luther Bevel, a close associate of [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), as director of the Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam. During the next four months they prepared for mass demonstrations, one scheduled for New York City, and the other for San Francisco, and on April 15, 1967, the demonstrations occurred. More than 125,000 marched in New York City against the war, including Martin Luther King, Jr., James Luther Bevel, and [Benjamin Spock](#), and another 60,000 marched in San Francisco. Up to its time, the Spring Mobilization was the largest antiwar demonstration in U.S. history.

Sources: Thomas Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home*, 1984; Clark Dougan and Steven Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: A Nation Divided*, 1984; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protests Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1984.

## SQUAD

A squad is a basic organizational institution in the United States Army and [Marine Corps](#). A sergeant usually commands the squad, and the squad is composed of two teams of four men each. A tank and its crew is considered the squad for an armored unit, as is the howitzer or gun and its crew in an [artillery](#) unit.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## SQUADRON

The term "squadron" refers to a cavalry unit of [battalion](#) size in the United States Army. Usually commanded by a lieutenant colonel, a squadron has approximately 1,000 officers and men, divided into three troops. The squadron is a basic organizational institution in the United States Air Force and [Navy](#) and consists of two or three groups of five aircraft each.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985. SRV See *Socialist Republic of Vietnam*



## STENNIS, JOHN CORNELIUS

John Cornelius Stennis was born on August 3, 1901, in Kemper County, Mississippi, and has served as a circuit judge (1937-47) and as a member of the U.S. Senate since 1947. Originally Stennis had severe reservations about the U.S. commitment in Vietnam. During the early 1950s Stennis voiced concern over U.S. support of the French and [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) regime during the late 1950s. Stennis, however, became a hard-liner once the [Gulf of Tonkin incident](#) occurred.

Although Stennis questioned from time to time the actions taken by the [Johnson](#) administration in Vietnam, he recoiled from the notion of a U.S. pullout or military defeat. He echoed the sentiments of many Americans who believed that once involved in an overseas war the United States could accept nothing less than total victory. After Johnson's commitment of troops to Vietnam in 1965, Stennis is purported to have made a statement that "America's purpose (in Vietnam) is to win." Because of his hard-line view, Stennis even suggested that Johnson's [Great Society](#) programs might have to be curtailed to win the Vietnam War.

Stennis's view of a military victory in Vietnam endeared him to the Pentagon with its vast assortment of senior officers. As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, he wielded much power, which he used to assist the Pentagon's prosecution of the Vietnam War. Beginning in the spring of 1967, Stennis began to criticize the Johnson administration's handling of the conflict. The hearings, which were held before Stennis and the Senate Armed Services Committee, revealed a lack of success in winning the Vietnamese conflict, although [Robert McNamara](#) and other officials presented evidence of progress.

Stennis came away from the hearings determined that the Johnson administration had failed in Vietnam, not America's military officials. Hence he advocated more latitude for military commanders in the field. Lyndon Johnson, however, was not about to give up his constitutional powers as commander in chief. He privately ridiculed Stennis and others on the committee for trying to push him deeper into war. Johnson nonetheless avoided direct confrontation with the committee, because he realized public opinion polls indicated that a great many Americans favored tougher measures in Vietnam.

The [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968 shattered Stennis's belief that the war could be won. When General [William Westmoreland](#) suggested that more troops might be needed, Stennis and hard-line senators questioned the winnability of the war. Stennis and others warned [Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford](#) that Congress had serious doubts about the conduct of the war. Thereafter Stennis would support a pullout of American troops, although not without assisting the South Vietnamese in gaining the requisite skills to defend themselves.

Sources: *Who's Who in America*, 1984-85; Ernest R. May, "Lessons" of the Past, 1973; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

John S. Leiby

## STRATEGIC AIRLIFT

When the large-scale deployment of military forces to [South Vietnam](#) began in 1965, the United States Air Force's [Military Airlift Command](#) (MAC) found itself assigned the task of providing urgent transportation of personnel and certain supplies from the United States to Southeast Asia. American reliance on strategic airlift stemmed from the necessity of projecting forces over long distances within a relatively short period of time and from the inability of the United States [Navy](#) and merchant transports to move personnel and supplies efficiently to the other side of the world. This requirement gave rise to the creation of an extensive strategic airlift operation between American West Coast bases and Southeast Asia.

The task of getting essential supplies, personnel, and units to Vietnam was a staggering one. Air force officials found that traffic to the Pacific grew from a monthly average of 33,779 passengers and 9,123 tons of cargo in fiscal 1965 to 65,350 passengers and 42,296 tons of cargo in fiscal 1967. During 1967, moreover, strategic airlift carried most of the cargo, while chartered commercial airliners carried most of the passengers. Not to be overlooked were the thousands of combat personnel flown by these aircraft to Honolulu and nine other cities in the Pacific area for rest and recuperation leaves (R & R). The R & R flights began in fiscal 1966 with 14,970 passengers. The numbers increased to 521,496 in 1967 and to 774,386 in fiscal 1968.

To expedite the flow of critically required cargo from aerial ports during the Vietnam buildup, the air force developed a series of intercontinental airlift routes, each with well-equipped and efficiently managed personnel and equipment-handling facilities. It also employed a series of priority designations: among them a "999," which identified the highest priority cargo, and the "Red Ball" (an airlift reference to the famous World War II truck express in Europe), which tagged priority United States Army spare parts for inoperative combat equipment. The MAC began its Red Ball Express on December 8, 1965, guaranteeing shipment within 24 hours of receipt at the aerial port. The 1,000th Red Ball mission departed Travis Air Force Base, California, on May 1, 1967.

On several occasions during the war, the air force was called on to undertake the deployment of major army units under special conditions. The first of these, designated Operation Blue Light, came late in 1965 when strategic airlift transports moved the 3rd Brigade, [25th Infantry Division](#), from Hawaii to [Pleiku](#), Vietnam, to offset a buildup of Communist forces in the area. These aircraft flew 231 [sorties](#) over a 26-day period and moved 3,000 troops and 4,700 tons of equipment the 6,000 miles to Pleiku by January 23, 1966.

In mid-1969 emphasis shifted to the return of units to the United States in accordance with the president's policy of gradual American [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam, beginning with 25,000 troops before August 31. The MAC strategic airlift fleet carried out the redeployments through a series of operations called Keystone. In the first of these, [C-141](#) transports airlifted 15,446 of the 25,000 troops plus 47.5 tons of materiel. As the president directed other incremental withdrawals over the next several years, these airlift managers responded accordingly.

As American participation in the war phased out, MAC devoted considerable strategic airlift capacity to equipment being delivered to South Vietnamese forces. Following the peace agreements in January 1973, the command turned its attention to the withdrawal of the remaining American military personnel and equipment from Vietnam. This task involved several thousand tons of equipment and more than 20,000 personnel.

Source: Carl Berger, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973, An Illustrated Account*, 1984.

Roger D. Launius

## STRATEGIC HAMLET PROGRAM

Launched in 1962, the Strategic Hamlet Program had high hopes for depriving the [Vietcong](#) "fish" of the peasant "sea." Designed by Sir Robert Thompson, the architect of similar [counterinsurgency](#) programs in Malaya and the [Philippines](#), the Strategic Hamlet Program would bring peasants in from scattered villages to hamlets surrounded by moats and fences and protected by well-trained military forces. In the strategic hamlets, peasants would be won over to the government of the [Republic of Vietnam](#) by fair elections, [land reform](#), good schools, and improved medical facilities. The Vietcong would then have nobody to exploit and no villages in which to hide; they would be forced to come out into the open where [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) and American forces would destroy them.

The theoretical hopes of the Strategic Hamlet Program were dashed on the rocks of reality. By the end of 1962 the government claimed to have established more than 3,500 hamlets, but they were hardly secure from Vietcong attack or [infiltration](#). In the [Mekong](#) Delta the program required massive relocation of peasants away from their ancestral homelands, which only further alienated them from the South Vietnamese government. [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) never implemented the promised land reform, and large volumes of U.S. assistance money were diverted by corrupt government officials away from hamlet medical, educational, and welfare programs to their own pockets. The Vietcong were able, by simply massing their forces, to overrun any strategic hamlet at will. The program proved to be so unpopular that it may have actually increased the Vietcong appeal among peasants. After the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963, the program was abandoned.

Sources: [Roger Hilsman](#), *To Move a Nation*, 1967; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Tran Dinh Tho, *Pacification*, 1980.

## STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was a leading, campus-based, antidraft and anti-Vietnam War organization of the mid-1960s. SDS was established in January 1960, primarily by students who had been affiliated with the Socialist party. After an organizing conference in May 1960 at the University of Michigan, SDS obtained a \$10,000 grant from the United Auto Workers (UAW). SDS then opened an office in New York City, with Tom Hayden serving as the first SDS field secretary. The primary purposes of SDS were to support the black civil rights movement and engage in community organizing in poor neighborhoods in northern cities. SDS began to gain strength and notoriety after its June 1962 conference at a UAW camp in Port Huron, Michigan. At that conference, SDS issued the first major manifesto of the New Left, the *Port Huron Statement*, which called for a more participatory democratic society and an end to the nuclear arms race. The statement also criticized other aspects of U.S. foreign policy associated with the Cold War. By 1964, especially after the [Gulf of Tonkin incident](#) in August, elements within SDS began to organize campus demonstrations and [teach-ins](#) against the Vietnam War and to circulate "We Won't Go" petitions among draft-age men. SDS organized a demonstration against the Vietnam War that brought more than 20,000 protesters to Washington, D.C., on April 17, 1965. Membership in SDS grew rapidly during 1965, to about 124 chapters by the end of the year. After endorsing the "black power" position of CORE and SNCC in June 1966, SDS, a mostly white student organization, turned its full attention to campus protests against the war, the draft, and corporate capitalism. By December 1966, when it adopted a militant draft resistance position, SDS had about 250 chapters, approximately 25,000 chapter members, and some 6,000 national members. However, SDS was soon plagued by internal dissension, independent-minded local chapters, many members who were stimulated more by the new counterculture than by politics, a futile search for a new revolutionary working class, and a concerted attempt by the "Marxist-Maoist" Progressive Labor party to take over SDS. During 1967, antiwar and antidraft demonstrations on and off campuses became more frequent, increasingly militant, and occasionally violent. Students seized campus buildings; sought to drive recruiters for the military, [Central Intelligence Agency](#), and Dow Chemical Company off campuses; picketed or attacked military induction centers; rioted; and sometimes bombed buildings or set them aflame. During Stop the Draft Week in October 1967, Carl Davidson, a national SDS leader, said, "We must tear them ;obinduction centers;cb down, burn them down if necessary." Nearly three-quarters of the nation's universities had experienced demonstrations by the end of the 1967-68 academic year, at which time SDS had about 300 chapters. The militance of protests escalated further during 1968. From March through May 1968, the SDS chapter at Columbia University, led by Mark Rudd, initiated several seizures of campus buildings, which led to violent confrontations with New York City police and a campus-wide strike that shut down the university. Under SDS pressure, Columbia agreed to sever its ties to the Institute of Defense Analysis, abandon plans to build a gymnasium in Morningside Park, and drop charges against most of the student demonstrators. Nationally, SDS helped to organize a series of militant demonstrations held in parks and streets outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in late August 1968. The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence later concluded that the violence associated with the Chicago demonstrations was caused by a "police riot," not by the demonstrators. The Chicago demonstrations helped to boost SDS membership, which apparently reached its peak in December 1968 when SDS may have had as many as 400 chapters. However, SDS's national convention, held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on December 26, 1968, was split by factionalism and by a growing desire to adopt "revolutionary violence" as the means to end the draft and the Vietnam War. Seeing themselves allied with "Third World revolutionaries," sizable factions within the SDS leadership began to encourage or engage in violent protests. In March 1969, the SDS national "war council," meeting in Austin, Texas, resolved to promote "armed struggle as the only road to revolution" in "the heartland of a world-wide monster" (i.e., the United States). Out of this grew a violent group, the Weathermen, which brought 600 people to Chicago in October 1969 to engage in violent protests, called the "Days of Rage." By fall 1969, however, SDS was disintegrating rapidly, and the leadership for organizing massive protest

demonstrations against the Vietnam War had already passed to other organizations, particularly the Moratorium and the New Mobilization Committee. The Weathermen, some local SDS chapters, and various SDS factions continued to function through the early 1970s, but SDS, which had never been a highly coherent national organization, ceased to exist as a coordinated nationwide entity by early 1970.

Source: Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS: Ten Years Toward A Revolution*, 1973.

John Kincaid

## STUDIES AND OBSERVATION GROUPS

In January 1964 the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) organized the Studies and Observation Groups (SOG), supposedly to evaluate the success of the military adviser program but actually to perform clandestine operations throughout Southeast Asia. The SOG program was directed by the special assistant for [counterinsurgency](#) and special activities, who reported directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)). By 1966 the SOG included more than 10,000 personnel, of which 2,000 were Americans and 8,000 were South Vietnamese and Montagnard troops. They were divided into a number of different groups. The Psychological Studies Group, operating out of [Hue](#) and Tay Ninh, made false radio broadcasts from powerful transmitters. The Air Studies Group, complete with UH-1F and H-34 helicopters, a [C-130 squadron](#), and a C-123 squadron, specialized in dropping and recovering special intelligence groups into [Laos](#), [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), and [North Vietnam](#). The Maritime Studies Group concentrated its efforts on commando raids along the North Vietnamese coast and the [Mekong Delta](#). The [Gulf of Tonkin incident](#) in July and August 1964 was triggered by SOG operations. The Ground Studies Group carried out the greatest number of missions, including monitoring the location of American [POWs](#), assassinations, kidnapping, rescue of airmen downed in enemy territory, early long-range reconnaissance patrols, and harassment and booby-trapping of [infiltration](#) routes. SOG operations were headquartered in Kontum, Ban Me Thout, and [Da Nang](#).

Sources: Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counter-insurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.

## THE SHORT-TIMERS

*The Short-Timers* is the title of Gustav Hasford's 1979 novel about the Vietnam War. An extraordinarily violent book, the novel focuses on William "Joker" Doolittle, [marine](#) combat reporter in Vietnam who refuses promotion to sergeant and insists on wearing a peace button. With his time running "short", only 49 days remaining on his tour, Doolittle's insubordination rankles a superior officer and he finds himself reassigned to a vulnerable combat unit. Supposedly fighting for freedom, the soldiers appear more as prisoners of the Vietnam War themselves.

Sources: Gustav Hasford, *The Short-Timers*, 1979; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.





## T

``TERMINATE WITH EXTREME PREJUDICE''

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THAI HOANG VAN

THAILAND

THANH NIEN CACH MENH DONG CHI HOI

THE PRISONERS OF QUAI DONG

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THICH QUANG DUC

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THURMOND, STROM

TIGER CAGES

TIGER DIVISION

TO HUU

TON DUC THANG

TON THAT DINH

TONKIN

TRAN BUU KIEM

TRAN DO

TRAN KIM TUYEN

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TRAN VAN CHUONG

TRAN VAN DO

TRAN VAN DON

TRAN VAN HUONG

TRAN VAN LAM

TRAN VAN TRA

TRINH

TROOP

TRUMAN, HARRY S

TRUONG CHINH

TRUONG DINH DZU

TRUONG NHU TANG

TUNNEL RATS

XXIV CORPS



## **``TERMINATE WITH EXTREME PREJUDICE''**

``Terminate with extreme prejudice" was a [Central Intelligence Agency](#) euphemism used to refer to killing people, especially civilians suspected of belonging to or supporting the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)). Critics said such terminology was part of a government propaganda effort by the United States to manipulate the general population into supporting an unjust and immoral war by hiding its grisly nature. Although others disagreed, one needs only to watch any number of documentaries on the war and listen to the mangled speech of government officials defending U.S. policy in Vietnam to get the feeling that obfuscation was intentional.

Sources: WGBH Educational Foundation, ``Vietnam, A [Television](#) History," 1983; CBS, ``1984 Revisited with [Walter Cronkite](#)," 1984.

Samuel Freeman

## **20TH ENGINEER BRIGADE**

The 20th Engineer Brigade served in [South Vietnam](#) between August 1967 and September 1971. It consisted of eighteen battalions in the 34th and 79th Engineer Groups and was stationed at [Bien Hoa](#). The 20th Engineer Brigade confined its construction work to [III](#) and [IV Corps](#) operations.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## 23RD INFANTRY DIVISION

In February 1967, in order to support U.S. [Marine](#) operations along the [Demilitarized Zone](#), the U.S. Army formed an ad hoc [division](#)-sized unit known as Task Force Oregon. Support troops were provided by various units, and the combat units consisted of one [brigade](#) from each of the two [divisions](#) already in Vietnam ([101st Airborne Division](#) and the [25th Infantry Division](#)) plus the independent [196th Light Infantry Brigade](#). In September 1967, the "borrowed" brigades were returned to their parent divisions and replaced by the 11th Infantry Brigade and the 198th Infantry Brigade. At that time the Task Force was renamed the Americal Division (resurrecting a name first used in World War II when the army formed a new division on New Caledonia). Officially the Americal Division was known as the 23rd Infantry Division, but the American high command preferred to use the designation Americal Division, calling it the only named division on active service.

The Americal Division's area of responsibility consisted of the three southern provinces in [I Corps](#). From November 1967 to November 1968 the division conducted numerous sweeps and patrols through this region as part of a yearlong operation code-named Wheeler/Wallowa. Also during this period units of the 11th Infantry Brigade committed a series of [atrocities](#) while conducting operations in Quang Ngai Province. The worst of these incidents occurred on March 16, 1968, at the hamlet of [My Lai](#) in Son My village where some 200 South Vietnamese civilians were killed by American soldiers.

The division continued to patrol its region during 1969 and 1970, fighting numerous small unit engagements. The Americal Division was deactivated in November 1971, and the 196th Infantry Brigade returned to independent status. During its period of service the Americal Division suffered over 17,500 [casualties](#).

Sources: Shelby Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army. U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Willard Pearson, *The War in the Northern Provinces, 1966-1968*, 1975.

Robert S. Browning III

## 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Nicknamed the "Tropic Lightning" [Division](#), the 25th Infantry Division served in the southwest Pacific during World War II and in [Korea](#) from 1951 to 1953. The division's 3rd [Brigade](#) deployed to [Vietnam](#) from Hawaii in December 1965, with the rest of the division following in January and April 1966. (The original components of the 3rd Brigade were transferred to the [4th Infantry Division](#) in August 1967. In return, the 25th Infantry Division received the 3rd Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division. The original 3rd Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division was reunited with the division following the [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam in 1970.)

During most of its time in Vietnam, the 25th Infantry Division served in the [Saigon](#) vicinity and along the Cambodian border of [III Corps](#). Until August 1967, the division's 3rd Brigade served in the western highlands around [Pleiku](#). In August this brigade became part of the 4th Infantry Division. The rest of the division participated in operations intended to clear [the Iron Triangle](#) in early 1967, and returned to that area with several other American units as a part of [Operation Junction City](#). During the [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968 the division assisted in the defense of Saigon, and was engaged in bitter fighting while protecting [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#). During most of late 1968 and 1969 the division was responsible for the security of the area around Cu Chi, and elements of the division were often involved in hard fighting in defense of base areas. In 1970 the division participated in the invasion of Cambodia (see [Operation Binh Tay](#)) before turning over responsibility for the security of its area to the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#). Most of the 25th Infantry Division left Vietnam in December 1970. The division's 2nd Brigade remained in Vietnam until April 1971. During the course of the Vietnam War, the 25th Infantry Division suffered 34,500 [casualties](#), twice the number it suffered in World War II and Korea combined.

Sources: Shelby Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981, and *The Rise and Fall of an American Army. U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985.

Samuel Freeman and Robert S. Browning III

### **365 DAYS**

*365 Days* is the title of Ronald J. Glasser's 1971 book on the Vietnam War. A medical officer in [Japan](#) treating wounded American soldiers in Japan, Glasser picks his title from each of the wounded men's preoccupation with the number 365, the number of days in a Vietnam tour of duty. The book deals primarily with the unbelievable sense of futility expressed by dying and wounded teenagers.

Sources: Ronald J. Glasser, *365 Days*, 1971; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.



### III CORPS

III Corps was the third allied combat tactical zone in [South Vietnam](#). During the 1960s and early 1970s, the country was divided into four major administrative and [military regions](#), and III Corps extended from the northern [Mekong Delta](#) to the southern [Central Highlands](#). It was also known as Military Region 3 (MR 3). III Corps had its headquarters in [Saigon](#), and consisted of the following provinces: Tay Ninh, Binh Long, Phuoc Long, Phuoc Tuy, Long An, Binh Duong, Long Khanh, Binh Tuy, Gia Dinh, Hau Nghia, and [Bien Hoa](#). The 18th and 25th Divisions of [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) played prominent roles in the military defense of III Corps, as did the 2nd Armored Cavalry and the 81st Airborne Rangers.

Sources: Harvey Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

### III MARINE AMPHIBIOUS FORCE

A corps headquarters established at [Da Nang](#) in May 1965, III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) replaced the [9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade](#) (MEB) and grew by 1968 to include two reinforced marine [divisions](#), one air [wing](#), a United States Army corps, plus several [Republic of Vietnam](#) and South Korean units. With tactical responsibility for the five northern provinces of South Vietnam, [I Corps](#)'s seven marine commanders often disagreed with [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) strategy, and this strain characterized the relationship until the army's [XXIV Corps](#) took over command of the region in March 1970.

III MAF's role in Vietnam reflected but another of the war's ironies, trained and equipped for rapid deployment as shock troops, marines were wedded to earlier contingency plans calling for a force that could be supplied over a beach and once committed were held in relatively static defensive positions around coastal enclaves and later along the [Demilitarized Zone](#) (DMZ). Meanwhile, MACV ordered an army division retrained for [Mobile Riverine Force](#) operations in the [Mekong Delta](#), an area perhaps more suitable to the marines' traditional purpose.

III MAF's [tactical area of responsibility](#) (TAOR) thus became a 30- to 70- mile-wide zone that stretched from the DMZ south some 225 miles to Sa Huynh at a spur in the Annamite Mountain chain. In 1965 an estimated 2.6 million (85 percent ethnic Vietnamese) lived in the 10,000-square-mile TAOR, mostly fishermen and farmers clustered in hamlets along the flat coastal plains or in small alluvial valleys lying inland between steep mountain slopes. These inhabitants were culturally and historically different from those, say, in [Saigon](#) and also included Montagnard tribesmen in the hills and business-oriented [Chinese](#), Indians, and a few remaining French in Da Nang, [Hue](#), and other urban areas.

At first assigned to defend the Da Nang airfield and a nearby ridgeline, III MAF believed that no more than 2,000 [Vietcong](#) operated in the densely populated agricultural area of Quang Nam Province (150,000 civilians within 81mm mortar range of the marines) and thus stressed pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) in its contribution to MACV planning. Although never completely rejecting General [William Westmoreland](#)'s decision to "search and destroy", III MAF's early operations were labeled "[clear and hold](#)", marine staffs objected to the drift toward a "big unit" war and won support from [Fleet Marine Force, Pacific Command](#) (FMFPAC) in Hawaii and the commandant in Washington, both prevailing upon the [commander in chief, Pacific Command](#) (CINC-PAC) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)) to slightly but never substantially alter MACV's reliance on increased firepower. Indeed, by 1966 the marine effort became two distinct wars, one in the south stressing pacification, another at the southern boundary of the DMZ seeking to stop [North Vietnamese Army infiltration](#) and find and destroy large units.

III MAF never quarreled with the lack of a pacification effort in the sparsely populated northern area of its TAOR, but it did object strenuously to [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#)'s 1966 concept of an unmanned barbed-wire and electronic sensor barrier along the DMZ (see [Project Practice Nine](#)). ("Hell," remarked a grunt in rare agreement with staff officers, "they'll just walk around it.") Although the project began in the Gio Linh-Con Thien sector, III MAF eventually prevailed and ordered construction of what it argued was a more feasible "mobile defense/conventional barrier," and by 1967 completed most of the strong points that dotted the northern tier of [Quang Tri](#) Province until abandoned in favor of a "mobile mode" after the 1968 siege of [Khe Sanh](#).

Meanwhile, III MAF's war with MACV intensified. While marines retook Hue and defended Khe Sanh in the wake of the [Tet Offensive](#), General Westmoreland reexamined the command structure in [I Corps](#) and briefly in February-March 1968 installed an interim headquarters, MACV(Fwd), at [Phu Bai](#) under General [Creighton Abrams](#) to coordinate with III MAF the conduct of all operations in I Corps's two northern provinces. Bemoaning throughout the war what it described as "fluctuating command direction" from Saigon, III MAF became particularly incensed with another 1968 decision by MACV, approved by [CINCPAC](#), to end the marines' relative autonomy over air-

ground operations and give the [Seventh Air Force](#) "mission direction" over the [1st Marine Aircraft Wing](#) based at Da Nang.

During [Vietnamization](#) the marine presence in I Corps dwindled more rapidly than the army's, and after XXIV Corps assumed command of all operations in 1970, III MAF confined its concern to seven operations in Quang Nam Province and ten special landing forays to the south of Da Nang. Just short of six years in country, III MAF headquarters yielded its command to the [Third Marine Amphibious Brigade](#) and left Da Nang on April 14, 1971.

Between 1965 and 1971, III MAF was commanded by six individuals: Major General William R. Collins (May 1965-June 1965); Major and then Lt. General Lewis W. Walt (June 1965-February 1966 and March 1966-June 1967); Major and then Lt. General Keith B. McCutcheon (February 1966-March 1966 and March 1970-December 1970); Lt. General [Robert E. Cushman](#), Jr. (June 1967-March 1969); Lt. General Herman Nickerson, Jr. (March 1969-March 1970); Lt. General Donn J. Robertson (December 1970-April 1971).

Sources: *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1983; Lewis W. Walt, *Strange War, Strange Strategy*, 1976; Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 1982; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, 1980; J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 1982.

Dudley Acker

## TA'I

The Ta'i were a Laotian ethnic minority living in the region surrounding [Dien Bien Phu](#) in [Tonkin](#). They made a living raising rice and trading for opium with the [Hmong](#). The Ta'i were frequently recruited to assist first the French and later the Americans in resisting the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) during the struggle for power in [Indochina](#) after World War II.

Sources: Edgar O'Ballance, *The Indochina War 1945-1954: A Study in Guerrilla Warfare*, 1964; Charles A. Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere: American Policy Toward Laos Since 1954*, 1973.

## TACTICAL AIRLIFT

One of the hallmarks of modern American warfare has been airmobility to, around, and from the battlefield. As a result of this basic means of waging war, the United States Air Force early sent tactical airlift transports to Vietnam; four C-47s arrived at [Bien Hoa](#) Air Base, near [Saigon](#), on November 16, 1961, as part of the first air force detachment. These C-47 airlifters performed diverse missions, supporting flights by other air force aircraft, airdrops of Vietnamese paratroops, and night flashship operations. Their most demanding task, however, was to resupply United States Army [Special Forces](#) detachments at remote locations throughout [South Vietnam](#).

In 1963 the number of C-47s in Vietnam was increased to six, but airlift tasks gradually shifted to large, twin-engine C-123 Providers. Although the C-123 had been tagged as "obsolescent" as early as 1955, sixteen were deployed to Vietnam in December 1961 as part of Project Mule Train to provide "tactical airlift support of South Vietnamese armed forces." The first four ships reached [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#) on January 2, 1962, with the remaining aircraft following during the next two years. All were assigned to the 315th Air Commando Wing. Until 1965 these aircraft were the principal airlift element in South Vietnam.

Beginning in 1965 the [C-130](#) Hercules began to dominate Vietnam tactical airlift activities. Equipped with four turboprop engines, the C-130 could move a fifteen-ton payload, about three times that of the C-123. Although used to transport personnel and materiel between bases in the Western Pacific and the Asian mainland before 1965, C-130 in-country missions from South Vietnamese bases became routine in April 1965. At first beginning with a handful of C-130 aircraft and a small mission assignment, by December 1965 the in-country force had grown to thirty-two ships and by February 1968 it stood at ninety-six C-130s.

Also used for tactical airlift in Vietnam during this period were six squadrons of C-7A Caribou transports (see [Caribou aircraft](#)). These aircraft were initially flown by the United States Army, and several had been deployed to Vietnam since the spring of 1962. By 1966 the force had expanded to six companies and operated under the scheduling and mission control of specified army [corps](#) and [divisions](#). In April 1966 the two services agreed to transfer the Caribous to the air force in keeping with a decision to centralize all land-based fixed-wing aircraft under the control of the air force.

Aerial transport aircraft played key roles in virtually all operations of the Vietnam conflict. One example of the key role played by air transport was seen in the operations of the 1st Brigade, [101st Airborne Division](#), during the spring and summer of 1966. The 1st Brigade made five successive moves, each requiring more than 200 C-130 missions and each operation largely sustained by aerial resupply. The C-130s first airlifted the brigade from Tuy Hoa to Phan Thiet early in April, next to the highlands airstrip at Nhon Co later that month, then north to [Dak To](#) soon after, and finally back to Tuy Hoa in July.

Perhaps the greatest test of tactical airlift capability came during the 1968 [Tet Offensive](#). The early attacks at Tan Son Nhut Air Base and many of the upcountry airstrips temporarily dislocated the airlift system. However, transport crews managed to fly numerous emergency troop and supply missions on behalf of hard-pressed garrisons. By February 3, the fourth day of the offensive, the tactical airlift force had regained its prerogative, and resupply operations played a critical role in the defeat of the Communist offensive. For instance, at the critical siege of [Khe Sanh](#), tactical airlift ensured that the defense of the fire base was successful.

Over the years between 1962 and 1973, the Air Force's tactical airlift forces delivered more than 7 million tons of passengers and cargo within South Vietnam. By comparison, American and British transports carried slightly more than 2 million tons during the Berlin airlift and about 750,000 tons during the Korean War. The air force lost 53 C-130s in the Southeast Asia war, more than half of them in 1967 and 1968. C-123 losses also totaled 53, and C-7 losses numbered 20. Of these 126 aircraft, enemy action accounted for 61, including 17 destroyed by sapper or shelling attacks. The other 65 were lost from accidents mainly associated with the difficult conditions at forward airstrips.

All but 10 of the losses occurred in South Vietnam.

Source: Ray L. Bowers, *The U.S. Air Force in Southeast Asia: Tactical Airlift*, 1983.

Roger D. Launius

## **TACTICAL AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY**

``TAOR" is a military acronym referring to ``Tactical Area of Responsibility." It refers to a specific area of land where responsibility for security and military operations is assigned to a commander. The TAOR is used as a measure of control for assigning forces, coordinating support, and evaluating progress.

Source: Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience: America Takes Over, 1965-1967*, 1985.

## TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE

Located just on the fringe of [Saigon](#), Tan Son Nhut handled the bulk of South Vietnamese commercial and military air traffic throughout the war. Tan Son Nhut was the headquarters of the South [Vietnamese Air Force](#) and after 1962, headquarters for the U.S. Second Air [Division](#). It was in charge of all American air operations in [South Vietnam](#). Between 1966 and 1973, the [Seventh Air Force](#) assumed control of those operations. Tan Son Nhut was also known as "Pentagon East" because the headquarters of the U.S. [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) was located there. On April 29, 1975, after the evacuation of several thousand Americans and Vietnamese, military demolition teams destroyed MACV Headquarters. The airport there was later rebuilt by North Vietnamese and Soviet engineers to serve the commercial and military needs of [Ho Chi Minh City](#), formerly Saigon.

Sources: Harvey Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Thomas G. Tobin, *Last Flight from Saigon*, 1978.



## **TANG PHUC**

Tang phuc are the white mourning clothes worn by the Vietnamese after the death of a relative.

Source: Ann Crawford, *Customs and Culture of Vietnam*, 1966.

## TAY SON REBELLION

By the late eighteenth century, peasant resentment about high taxes, poverty, and the struggle for power between the [Trinh](#) family in the North and the [Nguyen](#) dynasty in the South had dramatically increased. In 1773 the three Tay Son brothers, Ho Nhac, Ho Lu, and Ho Hue, led a rebellion against the Nguyen dynasty and captured [Saigon](#). At the same time, the Trinh used the Nguyen defeat to take control of Hue. But in 1786, Ho Hue Tay Son turned on the north and seized control of the Trinh capital of [Hanoi](#). After repulsing an invading [Chinese](#) army in 1788, the Tay Son were rulers of all of Vietnam. They quickly replaced Chinese with Vietnamese as the language of government and tried to break Chinese commercial influence. Their promises of redistribution of property to peasants, however, were never fulfilled. The three Tay Son brothers all died early in the 1790s and left behind no stable group to rule the country. [Gia Long](#), the surviving member of the Nguyen clan, then led a resistance movement against Tay Son rule which succeeded in 1802.

Source: Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, 1958.

## TAYLOR, MAXWELL DAVENPORT

Maxwell D. Taylor was born on August 26, 1901, in Keysteville, Missouri, and graduated from West Point in 1922. He taught at West Point between 1927 and 1932, and during World War II was generally credited with playing a major role in the development of [airborne](#) warfare. He was with the [82nd Airborne Division](#) in North Africa and Sicily and commanded the 101st Airborne Division at the Normandy invasion. After the war Taylor spent four years, between 1945 and 1949, as commandant of West Point. He commanded the Eighth Army in [Korea](#), and became commander in chief of the Far East Command in 1955. In June 1955 Taylor became chief of staff of the United States Army and served there until 1959. During the late 1950s, afraid that the army would be eclipsed by the nuclear powers of the United States Air Force, Taylor began advocating the "flexible response" theory, which argued that a deterrence policy based exclusively on nuclear weapons would leave the United States unable to deal with conventional crises around the world. Taylor wrote *The Uncertain Trumpet* in 1959 calling for a diversified military capability and [counterinsurgency](#) work.

President [John F. Kennedy](#) read the book, and on July 1, 1961, Taylor became the president's military adviser. Kennedy sent Taylor and [W. W. Rostow](#) to Vietnam in October 1961 on a fact-finding mission, and their report advocated the commitment of several thousand combat troops to assist the government of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in stopping the [Vietcong](#). Between 1962 and 1964 Taylor served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)), and then spent a year as ambassador to South Vietnam. He worked desperately in 1964 and 1965 to return South Vietnam to civilian rule after the assassination of Diem, and late in 1965 he became a special adviser to President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#). Johnson made Taylor a member of the Senior Advisory Group studying the Vietnam problem in 1968, and Taylor became a strong advocate of a continued American military presence in the country. Taylor left government service in 1969 to serve as chairman of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. He died April 19, 1987.

Sources: Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, 1959, and *Swords and Plowshares*, 1972; *Who's Who in America, 1976-1977*, 1977; [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; *New York Times*, April 20, 1987.

Gloria Collins

## TAYLOR-ROSTOW MISSION OF 1961

In October 1961, President [John F. Kennedy](#) sent an investigative team, led by General [Maxwell D. Taylor](#) and his deputy [Walt W. Rostow](#), to survey the military and political situation in [South Vietnam](#). They found very poor morale there and the government of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) weak and losing support among peasants in the countryside. Taylor and Rostow recommended an increase in military aid, larger numbers of military advisers, and the placement of an 8,000-man logistical task force to serve as soldiers and/or economic and political workers. Both men felt the increase in the American commitment would not lead to concomitant increases in Communist strength because they assumed that North Vietnam was too vulnerable to American [air power](#). The Kennedy administration accepted their recommendations, and the Taylor-Rostow Mission played an important role in the early escalation of the conflict.

Sources: Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, 1972; Paul Y. Hammond, *Cold War and Detente*, 1975; Walt W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power, 1957-1972*, 1972.

## TEACH-INS

In early February 1965, when the United States began to bomb [North Vietnam](#), a group of faculty members at the University of Michigan wrote to President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) protesting the escalation of the conflict. When Johnson ordered three thousand marines into [Da Nang](#) on March 10, they organized a teach-in for 8:00 P.M. on March 24, 1965. Three thousand Michigan students attended the first teach-in, where faculty members discussed the nature of the conflict. The major speaker at the teach-in was Arthur Waskow of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington. In the six weeks after the teach-in at the University of Michigan, faculty members across the country were holding similar meetings as forums for opposing the escalation of the war. Those teach-ins continued on college campuses throughout the war. A national teach-in was held on May 15, 1965, on 122 campuses throughout the country. Tom Hayden and [Jane Fonda](#) adapted the teach-in program to reach soldiers in the "Free the Army" (FTA) campaign with more informal teach-ins being for military personnel at coffeehouses and other places near military posts.

Sources: Thomas Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home*, 1984; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, 1984; Larry Waterhouse and Mariann Wizard, *Turning the Guns Around*, 1971.

Samuel Freeman

## TELEVISION

Between 1964 and 1975, the war in Vietnam was broadcast nightly in two- and three-minute segments on American television. It was the first war to be significantly "covered" by television, the first war in which television, as opposed to the print media, was the primary means of informing the public about the course and the nature of the conflict. Critics charged that television telescoped events, selected film for its dramatic quality, and had a built-in liberal bias. They also believed that commercial television's message was aimed at the viewers' emotions rather than their intellect. The result, they insisted, was inaccurate coverage, distortion, and ultimately propaganda. Military and political leaders in particular used the arguments of television critics to suggest that television "lost" the war in Vietnam.

Defenders of television maintained that television's coverage of the war was accurate and even-handed. To be sure, it was not perfect; mistakes were made, inaccurate reports were issued. But defenders argued that the print media was just as prone to make mistakes, and that often the mistakes originated with military- and government-issued reports. Investigative journalism, whether done by the print or the television media, always lags behind the day's top stories.

The two most controversial aspects of television coverage of the war involved the battle of [Khe Sanh](#) and the [Tet Offensive](#). Television, as well as the print media, reported the engagement of Khe Sanh as if it were another [Dien Bien Phu](#). "The parallels are there for all to see," reported [Walter Cronkite](#). The "historical ghost" of the French disaster was "casting a long shadow," echoed Marvin Kalb. The comparison was indeed inaccurate, and it did obscure the actual nature of the conflict. General [William Westmoreland](#) was especially critical of the coverage. Nevertheless, [Walt Rostow](#) and other government officials were also guilty of the unjustified comparison.

Westmoreland and his supporters also claimed that television, and to a lesser extent the print media, transformed the Communist failure in the Tet Offensive into a "psychological victory" for the North Vietnamese. Peter Braestrup made the same charge in his book *Big Story*, noting that "crisis journalism" had seldom "veered so widely from reality" as in the coverage of the Tet Offensive. Defenders of television, however, have claimed that while mistakes were made during Tet, television was not instrumental in leading the American public against the continuation of the war. In fact, public opinion surveys indicated that public support of the war had started to decline two years before Tet.

When the Vietnam War finally came to an end in April 1975, with North Vietnamese soldiers storming into [Saigon](#), television fittingly played its final role in the conflict, broadcasting the near riot on the roof of the U.S. embassy as panic-stricken South Vietnamese tried to get on evacuation helicopters before the [North Vietnamese Army](#) got into the compound. Tens of millions of Americans, sitting in their living rooms, actually saw the war end.

Sources: Peter Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington*, 1983; Michael Arlen, *Living Room War*, 1969; Jorge Lewinski, *The Camera at War*, 1978.

Randy Roberts

## TERRITORIAL FORCES

The South Vietnamese Territorial Forces, including the [Regional Forces](#) and [Popular Forces](#), were responsible for local population security in villages throughout the [Republic of Vietnam](#). Territorial Forces were first organized after the [Geneva Accords](#) and they expanded in size from 102,000 people in 1955 to 532,000 in 1972. By that time they represented just over half of South Vietnam's military force.

Sources: Ngo Quang Truong, *Territorial Forces*, 1981; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army in Vietnam*, 1986.

## TET

Tet is the most important Vietnamese festival and celebrates the lunar new year. In the belief that the first week of the new year will determine family fortunes for the rest of the year, Vietnamese paint their houses for Tet and buy new clothes. The holiday is characterized by family visits to pagodas, churches, and cemeteries, sacrifices to deceased family members, firecrackers, drums, gongs, and family visitations.

Source: Anne Crawford, *Customs and Culture of Vietnam*, 1967.



## TET OFFENSIVE

On January 30, 1968, [Vietcong](#) units throughout [I](#) and [II Corps](#), and by January 31, 1968, Vietcong and North Vietnamese soldiers were assaulting American and South Vietnamese forces throughout the country. In addition to attacking thirty-six of forty-four provincial capitals and five of six major cities, the Vietcong attacked the U.S. embassy in [Saigon](#), [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#), the presidential palace, and [South Vietnam](#) general staff headquarters. In the summer of 1967, the North Vietnamese commenced planning for the January 1968 offensive. They decided to launch diversionary raids in the [Central Highlands](#) and northern border areas, the most famous of which was the months-long siege of United States Marines at [Khe Sanh](#). The purpose of the raids was to deceive American intelligence, because during the campaigns in the highlands and northern provinces, Vietcong were slowly moving into the provincial capitals and major cities to prepare for the Tet attacks. While all this was going both the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front (see Vietcong) called for a cease-fire during the [Tet holiday](#) celebrations. By the time of the holiday they had moved 100,000 soldiers and vast amounts of supplies undetected into the cities.

On two levels, the Tet Offensive was a tactical disaster for the Vietcong and North Vietnamese. The offensive had failed in that the South Vietnamese army had held and American troops, airlifted into the critical areas, quickly regained control, except in [Hue](#) where the fighting continued for weeks. Nor had the South Vietnamese risen up in mass and rallied to the "Vietcong liberators." Finally, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese may have suffered as many as 40,000 battlefield deaths, compared to 1,100 for the United States and 2,300 for the South Vietnamese. The Vietcong were so decimated by the fighting that they never regained their strength, and after the Tet Offensive the war in Vietnam was largely a struggle between mainline U.S., [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam), and North Vietnamese regulars.

But if the Tet Offensive was a tactical defeat for the Vietcong and North Vietnamese, it was also a colossal strategic victory. Throughout 1966 and 1967 American military and political leaders had been talking of the progress in the war, how the enemy would not long be able to sustain such enormous losses, how there was a "light at the end of the tunnel," how the war would soon be over. The Tet Offensive, by exposing the determination of the Vietcong and North Vietnamese, as well as their continuing vitality, demoralized American public opinion. [Television](#) reporters broadcast home the incredible sight of General [William Westmoreland](#), standing beside several dead Vietcong *inside* the U.S. embassy compound, describing the American victory. The Tet Offensive led quickly to the defeat of President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) in the New Hampshire Democratic primary and his [withdrawal](#) from the race in March 1968. After Tet, American policy toward Vietnam had little to do with winning the war, only with finding an "honorable" way out.

Sources: Don Oberdorfer, *Tet! The Turning Point*, 1983; Robert Pisor, *The End of the Line: The Siege of Khe Sanh*, 1982; Pham Van Son and Le Van Duong, eds., *The Viet Cong Tet Offensive 1968*, 1969.

Charles Dobbs

## THAI HOANG VAN

Thai Hoang Van was born in 1906 in Thai Binh Province. He studied at the Hoang Pho Military Academy and joined the Communist party in 1930, becoming a founding member of the [Vietminh](#) in 1945. He was promoted to brigadier general in the Vietminh in 1946, and to major general in the People's Army of Vietnam, [North Vietnam](#), in 1959. Thai Hoang Van served as deputy minister of national defense in 1961, and became commander of Military Region 5 in 1965, which was the northern region of [South Vietnam](#). During the 1960s and early 1970s Thai Hoang Van was a member of the Central Committee of the [Lao Dong party](#) and the Central Military Party Committee.

Source: Borys Lewytzkij and Juliuz Stroynowski, *Who's Who in the Socialist Countries*, 1978.

## THAILAND

Thailand, with 198,115 square miles and a population of more than 52 million, is drained by the Menam River Valley, and has a southern arm extending down the Malay Peninsula. Eastern Thailand is drained by the [Mekong](#) River, which is the boundary between much of Thailand and [Laos](#). Originally, Thailand was a buffer state between British interests in Burma and French interests in [Indochina](#). Although 94 percent of the Thais are [Buddhist](#), including the four million ethnic [Chinese](#), the Malay minority along the southern extension are Moslem.

More than 60 percent of Thailand is forested, especially the northern and eastern regions. From these forests come such valuable woods as teak, ebony, boxwood, and rosewood. Traditional agricultural is handicapped by elevation, slope, soil leaching, and winter drought. The major breadbasket of Thailand is along the Menam River Valley. The central alluvial plains of the Menam are capable of producing two crops a year of rice, tobacco, and peanuts. Rice cultivation is found on 90 percent of the farmland and is the major export. Unlike most Asian nations, Thailand produces a rice surplus each year. The Thais usually supplement their diet with fish. Bangkok, located in the delta on the lower Chao Phraya, has a population of 2.4 million and is the commercial, financial, and political center of the country.

During the war in Vietnam, Thailand was a close American ally. Although the Thais had traditionally gotten along with the Vietnamese, they were suspicious of Communist intentions, feared the fall of [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea) and Laos to guerrillas, and wanted above all else to preserve their independence. By 1969 the Thais had a total of nearly 12,000 combat troops in Vietnam, including the elite [Queen's Cobras](#) and the Black Panther Division of the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Force. The United States 46th [Special Forces](#) Company assisted Thai forces in resisting Communist guerrilla activity along the Laotian border and in the south on the Malay Peninsula. The last of the Thai troops left Vietnam in April 1972.

The United States also had a strong military presence in Thailand, including the 8th, 355th, 366th, and 388th Tactical Fighter Wings and the 307th Strategic Wing. Strategic bombing operations over North and South Vietnam often originated in Thailand.

Sources: Stanley Robert Larsen and James Lawton Collins, Jr., *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 1975; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## **THANH NIEN CACH MENH DONG CHI HOI**

Known as the Revolutionary Youth League, the Thanh Nien Cach Menh Dong Chi Hoi was organized by [Ho Chi Minh](#) shortly after his arrival in [China](#) in 1924. Ho organized students in southern China into small cell groups to agitate for revolution through writing and speeches. The group ceased to function after Ho fled to Moscow in 1927.

Source: William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 1976.

## THE PRISONERS OF QUAI DONG

*The Prisoners of Quai Dong* is the title of Victor Kolpacoff's 1967 novel describing a prison camp in [North Vietnam](#) inhabited by American [prisoners of war](#) (POWs) and their North Vietnamese captors. Through the lens of an interrogation room, where Americans are regularly tortured to extract confessions, Kolpacoff eventually describes everyone there, American POWs, Vietnamese officials, and innocent witnesses, as equally prisoners of the Vietnam War.

Sources: Victor Kolpacoff, *The Prisoners of Quai Dong*, 1967; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## THE TRAITORS

*The Traitors* is the title of John Briley's 1969 Vietnam War novel. It centers on an American patrol ambushed and captured by the [Vietcong](#). At a detention camp an American defector tries to brainwash them, eventually convincing two of the captives to participate in a harebrained scheme to free an imprisoned [Buddhist](#) from a political prison in [South Vietnam](#) on the naive hope that he will be able to end the war.

Sources: John Briley, *The Traitors*, 1969; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1969.

## THICH NU THANH QUANG

A native of South Vietnam, Thich Nu Thanh Quang was born in 1911 and entered a [Buddhist](#) monastery to become a nun. She gained international attention on May 28, 1966, when she committed suicide in front of the Dieu De Pagoda in [Hue](#). After dousing herself with five gallons of gasoline, Quang ignited herself and remained motionless in a kneeling position for nine seconds before collapsing. Before her death, she drafted a letter to President [Lyndon Johnson](#) calling for the United States to abandon its support for the political regime of [Nguyen Cao Ky](#). Her death triggered a series of mass Buddhist protests throughout the country.

Source: *New York Times*, May 29, 1966.

## THICH QUANG DUC

Thich Quang Duc was a 66-year-old [Buddhist](#) monk whose self-immolation on June 11, 1963, profoundly affected the attitude of the [Kennedy](#) administration toward [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) and dramatically signified the Buddhist-government crisis in [South Vietnam](#). Quang Duc burned himself to death at a busy [Saigon](#) intersection in full view not only of passersby but also the media, which the [Buddhists](#) had alerted before the incident. The result was maximum exposure, especially in the United States. While self-immolation is a traditional form of protest in many parts of Asia, the event violated the sensibilities of the policymakers in Washington and was a critical factor in convincing them that Diem was incapable of governing the [Republic of Vietnam](#). Thus, the incident also reflected the sophistication of the Buddhist anti-Diem movement in understanding the importance of the press as a convenient method of expressing its position. Quang Duc's action also reflected the increasing inability of the Diem government to deal with the pervasive pluralism that characterized South Vietnam in this period. With his mandarin mentality, Diem responded to dissatisfaction with his regime by more repression. The result of this escalation was a growing stubbornness by Diem and more self-immolations by Buddhist monks, as well as other anti-Diem demonstrations. Thus, Thich Quang Duc's suicide marked the beginning of the end of the Diem regime.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; *New York Times*, June 12-13, 1963.

Stafford T. Thomas



## THICH TRI QUANG

Historically, Vietnamese [Buddhist](#) monks have taken part in public affairs *only* during crises when they have claimed with some legitimacy to speak for the Vietnamese people. At those times, they have demonstrated formidable abilities to organize and mobilize mass protests against those they hold responsible for the crisis. Thich Tri Quang, a charismatic Buddhist monk born in 1922, mobilized [Buddhists](#) three times in the 1960s. Profound nationalists, the Buddhists objected to foreign dominance and foreign influence in Vietnam. Therefore, they opposed the American presence almost as much as they opposed communism. Although Tri Quang worked with the [Vietminh](#) in the struggle against [France](#), he broke with them because they claimed to represent all Vietnamese with an alien ideology when only the Buddhists could truly represent them. Tri Quang advocated a "middle way" based on traditional values between the foreign-influence doctrines of Catholicism and communism.

Tri Quang organized Buddhist opposition to [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), a Catholic. Animosity between Catholics and Buddhists stemmed from their theological differences and from French favoritism of Catholics and persecution of Buddhists. When some 900,000 northern Catholics moved south after the 1954 Geneva Conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)) and Diem became president, relations worsened. In May 1963, Tri Quang moved against Diem. Monks took to the streets demanding Diem's resignation, a return to traditional ways, and an end to Catholic domination of the government. They applied pressure until Diem was overthrown.

Recognizing Tri Quang's power, Ambassador [Henry Cabot Lodge](#) recommended he hold office in the post-Diem government. It was not to be. In the convoluted politics of General [Nguyen Khanh](#)'s tenuous rule, Tri Quang mobilized Buddhists first to force his resignation and then to bring him back. After 1964 the Buddhists were relatively quiet until 1966 when [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) fired [I Corps](#) commander General Thi, who had developed a close relationship with Tri Quang. Buddhist protests paralyzed the government and forced Ky to call elections. Determined U.S. support enabled Ky to survive and break the monk's power. Tri Quang, placed under house arrest, began a long fast and almost died. Distrusted by the North Vietnamese, Tri Quang was exiled to a monastery in 1975.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; George McTurnan Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Viet Nam*, 1967.

Samuel Freeman

### THIRD MARINE AMPHIBIOUS BRIGADE

When the Third Marine Amphibious Force departed [Da Nang](#) in April 1971, the Third Marine Amphibious Brigade (3rd MAB) took its place at headquarters under Major General Alan J. Armstrong. The brigade began planning on March 1 with a target date for beginning operations set at April 14. Assuming responsibility for over 13,600 marines who remained in Vietnam, 3rd MAB included a marine [regiment](#), fixed-wing and helicopter [gunships](#), and the remainder of a force logistics command. Remnants of the marine civic action program deactivated shortly, and 3rd MAB formally ceased to exist and was out of Vietnam by June 26, leaving behind a scattering of naval gunfire teams along the [Demilitarized Zone](#), a marine advisory unit, a few officers at the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#), and guards for the U.S. embassy in [Saigon](#), in a ``transitional-support" group of some 500 marines.

Source: Edwin H. Simmons, ``Marine Corps Operations in Vietnam, 1969-1972," in *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1983.

Dudley Acker

## THIRD MARINE DIVISION

The March 1965 deployment of two battalions from the Third Marine Division on Okinawa to guard the [Da Nang](#) air base marked the first overt commitment of U.S. combat forces to [South Vietnam's](#) defense. Composed eventually of the 3d, 4th, and 9th Marine Regiments, plus the [5th Marine Division's](#) 26th Marines, the division's headquarters moved north to the [Hue](#) area in October 1966, to [Quang Tri](#) eighteen months later, then finally to [Dong Ha](#) in June 1968.

Medals of Honor were awarded to twenty-nine marines and one corpsman who served with the division. Units from the Third Marine Division became chiefly responsible for setting up a defensive barrier along the [Demilitarized Zone](#) (DMZ) and fought and operated out of Gio Linh and Con Thien, both within five kilometers of the DMZ and together with Dong Ha and Cam Lo forming ``Leatherneck Square"; Camp Carroll, the Rockpile, and Ca Lu along Route 9; and successfully defended [Khe Sanh](#) in the spring of 1968.

The division, which had not seen action since landing on Bougainville, Guam, and Iwo Jima during World War II, received a Presidential Unit Citation and Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, redeployed to Okinawa in late November 1969, and in 1975 provided troops involved in the Pnom Penh, Da Nang, and [Saigon](#) evacuations as well as the units which attacked Koh Tang island during the [Mayaguez](#) affair.

Sources: *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1973*, 1983: R. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 1982; Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, 1980; William Turner Huggett, *Body Count*, 1973.

Dudley Acker

## THOMPSON, ROBERT

Born in England on April 16, 1916, Robert Thompson served in a variety of positions in Malaysia during the 1930s and then spent six years in the Royal Air Force during World War II. He returned to Malaya after the war and served as deputy and later [secretary of defense](#) between 1957 and 1961. During his years in Malaya Thompson became a recognized expert in [counterinsurgency](#) against Communist guerrillas. At the request of the United States, Thompson was brought to [South Vietnam](#) in 1961 as head of the [British](#) mission there, and he remained there until 1965, playing an important role in advising American military and political officials on how to deal with the [Vietcong](#). Thompson tried to apply the lessons the English had learned in Malaya to Vietnam, urging the United States to establish the [Strategic Hamlet](#) Program and win the "[hearts and minds](#)" of the people. He warned the United States about relying too heavily on a military solution to the problem in Vietnam, but his advice was not really heeded. Also, Thompson placed too much faith in the government of the [Republic of Vietnam](#). The British had succeeded with their counterinsurgency in Malaya in part because they were the government of a colony, but the United States had to deal with a native South Vietnamese government, one run by the likes of [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#) and [Nguyen Khanh](#). Extraordinary corruption and lack of vision doomed the counterinsurgency effort. Early in the 1970s Thompson spent some time as a consultant to the Nixon administration and approved of the concept of [Vietnamization](#).

Sources: Robert Thompson, *Revolutionary War in World Strategy, 1945-1949*, 1970, and *Peace is Not at Hand*, 1974; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986.

## THURMOND, STROM

Strom Thurmond, a Republican senator from South Carolina throughout the Vietnam era, had long been in the political arena. After having served as both state senator and circuit court judge, in 1946 Thurmond was elected governor of South Carolina on the Democratic ticket. In 1948, after the Democratic National Convention adopted a civil rights plank for its platform, the breakaway States Rights party, sometimes referred to as the Dixiecrats, selected Thurmond as its presidential candidate. Unsuccessful in this bid, Thurmond was able to enter the Senate in 1954. Ten years later he transferred his allegiance to the Republican party, so that he could work openly for the candidacy of conservative [Barry M. Goldwater](#), the Republican senator from Arizona, during the presidential election of 1964.

Although best known for his conservative southern stand in opposition to antidiscrimination measures and civil rights legislation, Thurmond also favored a militantly anti-Communist foreign policy and large defense appropriations. Indeed, the South Carolina senator was one of the few to associate himself with the causes of ideological right-wing organizations like the John Birch Society and the Young Americans for Freedom in the early 1960s. During the presidency of [Lyndon Johnson](#), Thurmond was among the five leading Republican supporters of a tough anti-Communist foreign policy in the Senate.

To offset what he regarded as unrelenting Communist expansionism, Thurmond favored the unrestrained use of military force in Vietnam. He charged in August 1966, as one example, that the administration was following a "no-win" policy in Southeast Asia and urged the use of increased force to ensure the continued existence of [South Vietnam](#). The following April he criticized an East-West treaty governing the peaceful exploration and use of outer space as "another step in the artificial and unrealistic atmosphere of detente with Communism."

In 1968 Thurmond backed [Richard M. Nixon](#) for the Republican presidential nomination and was credited with convincing most Southern Republican delegates to the party's national convention to support Nixon instead of another candidate. As a result, Thurmond wielded considerable influence in the White House during the Nixon administration. Harry Dent, his former aide, was a political adviser to the president, and about twenty other friends and associates of the senator received significant administrative jobs. He supported President Nixon's efforts to conclude the conflict in Southeast Asia through a negotiated peace but has continued to urge the constant opposition to Communist activity throughout the world.

Sources: Seyom Brown, *The Faces of Power: Constancy and Change in United States Foreign Policy from Truman to Johnson*, 1968; Eric F. Goldman, *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson*, 1969; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1979.

Roger D. Launius

## TIGER CAGES

“Tiger cages” were small stone compartments used by the South Vietnamese to confine [prisoners of war](#) (POWs) in the Con Son Correction Center on Con Son Island (see [Poulo Condore](#)). The cages measured 5 feet by 9 feet and had bars on top. According to official releases of the [Saigon](#) government, prisoners were humanely treated and confined only temporarily in the tiger cages, and all were obstinate troublemakers. But in July 1970 the Red Cross reported that the prisoners were abused and that [South Vietnam](#) was violating the Geneva Convention. Chained to walls day and night, denied adequate food, water, and exercise, the prisoners often died or lost the use of their legs. While South Vietnam claimed prisoners were common criminals, the Red Cross disagreed, saying the prisoners were mostly North Vietnamese POWs or [Buddhist](#) dissidents. On July 7, 1970, Congressmen Augustus Hawkins and William Anderson condemned the prison after touring it. In February 1971, the U.S. mission in Saigon announced that the State Department would provide \$400,000 to construct 288 isolation cells to replace the notorious tiger cages and that all POWs would be removed from the facility.

Source: Edward W. Knappman, ed., *South Vietnam: U.S., Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia*, vols. 6 & 7, 1973.

Linda Casci

## TIGER DIVISION

The Tiger Division was the [Capital Division](#) of the [Republic of Korea](#) Army. The Tiger Division was first deployed to [South Vietnam](#) in September 1965, and spent most of the war fighting in [II Corps](#). They were headquartered at [Qui Nhon](#). The Tiger Division's primary activity involved protecting the major American installations along the coast in II Corps and keeping transportation lanes open between those installations and the U.S. air bases at Phu Cat and Phan Rang.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army. U.S. Ground Troops in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 1985; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985; Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## TO HUU

Originally known as Nguyen Kim Thanh, To Huu was born in Thua Thien Province in 1920 and educated in [Hue](#). He became a devoted Communist as a student and eventually was known as the poet laureate of [North Vietnam](#). Huu has held a variety of positions in the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, including minister of culture.

Source: Danny J. Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976.



## TON DUC THANG

Ton Duc Thang, also known as Ton That Thien, was a native of South Vietnam born in 1889. While attending school in [Saigon](#) in 1910, Thang met [Ho Chi Minh](#) and became a dedicated anti-French, Vietnamese nationalist. For political activities against the empire, the French placed Thang in the notorious prison at [Poulo Condore](#) between 1929 and 1945. After World War II he immediately began working with the [Vietminh](#) and served in various leadership positions in the [Lao Dong party](#). After Ho Chi Minh's death in 1969, Thang moved up from vice president of the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) to president, but it was only a figurehead position he filled until his death.

Sources: "Meet Uncle Tom," *Newsweek*, 74 (October 6, 1969), 92; "North Viet Nam," *Time*, 94 (October 3, 1969), 26; William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 1976.

## TON THAT DINH

Born a southerner in 1930, Ton That Dinh rose to power in the [Republic of Vietnam](#) because of his close personal relationship with [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). Diem viewed Dinh with trust and paternalism, and in 1961 he had made Dinh the youngest general in the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN). Dinh converted to [Roman Catholicism](#) early in the 1960s and was an active member of [Ngo Dinh Nhu's Personalist Labor party](#). Ambitious for a prominent political position in Ngo Dinh Diem's cabinet, Dinh turned to plotters against the regime after Diem refused. In November 1963 he played a leading role in the coup d'etat which toppled and assassinated Diem. Suspected of still being loyal to the Diem faction, Dinh was arrested by General [Nguyen Khanh](#), but was held only temporarily. When [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) took control of the government, Dinh was again in command of an ARVN corps, but he lost favor during the [Buddhist](#) crisis of 1966 when he resented the tactics Ky used to crush the protest. In the summer of 1966 Dinh lost command of his corps and was exiled from the Republic of Vietnam.

Sources: Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, 2 vols., 1967; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972.

## TONKIN

Geographers generally divide Vietnam into three major regions: Tonkin in the north, [Annam](#) in the center, and [Cochin China](#) in the south. Anciently, the ancestors of the Vietnamese migrated out of southern China (see [People's Republic of China](#)) and settled first in Tonkin and later in Annam. Not until the nineteenth century did they displace Cambodians from Cochin China in the south. Drained primarily by the Red River, much of Tonkin is a fertile delta capable of supporting a dense population. In addition to the Red River, the Clear, Black, and Thai Binh rivers cut through Tonkin, depositing a rich loam soil. The major city of Tonkin is [Hanoi](#), a commercial and manufacturing center, and the port city of Haiphong is connected to the Thai Binh River. The Red River Delta is a huge rice field. Because the Red River regularly floods, Tonkin is covered with an elaborate system of [dikes](#) and canals. During the Vietnam War, the United States considered but never used air strikes to attack the canals and dikes, primarily because it would have destroyed a civilian food supply and constituted a war crime according to international law. Inland from the Red River Delta, Tonkin becomes a series of hills and then mountains at the [Chinese](#) and Laotian borders. In those mountains, tribes of [Montagnards](#) ("mountain people") are widely scattered. Those mountain areas are rich in such ore deposits as iron, zinc, tin, and coal.

Sources: Pierre Gourour, *The Peasants of the Tonkin Delta*, 1955; Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience: Setting the Stage*, 1981.

## TRAN BUU KIEM

Tran Buu Kiem was born in 1921 in [Can Tho](#) and took a law degree at [Hanoi](#) University. A fervent anti-French nationalist, Kiem organized student protest movements against the French Empire and became active as a leader on the central committee of the National Liberation Front (see Vietcong) in the 1950s and 1960s. Kiem served on the delegation to the [Paris peace talks](#) in 1968 and was minister to the president of the [Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam](#).

Source: *International Who's Who, 1982-1983*, 1983.

## TRAN DO

Born in [North Vietnam](#) in 1922, Tran Do served as deputy commander of North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) forces in [South Vietnam](#) during the 1960s and early 1970s. Do lived with his troops in underground bunkers and jungle camps, established no headquarters, and always kept on the move, confusing and frustrating American forces trying to capture him. Although the South Vietnamese resented the leadership of northerners in their campaign against the governments of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), [Nguyen Cao Ky](#), and [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), Do managed to prevent factionalism from seriously hindering the war effort. Tran Do planned and executed the [Tet Offensive](#) in 1968 which, although resulting in tens of thousands of [casualties](#) for the Vietcong and North Vietnamese, was a political deathblow to the American war effort.

Source: John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## TRAN KIM TUYEN

A native of [North Vietnam](#), Tuyen attended medical school, practiced medicine for a time in [Hanoi](#), and then fled to [South Vietnam](#) in 1954 as part of the large-scale Catholic relocation across the [Demilitarized Zone](#). In South Vietnam, Tuyen became head of the feared Office of Political and Social Studies, a [Central Intelligence Agency](#)-established secret police force loyal to [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). He became disaffected from Diem late in the 1950s, primarily because he believed Diem's weak and corrupt government would guarantee a Communist takeover. In 1962 and 1963 Tuyen began plotting the overthrow of the Diem government, but when Diem found out, he exiled Tuyen, naming him diplomatic counsel to Egypt. Tuyen never reached Egypt but ended up in Hong Kong where he continued to oppose Diem. After the fall of the Diem government Tuyen returned to South Vietnam but played no prominent political role. He fled to [Great Britain](#) just before the fall of [Saigon](#) in 1975.

Source: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## TRAN THIEN KHIEM

Tran Thien Khiem, South Vietnamese diplomat and ambassador to the United States, was born on December 15, 1925. Khiem joined the Vietnamese army as a young man, and rose quickly through the ranks. In 1960, after stopping an attempted coup against [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), Khiem became army chief of staff and a powerful figure in South Vietnamese politics. Three years later, however, Khiem was a leading figure in the successful coup d'etat and assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem. The next year Khiem joined with General [Nguyen Khanh](#) in deposing General [Duong Van Minh](#). Khiem was then named defense minister and commander in chief of the new government. The Khanh government was soon shaky, and Khiem was plotting against it. For a brief time in 1964 Khiem joined Khanh and Duong Van Minh in a triumvirate government until the forces of air force general [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) took over. Khiem was then sent into honorable exile, first as ambassador to the [People's Republic of China](#) between October of 1964 and October of 1965, and then from 1965 to 1968 as ambassador to the United States.

Khiem returned to [Saigon](#) in 1968 as minister of the interior, and for five months in 1969 he served as deputy prime minister. He became prime minister in 1969 and remained in that post until 1975. General Khiem was considered a leading figure in the lucrative South Vietnamese heroin traffic, a trade which included most other prominent officials in the government. In April 1975, as North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) forces were moving into Saigon, Khiem escaped to Taiwan.

Sources: *The International Who's Who, 1976-1977*, 1976; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## TRAN VAN CHUONG

Tran Van Chuong was born in 1898 and educated at the University of Paris. He set up a law practice in [Hanoi](#) in 1925 and became a prominent member of the French-Vietnamese establishment. His daughter, Tran Le Xuan, married [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#) (see [Ngo Dinh Nhu, Madame](#)), and in 1954 Tran Van Chuong became minister of state for the [Republic of Vietnam](#). He then served as ambassador to the United States between 1954 and 1963. He resigned in protest in August 1963 when [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) began his attacks on the [Buddhists](#), and in the fall of 1963 Tran Van Chuong followed his daughter around the United States contradicting her statements of support for the Diem government. After the assassination of Diem, Tran Van Chuong remained in the United States, living in Washington, D.C.

Sources: *Who's Who in the Far East and Australia, 1974-1975*, 1975; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.



## TRAN VAN DO

Tran Van Do was minister of foreign affairs in [Ngo Dinh Diem](#)'s first cabinet in 1954. A physician and a man of distinguished reputation in [Vietnam](#), Do was head of the State of Vietnam's delegation to the Geneva Conference at the time of the completion of the [Geneva Accords](#) in 1954. He made a determined but futile effort to prevent the partitioning of Vietnam at Geneva and, in the name of his government, denounced the final accords.

Do had been a longtime and close associate of Ngo Dinh Diem. His brother, [Tran Van Chuong](#), was the father of [Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu](#) and became Diem's ambassador to the United States. Do split with Diem in the spring of 1955, however, because he objected to Diem's unwillingness to broaden his government beyond the Ngo family circle. Do was one of the signers of the ``Caravelle" petition in 1960 that urged Diem to initiate political reforms. After Diem's death, Do served once again as foreign minister in the cabinet of Prime Minister [Phan Huy Quat](#).

Source: Bernard B. Fall, *Viet-Nam Witness*, 1953-66, 1966

David L. Anderson

## TRAN VAN DON

General Tran Van Don was one of the leaders of the South Vietnamese Army who helped [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) secure power and who later helped remove Diem from office. Although he lived most of his life in Vietnam, Don was born in [France](#) in 1917 while his father was attending medical school. As a French citizen, he found himself in the French Army during World War II, and largely through circumstance, he became a career military officer. When the French decided during their war with the [Vietminh](#) to create a [Vietnamese National Army](#) (VNA), Don, who was then a colonel, became chief of staff for General [Nguyen Van Hinh](#), whom the French placed in command of the VNA. It was with the support of such key officers as Colonel Don that Ngo Dinh Diem was able to secure VNA support in 1955 in subduing the private and sectarian military forces in [South Vietnam](#).

Under Diem, Don became a general and rose to command of the [First Corps](#) with headquarters at [Hue](#). Like other military officers, however, he became increasingly disillusioned with Diem and the entire Ngo family. In 1963, Don was one of the principal conspirators in the coup that ended with Diem's assassination. With the rise to power in 1965 of younger military officers such as [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) and [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), Don was among the senior officers forced to retire. Elected to the South Vietnamese Senate in 1967, Don remained an influential figure in South Vietnam. On April 29, 1975, the day before [North Vietnam](#)'s seizure of [Saigon](#), he chose to seek exile in the United States.

Source: Tran Van Don, *Our Endless War: Inside Vietnam*, 1978.

David L. Anderson

## TRAN VAN HUONG

Tran Van Huong was born on December 1, 1903. He worked as a schoolteacher before joining the [Vietminh](#) resistance movement against the French. Huong served as mayor of [Saigon](#) in 1954 and again in 1964, until he became prime minister of [South Vietnam](#) in a civilian government orchestrated by General [Nguyen Khanh](#). Huong encountered bitter opposition from various [Buddhist](#) factions and was in office only three months. After the [Tet Offensive](#) in 1968, General [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) appointed Huong prime minister again. He lasted there until 1969. In 1971, Huong became vice president of South Vietnam and remained in that position until April 21, 1975, when Thieu abdicated. Huong was president of South Vietnam for nine days until he surrendered authority to General [Duong Van Minh](#) on the eve of the North Vietnamese victory.

Sources: George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; *The International Who's Who, 1976-1977*, 1976.

## TRAN VAN LAM

Tran Van Lam was born on July 30, 1913, in [Cholon](#). He was educated at [Hanoi](#) University as a pharmacist and spent his career in [Saigon](#). Lam was elected to the Saigon city council in 1952 and served in the national assembly between 1956 and 1961. Between 1961 and 1964 Tran Van Lam was the ambassador to [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#) for the [Republic of Vietnam](#). He returned to South Vietnam in 1964, and in 1968 was appointed minister of foreign affairs, where he served until 1973 when he became speaker of the Senate. He remained in that position until the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975.

Source: *Who's Who in the Far East and Australasia*, 1974.

## TRAN VAN TRA

Tran Van Tra was born in Quang Ngai in central Vietnam in 1918. He worked on the railroads until the end of World War II when he joined the [Vietminh](#) to oppose the return of the French Empire. Successful at politics, Tra became a senior officer, received political and military training in the [Soviet Union](#) and [People's Republic of China](#), and in 1963 assumed command of [Vietcong](#) forces in [South Vietnam](#). He led the attack on [Saigon](#) during the [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968. Tra joined the armistice commission after the January 1973 cease-fire, but two months later he was back in [Hanoi](#) planning the final assault on the South. He then was transferred to Loc Ninh, a command post about 75 miles north of Saigon, and planned the assault. In 1975 Tra was a leader of the conquest of Saigon when [ARVN](#) forces (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) collapsed. When he published in 1982 a critical account of internal dissension among Communist leaders during the Vietnam conflict, Tran Van Tra was purged from the Communist party.

Source: John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## TRINH

The Trinh were the family dynasty in control of [Tonkin](#) in the northern portion of [Vietnam](#). By the 1590s Trinh Kiem was the power behind the throne of the Le dynasty in Tonkin, and the Trinh ruled Tonkin until 1786, when leaders of the [Tay Son Rebellion](#) invaded and seized [Hanoi](#). When the Tay Son government collapsed in 1802, the Trinh were unable to return to power in Hanoi because the [Nguyen](#) dynasty, under [Gia Long](#), had unified [Cochin China](#), [Annam](#), and Tonkin under one rule.

Source: Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, 1958.

## TROOP

The term ``troop" usually refers to a cavalry unit of [company](#) size. Usually commanded by a captain, a troop is made up of two or more platoons. During the war in Vietnam, there were also reconnaissance troops, armored cavalry troops, and [air cavalry](#) troops.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## TRUMAN, HARRY S

Harry S Truman, the thirty-third president of the United States, was born on May 8, 1884, in Lamar, Missouri. After graduating from high school he worked the family farm near Independence, Missouri, and joined the army in 1917. Truman saw combat with the 129th Field Artillery of the 35th Division at St. Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne offensives. After the war he operated a clothing store and studied law in night school. Active in the politics of Tom Pendergast's Kansas City machine, Truman became a Jackson County judge in 1922, served as presiding judge between 1926 and 1934, and won election to the U.S. Senate in 1934. Truman was reelected in 1940 but served in obscurity until he chaired the Senate Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program. [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) selected Truman as his running mate to replace Henry A. Wallace in 1944, and when Roosevelt died of a stroke on April 12, 1945, Truman became president of the United States.

Unlike Roosevelt, however, Truman had no philosophical opposition to colonialism nor any real interest in [Indochina](#). Truman was content to let [France](#) return to control of her colonial empire. So instead of pursuing Roosevelt's plan to establish intermediary "trusteeship" status on former European colonies, Truman wanted the European powers to resume their imperial positions as a way of fighting Communist expansion in the world. Truman also had a distinct distrust for [Ho Chi Minh](#) because of his ties to Moscow, and instead of viewing Ho as a legitimate nationalist, Truman could only see him as a Communist. Although the United States adopted a position of pro-French [neutrality](#) toward the war in Indochina during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the president provided for covert economic and military assistance to the French. Hundreds of millions of dollars of Marshall Plan assistance to France were also diverted to the colonial enterprises in Indochina and Africa. When Harry S. Truman left office in January 1953, the United States was clearly a French supporter in the Indochina war. Fear of communism had replaced opposition to imperialism as the main focus of American Third World policy.

Sources: Alfred Steinberg, *The Man from Missouri: The Life and Times of Harry S. Truman*, 1962; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986.



## TRUONG CHINH

Truong Chinh was born in 1907 in Nam Dinh. He joined the Revolutionary League of Vietnamese Youth in 1927 and was expelled from the Nam Dinh School for anti-French, revolutionary activities. Chinh joined the Communist party in 1930 and was imprisoned by the French. After his release in 1936, Chinh worked as a journalist until 1939 when the French imprisoned him again. He escaped prison and fled to Yenan late in 1939 and returned to Vietnam in 1941. Between 1941 and 1945 Chinh was the secretary-general of the Central Committee of the Communist party of [Indochina](#) (see [Lao Dong party](#)). During the 1950s he was active in the Labor party of Vietnam and was appointed deputy prime minister of [North Vietnam](#) in 1958. Chinh's relationship with [Ho Chi Minh](#) was a close one, with him acting as Ho's chief Marxist theorist. Chinh was viewed, however, as a moderate and an advocate of negotiation whenever possible. After the fall of [South Vietnam](#) in 1975, Chinh rose to more power in the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#), eventually becoming the second most powerful individual in the country. He resigned as party chief and president in December 1986 after severe economic problems in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam eroded his political base.

Sources: *Who's Who in the Socialist Countries*, 1978; Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; *Washington Post*, December 18, 1986.

## TRUONG DINH DZU

In 1967 an obscure [Buddhist](#) lawyer ran an unexpectedly strong second to the presidential ticket of [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) and [Nguyen Cao Ky](#). Dzu took 17 percent of the vote in a field of ten candidates to Thieu's 35 percent, an unheard-of result in the quagmire of South Vietnamese politics. Candidates who were "pro-Communist," "neutralist," or allied with "militant Buddhists" were excluded from the election, and Truong Dinh Dzu had kept his platform relatively secret. But he was allowed to run because he had [Central Intelligence Agency](#) contacts and because he advocated a bombing "pause" rather than a "halt" in North Vietnam and because he initially opposed negotiations with the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)). Nevertheless, Truong Dinh Dzu, in the absence of stronger peace candidates, became the token peace candidate, and his 17 percent electoral finish was an embarrassment to the government. In a country where the "will of heaven" determines political authority, the election weakened Thieu's legitimacy. In response he jailed and later exiled Truong Dinh Dzu.

Sources: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, 1972; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Edward Herman and Frank Brohead, *Demonstration Elections*, 1984.

Samuel Freeman

## TRUONG NHU TANG

Truong Nhu Tang was born in 1923 in the [Saigon](#) suburb of [Cholon](#). Educated at the University of Paris, he became a successful banker in [South Vietnam](#), directing the Viet-Nam Bank for Industry and Commerce and the Viet-Nam Sugar Company in Saigon. During the late stages of the government of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) in the early 1960s, Tang became disenchanted with the corruption and American involvement. In 1964 he became a director of the People's Movement for Self-Determination, and in 1966 president of the Viet-Nam Youth Union. He was imprisoned in 1967 and 1968 for advocating peace with the [Vietcong](#), and in 1968 Tang joined the National Liberation Front (see Vietcong). In 1969 he was named minister of justice for the [Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam](#), and remained in that position until the fall of South Vietnam in 1975. He then became the minister of justice for the southern part of the new [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#).

Source: *The International Who's Who 1976-77*, 1976.

## TUNNEL RATS

The term "tunnel rats" was a slang term describing American soldiers specially trained to attack [Vietcong](#) and [North Vietnamese Army](#) underground positions. In [South Vietnam](#) there were hundreds of miles of tunnels the Vietcong used to protect living areas, storage depots, ordnance factories, hospitals, and supplies from American air and [artillery](#) strikes. The most elaborate tunnels, first constructed by the [Vietminh](#) in the 1940s, were located around Cu Chi, approximately 25 miles northeast of [Saigon](#) on Highway 1 (see "[Street Without Joy](#)"). The area around Cu Chi became the most bombed, gassed, defoliated, and devastated area in the history of combat because of the American attempts to destroy the tunnel network.

Source: Tom Mangold and John Penycate, *The Tunnels of Cu Chi*, 1985.

## XXIV CORPS

Headquartered at [Phu Bai](#) in [I Corps](#), the XXIV Corps was first activated in Vietnam after the [Tet Offensive](#) in 1968. Until 1970, when the [Third Marine Division](#) left Vietnam, XXIV Corps was subordinate to the [III Marine Amphibious Force](#). In March 1970 the headquarters of the XXIV Corps was shifted to [Da Nang](#), and the XXIV Corps then assumed control of marine and South Vietnamese military operations in I Corps. The XXIV Corps was deactivated at the end of June 1972. During its nearly four years in I Corps, the XXIV Corps had responsibility at various times for all or parts of the following units: the [1st Cavalry Division](#), the [82nd](#) and [101st Airborne Divisions](#), the [Fifth Infantry](#) Division, the 108th Artillery Group, and the III Marine Amphibious Force. The following lieutenant generals commanded XXIV Corps: William B. Rosson (February-July 1968); Richard Stilwell (July 1968-June 1969); Melvin Zais (June 1969-June 1970); James W. Sutherland (June 1970-June 1971); and Welborn G. Dolvin (June 1971-June 1972).

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.



## U

U THANT

UH-1

UNCOMMON VALOR

UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM

USS C. TURNER JOY (DD-951)

USS MADDOX (DD-731)

USS PUEBLO

USS TICONDEROGA





## U THANT

U Thant was born in Burma in 1909 and became secretary of the Ministry of Information in 1949, where he served until 1957. In 1957 Thant received appointment as the Burmese ambassador to the United Nations (UN). During the next four years he proved himself as a strong neutralist with great diplomatic skills. In 1961 Thant became secretary-general of the UN. Thant presided over the General Assembly during the most intense years of the Vietnam War, and he frequently urged a negotiated settlement of the conflict and occasionally played a direct role in negotiating such a settlement. His major attempt came in 1964 when he tried to work with Premier Nikita Khrushchev in bringing the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table. His efforts were stillborn until 1968, when he helped in working out some of the detail of the [Paris peace talks](#). U Thant resigned as secretary-general of the UN in 1971 and died in 1974.

Sources: *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary*, 1983, p. 1979; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## UH-1

The Bell UH-1 helicopter is one of aviation's true success stories. Thousands of the aircraft have been made in a number of variations, serving a multitude of roles. Called the Iroquois by the United States Army, the aircraft is much better known by its nickname of "Huey," derived from its initial designation of HU-1. In its multitude of roles in Vietnam, the Huey became a familiar sight on the [television](#) screens of America. Hardly a night passed without the evening news showing Hueys in [dustoff](#), [slick](#), or other missions.

Bell was chosen in 1955 to provide the army with a utility helicopter capable of serving as a front-line medical evacuation (see medevac) aircraft, a general utility aircraft, and an instrument training aircraft. Deliveries to the U.S. Army began in 1959. In 1961 a more powerful version, the UH-1B, was introduced. In 1967, starting with the UH-1D series, the airframe length was increased, giving the Huey a much roomier passenger-cargo compartment capable of carrying more troops or supplies. In 1968 Bell developed a specialized version of the aircraft with a stronger airframe and more powerful engine. The "Huey tug," as it was nicknamed, was capable of lifting loads of up to three tons, nearly double that of a conventional Huey.

The UH-1 carried out a variety of missions in Vietnam, and it carried them all out well. As a troop transport, the Huey could carry from eleven to fourteen fully equipped combat troops. As a medical evacuation helicopter, the Huey carried six litters and a medical attendant. Conventional Hueys could carry 3,880 pounds of supplies, either internally or in a sling under the fuselage. As a gunship, the Huey could carry a variety of armaments, including rocket packs on each side of the fuselage, a nose-mounted M-5 40mm grenade launcher capable of firing 220 rounds per minute, or two side-mounted XM-140 30mm cannon.

Powered by a 1,400 SHP Avco Lycoming engine, the Huey had a cruising speed of 127 mph and a range of 318 miles. Fast and highly maneuverable, the Huey proved far superior to the [CH-21](#) or [CH-34](#) as an assault helicopter. Combat troops normally rode in the wide doors on each side of the aircraft, and could exit quickly, greatly reducing the time the helicopter was on the ground. Often troops jumped from a Huey just above the ground as it "bounced" in ground effect and then left, with the entire ground time reduced to a matter of seconds.

The Huey continues to serve a major role in military organizations throughout the non-Communist world. The U.S. Army plans to retain at least 2,700 improved UH-1H models beyond the year 2000 to serve in a variety of roles, including resupply, troop transport, command, electronic warfare, and medical evacuation.

Sources: *Jane's All the World's Aircraft: 1970-71*, 1971; *Jane's All the World's Aircraft: 1985-86*, 1986.

Nolan J. Argyle

## UNCOMMON VALOR

One of the many POW-genre films of the early 1980s, *Uncommon Valor* was released in 1983 and starred Gene Hackman as Colonel Jason Rhodes and Robert Stack as a Texas multi-millionaire, both of whom are intent on financing and carrying out a mission to rescue their sons, whom both believe are still [prisoners of war](#) in Vietnam. Hackman recruits several of their sons' former comrades and they stage a rescue. The film tells the story of the recruitment and training of the rescue [squad](#) and the successful mission.

## UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the Foreign Assistance Act of September 4, 1961, Congress recommended that the United States adopt programs assisting foreign countries in economic development and external and internal security, and two months later President [John F. Kennedy](#) established the Agency for International Development (AID) by executive order. New York lawyer Fowler Hamilton became the first AID administrator, and he was succeeded in 1962 by economist David E. Bell. During the 1960s AID represented a shift in American foreign aid away from Europe and toward the Third World. In addition to loans and grants, AID assigned American specialists abroad. By the end of 1962 AID had more than 5,000 employees abroad, and they were training another 8,000 foreign nationals. By 1965 AID was spending more than \$2 billion a year, and loans were beginning to replace grants as a major form of assistance. AID missions were established in seventy foreign countries, and most workers were assigned to projects in agriculture, education, and public health. By that time AID employees had reached more than 15,000 people.

During the early years of the Vietnam buildup AID became increasingly involved in anti-Communist programs, public safety, civic action, and rural and community development. Its 1967 budget earmarked more than \$550 million for Vietnam. AID workers tried unsuccessfully to establish farming cooperatives, self-help projects, and village elections. As the war became more and more controversial at home, the public image of AID deteriorated, especially as revelations of [Central Intelligence Agency](#) involvement in AID appeared. Between 1968 and 1975, AID personnel strength dropped from 18,000 people to less than 6,000. In addition to continuing its development activities, AID began running refugee assistance programs around the world. It also conducted [Operation Babylift](#) in 1975 when thousands of [refugees](#) were removed from Vietnam. After new legislation passed through Congress in 1973, AID programs shifted away from industrially oriented capital expenditures to popular participation programs in public health, education, and agriculture.

Sources: Rober E. Asher, *Development Assistance in the Seventies: Alternatives for the United States*, 1970; Paul G. Clark, *American Aid for Development*, 1972; John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986.

## **UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM**

The United States Army Vietnam was a logistical command headquarters between July 1965 and March 1973. It functioned at [Saigon](#) and later [Long Binh](#). The deputy commander of the [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) supervised the United States Army Vietnam.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

### USS C. TURNER JOY (DD-951)

The *C. Turner Joy* is a *Forrest Sherman* class destroyer of 4,200 tons and a crew of 360 people. She has three 5-inch guns, two 3-inch guns, six torpedoes, and depth charges. Commissioned on August 3, 1959, the *C. Turner Joy* completed two Western Pacific deployments and was in the midst of her third in August 1964 when she went to the assistance of the [USS Maddox](#), another destroyer under attack by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. After firing, along with the carrier [USS Ticonderoga](#), on the boats and destroying one of them, the *C. Turner Joy* retired to an area 100 miles off the North Vietnamese coast and continued patrolling. On August 4, 1964, both destroyers picked up on radar what they believed to be small surface craft approaching at extreme range in poor weather. Gunfire from the destroyers and aircraft from the *Ticonderoga* sank two of the boats and damaged two others, although the attacking boats were never positively identified. In retaliation of this "[Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#)," President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) ordered air strikes against four torpedo houses and supporting facilities. Congress passed the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#), which legally cleared the way for direct U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Throughout the rest of the Vietnam War the *C. Turner Joy* conducted shore bombardment (see [naval bombardment](#)) and screening patrols in the South China Sea.

Sources: *Jane's Fighting Ships 1976-77*, 1978; Tom Carhart, *Battles and Campaigns in Vietnam*, 1984.

Charles Angel

## USS MADDOX (DD-731)

Commissioned on June 2, 1944, the USS *Maddox* was an *Allen M. Sumner* class destroyer that carried six 5-inch guns and ten 21-inch torpedoes. The USS *Maddox* was assigned to the Third Pacific Fleet and supported the Luzon invasion in late 1944 and early 1945, as well as the Okinawa and Japanese home islands campaigns in the summer of 1945. As part of the [Seventh Fleet](#) in the South China Sea in the summer of 1964, the USS *Maddox* came under attack by three North Vietnamese patrol boats. With help from the destroyer [C. Turner Joy](#) and the carrier [Ticonderoga](#), the *Maddox* destroyed one of the patrol boats and damaged two others. Two days later, on August 4, 1964, the *Maddox* picked up radar information of five attacking patrol boats, and the same three vessels engaged them for more than two hours. The [Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#) was used by President [Lyndon Johnson](#) to begin air strikes against North Vietnam and to justify a major escalation of the war. The *Maddox* completed two additional tours in Vietnamese waters in 1965 and 1966, supporting carriers and bombarding the shore. In 1969 the USS *Maddox* was decommissioned.

Sources: U.S. [Navy](#) Department, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, 4:189-90, 1969; Tom Carhart, *Battles and Campaigns in Vietnam*, 1984.

Charles Angel

## USS PUEBLO

Early in the morning of January 23, 1968, forces from the North Korean navy seized the USS *Pueblo*, a highly sophisticated American intelligence ship. The seizure reportedly occurred 15 miles off the North Korean coast, well beyond the 12-mile territorial limit, and there were eighty-three Americans aboard. One was killed in the attack and four wounded. North Korea claimed that the ship was seized in waters seven miles off the coast, in what was a violation of their territorial sovereignty. Even if the territorial violation had been accurate, the North Korean action was a severe reaction, since American and Soviet intelligence vessels regularly worked the Asian coasts and occasionally wandered off course. Such occurrences usually warranted only orders to leave. Although the United States immediately ordered 350 aircraft to air bases in [South Korea](#) as a show of force, the crew of the *Pueblo* spent eleven months in captivity and were beaten, tortured, and forced to sign false confessions. Because the diplomatic controversy over the *Pueblo* lasted throughout 1968, along with the [Tet Offensive](#), [election of 1968](#), [My Lai](#), and the assassinations of [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), and [Robert Kennedy](#), American energies were distracted, and a more vigorous response, one which held out at least the possibility of military action against Korea, was out of the question. The quagmire in Vietnam had limited the American capacity to deal with other crises in the world.

Source: F. Carl Schumacher and George C. Wilson, *Bridge of No Return*, 1971.

Sally Smith



## USS TICONDEROGA

The *Ticonderoga* was an *Essex* class aircraft carrier commissioned on May 8, 1944. After participating in the Pacific campaigns against [Japan](#) in 1945, the *Ticonderoga* spent two years bringing American servicemen home from Japan and was decommissioned on January 9, 1947. She was converted for jet operations in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin, the *Ticonderoga* received reports from the destroyer [Maddox](#) of attacks by three torpedo boats. The carrier deployed four aircraft to attack the boats. Two days later the *Ticonderoga* assisted the destroyer [C. Turner Joy](#) when it was being attacked by torpedo boats. The Gulf of Tonkin incident led to the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) by Congress authorizing air strikes against [North Vietnam](#), and along with the USS *Constellation*, the *Ticonderoga* flew sixty [sorties](#) against four bases and oil storage facilities, destroying twenty-five torpedo boats and causing severe damage. Between November 1965 and August 1969, the *Ticonderoga* completed five combat tours in the Far East and its aircraft flew over 35,000 sorties against North and South Vietnamese targets. The *Ticonderoga* was decommissioned on September 1, 1973, and sold for scrap.

Sources: Tom Carhart, *Battles and Campaigns in Vietnam*, 1984; U.S. [Navy](#) Department, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. 3, 1978.

Charles Angel



## V

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VU VAN MAU

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## VAN TIEN DUNG

Van Tien Dung, the protege of General [Vo Nguyen Giap](#), who led the final assault on [South Vietnam](#) in 1975, was born on May 1, 1917, in Ha Deng Province, [Tonkin](#), of peasant ancestry. Dung joined the revolutionary movement in the mid-1930s, fought against the French before and during World War II, as well as against the Japanese occupation forces of [Indochina](#) after 1940. Vo Nguyen Giap took notice of the peasant soldier and moved him up through the army ranks, appointing him chief of staff in 1953 and giving him logistical command of the assault against French forces at [Dien Bien Phu](#) in 1954. Dung was second in command to Giap throughout the 1960s, and early in the 1970s became the youngest member of the politburo in [North Vietnam](#). Giap named Dung commander of the campaign against South Vietnam in 1975. Dung's book *Our Great Spring Victory* describes the assault on and collapse of the South Vietnam government. Dung replaced Giap as minister of national defense in February 1980.

Sources: Van Tien Dung, *Our Great Spring Victory*, 1976; U.S., [Central Intelligence Agency](#), *Who's Who in North Vietnam*, 1969; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983.

## VANCE, CYRUS ROBERTS

Cyrus Vance was born on March 27, 1917, in Clarksburg, West Virginia, and received an undergraduate and a law degree from Yale in 1939 and 1942 respectively. After service in the navy during World War II, Vance began practicing law in New York City, and became general counsel for the Department of Defense in 1961. In 1962 President [John Kennedy](#) named Vance secretary of the army. Vance was a close friend of [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), and he became deputy [secretary of defense](#) in 1964. He toured Vietnam in 1966 and publicly defended administration policy, and from 1968 to 1969 Vance served on the negotiating team at the [Paris peace talks](#) on Vietnam. When [Richard Nixon](#) entered the White House in 1969, Vance's role in foreign policy faded, except for periodic consultation assignments with [Secretary of State Henry Kissinger](#), but in 1977 the new president, Jimmy Carter, named Vance secretary of state. Then Vance advocated diplomatic recognition and restoration of relations with the government of Vietnam. He resigned as secretary of state after the abortive American attempt to rescue the Iranian hostages in 1980. Cyrus Vance is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Sources: *Current Biography*, 1977, pp. 405-11; *Who's Who in America*, 1976-1977, p. 3210.

## **VIET NAM CACH MENH DONG MINH HOI (VIETNAM REVOLUTIONARY LEAGUE)**

The [Vietminh](#)'s origins can be traced to an anti-Communist [Chinese](#) nationalist warlord, Chang Fa-kwei, who had jailed Nguyen Ai-Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot) for Communist activities. The Chinese had had designs on Vietnam for centuries, and the end of World War II presented new opportunities. Chang and two other warlords, Lu-Han and Lung-Yun, wanted control over [Tonkin](#). The [Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang](#) (VNQDD), a pro-Chinese Vietnamese nationalist organization formed by [Chiang Kai-shek](#), and other non-Communist nationalist organizations, were weak, with aging leadership, and in no position to serve Chinese interests. Nguyen Ai-Quoc led the well-organized Indochinese Communist party (ICP; see [Lao Dong party](#)). Ai-Quoc's willingness to set aside ideological differences with Chang and collaborate in forming the Viet Nam Cach Menh Dong Minh Hoi (a coalition of Vietnamese nationalist organizations which became known more simply as the Vietminh), typified his willingness to compromise Communist principles in order to strengthen his organization.

Chang released Ai-Quoc from prison and funded the new coalition. Ai-Quoc promptly changed his name to [Ho Chi Minh](#) (He Who Enlightens) because he was too well-known as a Communist. Since the ICP comprised a small minority of the Vietnam Revolutionary League, Chang mistakenly believed he could prevent Ho from dominating the organization. Ho returned to Vietnam and, with [Vo Nguyen Giap](#), organized Vietnamese resistance to [Japan](#). They established ties with the United States OSS (Office for Strategic Services), rescued downed Allied pilots, collected intelligence, harassed Japanese forces, and planned to seize control of Vietnam before the Allies could execute plans to accept the Japanese surrender in [Indochina](#).

Though much more numerous, the non-Communist members of the Revolutionary League were no match for Ho's leadership. On September 2, 1945, with American military personnel on the reviewing stand and warplanes flying overhead in salute, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the independence of Vietnam under the governance of the Vietminh.

Sources: [Bernard Fall](#), *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis*, 1963; William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 1976.

Samuel Freeman VIET NAM DOC LAP DONG MINH HOI See Vietminh

## VIET NAM QUOC DAN DANG

The Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang, or Vietnamese Nationalist party, was established in Canton, [China](#), in 1925 to oppose [Ho Chi Minh](#)'s forces in Vietnam. In 1927 Nguyen Thai Hoc, a schoolteacher, secretly established a branch of the party in [Hanoi](#). Patterned after the Kuomintang in China, the Vietnamese Nationalist party wanted to modernize Vietnam and expel the French. An unsuccessful uprising at Yen Bay, northwest of Hanoi, in 1930 severely hurt the party and many of its members fled to Yunnan in southwest China. Although the Vietnamese Nationalist party was generally inactive during the [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) years, its leader then, Nguyen Tuong Tam, opposed Diem and called for the end of [Buddhist](#) suppression. He committed suicide in 1963. After the fall of Diem, the Vietnamese Nationalist party became a major force in [South Vietnam](#), opposing communism and calling for democratic socialism and an end of discrimination against [Buddhists](#). By the late 1960s, there were four major factions in the Vietnamese Nationalist party. The largest faction was centered in the [Mekong](#) Delta and had 95,000 members. Most of them were Buddhists led by Nguyen Hoa Hiep and Tran Van Tuyen. A second group of 50,000 was based in Quang Ngai Province as well as in the provinces of Quang Nam and Quang Tin. It was led by Nguyen Dinh Bach and Bui Hoanh, who was the political administrator of Quang Ngai Province. Buddhist militant [Thich Tri Quang](#) was influential in this faction. A third group, numbering about 10,000 people, consisted of [Roman Catholic refugees](#) from [North Vietnam](#) and was led by Le Hung. Another group had only 1,000 members, also influential among Roman Catholic refugees.

Sources: William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 1976; Harvey H. Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967. VIETNAM REVOLUTIONARY LEAGUE  
See Viet Nam Cach Menh Dong Minh Hoi



## VIETCONG

In 1954, after the Geneva Conference (see [Geneva Accords](#)) on [Indochina](#), [Ho Chi Minh](#), just as he had promised, ordered his forces to withdraw back into [North Vietnam](#), where he would wait for the results of the promised elections to reunite the country in 1956. Included in the withdrawing troops were those [Vietminh](#) originally from southern Vietnam. Some of them undoubtedly stayed in the south, but they were few in number and restrained by [Hanoi](#). But five years later, with the government of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) firmly in control of the [Republic of Vietnam](#) and the elections cancelled, Ho Chi Minh decided to rejoin the battle in the south. He permitted southern Communists to return home, recruit new supporters, and prepare for the "revolutionary struggle." Southern Communists engaged in a frenzy of assassination and terrorism to destabilize the [Saigon](#) regime. On December 20, 1960, Ho Chi Minh organized the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Vietnam, with [Nguyen Huu Tho](#) serving as chairman. The purpose of the NLF was to foment a general uprising in the Republic of Vietnam to bring about a Communist revolution which would unite the south with the north. It remains arguable how firmly southern Communists controlled the NLF and how firmly Hanoi controlled the southern Communists.

During the Kennedy administration, the southern insurgents became stronger. South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, seeking to deride the insurgency, called the guerrillas the Vietcong (short for Vietnamese communists). American troops later called them VC, or "Charlie." But the VC soon appeared more than a match for Diem's government forces. At the [Battle of Ap Bac](#), for example, in January 1963, the Vietcong were outnumbered ten to one but managed to inflict a humiliating defeat on [ARVN](#) forces (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam). By late 1963 American intelligence analyses found that the Vietcong controlled more villages in the south than did the Saigon government.

The Vietcong high-water mark came in 1963-64. In 1965 President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) began committing the first of what became more than a half million troops and a vast array of weaponry. Hanoi responded with its own buildup of North Vietnamese regular troops. The Vietcong were battered by American forces and taken over gradually by [North Vietnamese Army](#) cadres. The [Tet Offensive](#) in January and February 1968, although a political disaster for the United States, was a death stroke for the independence of the Vietcong. By the end of 1968, the Vietcong had suffered deep and disastrous losses, and North Vietnamese troops were largely responsible for the war effort in South Vietnam. In 1969 the [Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam](#) superseded the Vietcong-NLF.

Sources: Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation of South Vietnam*, 1966, and *History of the Vietnamese Communist Party*, 1978; [Truong Nhu Tang](#), *A Viet Cong Memoir*, 1985.

Charles Dobbs

## VIETMINH

Vietminh is the shortened and most commonly used name for the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi, or League for the Independence of Vietnam. The Vietminh was a patriotic front organization created at the Eighth Plenum of the Indochinese Communist party (ICP; see [Lao Dong party](#)) in May 1941. Under the direct guidance of [Ho Chi Minh](#), the front provided the vehicle for the party to mobilize the anti-French and anti-Japanese nationalism of the Vietnamese people. At the same time, the party made a conscious decision to de-emphasize ideology and class war until national independence was achieved.

The creation of the Vietminh also represented a shift in military strategy by the ICP to guerrilla (see [Vietcong](#)) warfare, and it was largely through rural insurgency that the Vietminh led the resistance first against the Japanese and then against the French. The anticolonial war of the Vietminh gained its most spectacular success with the surrender of the French garrison at [Dien Bien Phu](#) in May 1954. It was with representatives of the Vietminh that the French negotiated the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#) that led to de facto recognition of Ho Chi Minh's government in [Hanoi](#) and to the eventual military [withdrawal](#) of the French from Vietnam.

Long before Dien Bien Phu and Geneva, the Communist identity of the Vietminh leadership was clearly apparent in Vietnam. In 1951, in an effort to maintain and attract broad support for the liberation struggle, the Communist party dropped the name Vietminh and adopted the name Lien Viet Front. Despite this move, Vietminh remained during the 1950s the designation most commonly used in [South Vietnam](#) for the Communists. Around the time of the creation of the National Liberation Front (see Vietcong) in South Vietnam in 1960, the name Vietcong replaced Vietminh as the term used outside of North Vietnam for the Vietnamese Communists.

Source: William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 1981.

David L. Anderson

## VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) was founded in 1967 after six veterans who marched together in an antiwar demonstration decided veterans needed their own antiwar organization. Its membership ultimately included several thousand veterans and a few government infiltrators. The VVAW participated in most major antiwar activities, including the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Government officials saw VVAW from its inception as a special threat because Vietnam veterans had a unique credibility. Furthermore, officials feared their capacity for violence although VVAW demonstrations were always among the most peaceful and orderly. With [Jane Fonda's](#) financial assistance, VVAW conducted the Detroit "[Winter Soldier Investigation](#)" (February 1971) where numerous veterans testified about "war crimes" they either witnessed or perpetrated. Selected testimonies were published in *The Winter Soldier Investigation* (1972). Speaking at the hearings, prompted in part by VVAW outrage over the assertion that the [My Lai](#) massacre was an aberration resulting from soldiers having "gone berserk," executive secretary Al Hubbard stated: "The crimes against humanity, the war itself, might not have occurred if we, all of us, had not been brought up in a country permeated with racism, obsessed with communism, and convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are good and most other countries are inherently evil." The government and its supporters denounced the proceedings and made several attempts to discredit testimony given.

On April 19, 1971, the VVAW began "Dewey Canyon III." ([Dewey Canyon I and II](#) were military operations in [Laos](#).) It included over 1,000 veterans, led by men in wheelchairs and mothers of men killed in combat, who held a memorial service at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and then were refused permission to lay wreaths on graves of fallen comrades at Arlington Cemetery (although after much haggling 200 were permitted in to lay wreaths the next day). They camped on the mall in defiance of a court order which was rescinded after it was realized that it would be poor public relations to arrest peaceful combat veterans. On April 23, 1971, more than 1,000 veterans threw medals they had won in Vietnam over police barricades on the Capitol steps.

Subsequent activities included several protests in December 1971 of the heaviest bombing of [North Vietnam](#) since 1968 and at the 1972 Republican convention in Miami, for which eight members (and two sympathizers) were tried on contrived criminal conspiracy charges. In July 1974 about 2,000 members demonstrated in Washington demanding universal amnesty for [draft resisters](#) and [deserters](#), implementation of the Paris peace treaty, ending aid to [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) and [Lon Nol](#), [Richard Nixon's](#) impeachment, and a universal discharge with benefits for all Vietnam veterans.

In all its activities, the VVAW had an overriding goal: to make the nation realize, in the words of cofounder Jan Barry, "the moral agony of America's Viet Nam war generation", whether "to kill on military orders and be a criminal, or to refuse to kill and be a criminal."

Sources: Myra MacPherson, *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation*, 1984; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 1985.

Samuel Freeman



## VIETNAM WAR MEMORIAL

After watching the film [The Deer Hunter](#) in 1979, Vietnam veteran Jan C. Scruggs first conceived of the idea for a Vietnam War Memorial. Scruggs had little success promoting the idea until "CBS Evening News" did a prime-time spot on the campaign. Robert Doubek and John Wheeler, two attorneys in Washington, D.C., who were both veterans, heard the spot and soon organized the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to raise money and construct the memorial. With the assistance of Senator Charles Mathias, Jr., of Maryland, they formed a National Sponsoring committee which included Bob Hope, former president [Gerald Ford](#), Rosalynn Carter, Senator [George McGovern](#), and General [William Westmoreland](#). On April 30, 1980, the Senate unanimously approved a bill setting aside two acres on the mall near the Lincoln Memorial. The House approved the measure more than a month later, and on July 1, 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed the bill into law.

A national competition for memorial designs received 1,421 entries by the deadline of March 31, 1981, and the winner was Maya Lin, a Yale architecture student. Her proposal for a black granite sculpture, rising out of the ground and then descending back again in angular form, with the names of more than 58,000 dead or missing American soldiers inscribed on it, soon raised a storm of protest. Some Vietnam veterans resented the fact that an Asian-American woman had designed it, while others thought it memorialized the shame of the war. Still, by January 4, 1982, more than 650,000 people had donated more than \$5 million, and Secretary of the Interior James Watt issued a building permit after a compromise agreement to include a sculpture of three soldiers by Frederick Hart. Hart's sculpture was finished on September 20, 1982, and the entire memorial was dedicated on November 13, 1982. At the time a total of 58,022 names were on the memorial. In 1986, another 108 names were added, 95 servicemen killed on combat missions outside the formal war zone and 13 others who died of wounds after leaving the war zone.

Sources: Joel L. Swerdlow, "To Heal a Nation," *National Geographic* 167 (May 1985), 555-73; Jan C. Scruggs and Joel L. Swerdlow, *To Heal a Nation: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, 1985.

Robert L. Shadle

## VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE

In 1951 the French established a small unit in the Army Air Corps which formed the beginning nucleus of the South Vietnamese Air Force. Primarily engaged in observation, liaison, and small cargo transport, the Vietnamese Air Force used Morane Saulnier MS500 Criquets. The Vietnamese Air Force became an independent military unit in 1955 after the [withdrawal](#) of the French from [Indochina](#). At that time its equipment included Grumman F8F Bearcat [fighters](#), Cessna L-19 aircraft for reconnaissance, and C-47 and AAC-1 Toucan aircraft for transport. Beginning in 1960 the United States began supplying the Vietnamese Air Force with [A-1 Skyraiders](#) and T-28Ds. The United States Air Force began training Vietnamese pilots on jet aircraft, primarily Northrop F-5As (see [F-5](#)) in 1966, and early in 1967 established the 522nd [squadron](#) at [Bien Hoa](#). Eight Vietnamese Air Force squadrons were eventually established using F-5As or F-5Es. They also used A-37 Dragonflies. The A-1s were replaced by A-37s between 1967 and 1969.

Between 1969 and 1973 the Vietnamese Air Force was greatly expanded as part of [Richard Nixon's Vietnamization](#) process. By December 1972 there were 42,000 men and 49 squadrons in the Vietnamese Air Force. It had nearly 2,100 aircraft, primarily A-37 and F-5 squadrons; [AC-47](#) and AC-119 [gunships](#); O-1 [FAC](#) aircraft; [C-7](#), C-119, C-123, and [C-130](#) transports; and [UH-1](#) and [CH-47](#) helicopters. The real weakness in the Vietnamese Air Force were lack of trained maintenance personnel, shortages of spare parts, and serious problems of morale.

Sources: Dong Van Kuyen, *The RVNAF*, 1980; Carl Berger, ed., *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973*, 1977; John S. Bowman, ed., *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## VIETNAMESE NATIONAL ARMY

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the [Truman](#) administration urged the French to establish a Vietnamese army to assist them in fighting the [Vietminh](#). The French were reluctant to do so, but finally decided in 1950 to go ahead with the idea. Although they had a goal of 115,000 troops for the Vietnamese National Army (VNA), it totaled only 38,000 soldiers by the end of 1951. But the army was poorly trained and deeply infiltrated by the Vietminh. The [Navarre Plan](#) of 1953 called for increasing the size of the VNA and improving its training, but the defeat at [Dien Bien Phu](#) in 1954 ended those plans. In 1955 the new leader of the [Republic of Vietnam](#), [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), took over the VNA, and it became the nucleus of the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#).

Sources: George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; [Bernard Fall](#), *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis*, 1963.

## VIETNAMIZATION

In 1969 the new president, [Richard Nixon](#), wanted to extricate the nation from the Vietnam quagmire. When [Hanoi](#) appeared unwilling to negotiate and when military analysts convinced him that there were few immediate levers to move the North Vietnamese to the peace table, Nixon turned a three-prong policy: American [troop withdrawal](#), consequently lowered [draft](#) calls permitting creation of a lottery system, and, the key to the entire process, turning the ground fighting over to the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#), so-called Vietnamization, which became the basis for the [Nixon Doctrine](#), that Asians, not Americans, should fight Asian wars.

The policy was not new. In the 1950s the French had their policy of turning fighting over to native units, *jaunissement*, or yellowing. And certainly the rationale for commitment of U.S. forces in 1965-68 had been, eventually, to use the breathing space to build an effective South Vietnamese Army and to turn the ground burden over to it.

Still, the U.S. government pursued Vietnamization with great vigor, and by the end of 1970 the South Vietnamese Army was among the largest and best equipped in the world. In those cases where officers were competent and brave, the units were excellent and capable of holding the line. But the record was mixed. A larger army meant larger draft calls and severe dislocations in the Vietnamese economy. [Desertion](#) rates remained high. And the quality of officers remained uneven, sometimes excellent, all too often mediocre.

Vietnamization had three major tests. In 1971 Nixon ordered a hastily planned South Vietnamese invasion of [Laos](#) (see [Lam Son 719](#)); it went badly. In 1972 [North Vietnam](#) launched a strong offensive that crushed and routed many South Vietnamese units; massive application of U.S. [air power](#) managed to restore the balance. Then in March 1975 the North Vietnamese attacked with nearly twenty [divisions](#) and within two months crushed the south.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986; Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Vietnamization and Cease-Fire*, 1985.

Charles Dobbs

## VO NGUYEN GIAP

Vo Nguyen Giap was born in 1912 in Quang Binh Province and studied in [Hanoi](#) at the Lycee Albert Sarraut and the University of Hanoi Law School. As a teenager he was politically active in the Revolutionary party of New Vietnam, and in 1933 he joined the Indochinese Communist party (see [Lao Dong party](#)). In 1939 he was forced into exile for anti-French activities, and his wife died in 1941 in a French jail. By that time Giap was thoroughly familiar with the interests of [Ho Chi Minh](#), and in 1941 he helped Ho organize the [Vietminh](#). Between 1941 and 1945 Giap was active in the mountains of northern [Tonkin](#) and southern [China](#) putting together an army and harassing French and Japanese units. Ho Chi Minh promoted Giap to general and commander in chief of the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) in 1946.

As military leader of the Vietminh, Giap put together an army of nearly 300,000 revolutionary troops and militia, and in 1953 he launched a drive into [Laos](#), having already gained control of most of central and northern Vietnam outside the coastal lowland areas. The new French commander, Henri Navarre (see [Navarre Plan](#)), reversed himself and chose to commit 10,000 troops to an isolated plateau, [Dien Bien Phu](#), in northwest Vietnam, astride Giap's line of communications. Giap then reversed course, cut off the French, secretly brought [artillery](#) up into the surrounding mountains (a tactic the French considered impossible), massed 50,000 troops of his own, and established a siege of Dien Bien Phu. The French surrendered on May 7, 1954, and gave up their Indochinese Empire.

Giap also led the military campaign against the United States and [South Vietnam](#) during the 1960s and 1970s. A believer in direct military confrontation as opposed to guerrilla action, Giap frequently orchestrated frontal attacks on U.S. positions, with disastrous results. The [Tet Offensive](#) all but destroyed the [Vietcong](#) and forced [North Vietnamese Army](#) troops to carry the burden of the war. Still, Tet had been a strategic victory even if a tactical defeat. In 1972, Giap planned and tried to implement the [Eastertide Offensive](#), assuming that with the United States all but out of South Vietnam, the country was ripe for attack. Throughout most of the country [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) held its positions, and buttressed with massive [B-52](#) strikes from the United States, they were able to regain all that they had lost in the initial stages of the offensive. The North Vietnamese suffered more than 100,000 [casualties](#), and in the wake of the defeat Giap was replaced by his chief of staff, [Van Tien Dung](#). Dung led the final assault on South Vietnam in 1975. In 1980, Giap retired as minister of defense of the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#).

Sources: Vo Nguyen Giap, *Dien Bien Phu*, 1962; *Big Victory, Big Task*, 1967; and *Unforgettable Days*, 1978; G. H. Turley, *The Eastertide Offensive: Vietnam 1972*, 1985; *Who's Who in the Socialist Countries*, 1978.

Charles Dobbs



### **VOGT, JOHN W., JR.**

John Vogt was born on March 19, 1920, in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He was an Army Air Corps pilot during World War II. Vogt rose through the ranks of the United States Air Force officer corps during the 1950s, and between 1965 and 1968 served as deputy for plans and operations at the Pacific Air Force headquarters in Honolulu. Vogt took command of the [Seventh Air Force](#) in 1972. As part of the American [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam, Vogt moved the Seventh Air Force out of [Tan Son Nhut Air Base](#) to [Thailand](#) in March 1973. Vogt stepped down as commander of the Seventh Air Force in October 1973 to become commander in chief of the Pacific Air Force. He retired from the air force in 1975 after a stint as commander in chief of the United States Air Force in Europe.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## VU VAN MAU

Vu Van Mau was born in [Hanoi](#) on July 25, 1914. He attended law school at Hanoi University and the University of Paris and began practicing law in Hanoi in 1949. He became a professor of law at Hanoi University in 1950 and dean of the law school in 1954. After the division of [Indochina](#) in 1954, Mau moved to the south and became minister of foreign affairs in the government of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#). In 1963 Vu Van Mau resigned in protest when Diem's police forces began attacking [Buddhist](#) strongholds. He even shaved his head in the fashion of Buddhist monks to protest the discrimination and persecution. After the fall of the Diem government Mau returned to private law practice.

Source: *Asia Who's Who*, 1960.

## VUNG TAU

Vung Tau, the fifth largest city in [South Vietnam](#), with nearly 40,000 people, was also the southernmost, major port facility in the country. Located in Phuc Tuy Province in [III Corps](#), Vung Tau was more than 400 miles south of [Hue](#). It was formerly known as Saint Jacques. The port at Vung Tau was the main support center for the southern area of South Vietnam, and was situated at the entrance to the [Mekong](#) River system leading into [Saigon](#). Vung Tau was also the support area for the [Mobile Riverine Force](#).

Sources: Harvey H. Smith et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, 1967; Carroll H. Dunn, *Base Development in South Vietnam, 1965-1970*, 1972.



## **W**

``WALK IN THE SUN"

``WASTED"

``WISE MEN"

WALT, LEWIS

WAR OF ATTRITION

WAR POWERS RESOLUTION (1973)

WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE

WAR ZONE C

WARNKE, PAUL CULLITON

WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

WATER BUFFALO

WATERGATE

WEST GERMANY

WESTMORELAND, WILLIAM CHILDS

WEYAND, FREDERICK CARLTON

WHEELER, EARLE GILMORE

WHITE HORSE DIVISION

WHITE STAR MOBILE TRAINING TEAM

WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM?

WILD WEASEL

WILLIAMS, SAMUEL T.

WING

WINTER SOLDIER INVESTIGATION

WITHDRAWAL

WOMEN, UNITED STATES



## **``WALK IN THE SUN''**

``Walk in the Sun" was a phrase soldiers used to denote some type of ground [troop](#) movement free of the risk of combat. These were rare, cherished events when troops could move freely without having to be constantly alert for ambush or [booby traps](#). The need to be constantly alert to every detail of the environment, to any aberration in the nature of the terrain or vegetation, to smells in the air, to any changes in the noise of the jungle, to a sudden quiet or the sound of startled animals or birds, had a grinding and exhausting effect on the men who stalked the jungles. All of their senses were finely honed so that reaction came instinctively. But such a high level of alert consumed enormous amounts of nervous energy. A ``walk in the sun" provided a tremendous if temporary sense of relief from the omnipresent burden of intense vigilance.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Al Santoli, *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-three American Soldiers Who Fought It*, 1981.

Samuel Freeman

## ``WASTED"

Many people, especially combat soldiers, came to see the entire U.S. effort and the resulting loss of life in Vietnam as a waste. ``Wasted" which referred to killing people, evolved from this sentiment. A soldier who killed an enemy soldier in combat might described the incident in colorful, profane language by saying he ``wasted the , , " (expletive deleted) with his [M-16](#) or [M-79](#). ``Wasted" might also be used to describe the mercy killing of a wounded soldier, either enemy or allied, who was obviously mortally wounded, or the summary execution of a prisoner of war. However, the term is most frequently associated with what is considered to be an unnecessary killing, the accidental or intentional killing of civilian noncombatants or the killing of another soldier.

Sources: Thomas D. Boettcher, *Vietnam: The Valor and the Sorrow*, 1985; [Vietnam Veterans Against the War](#), *The Winter Soldier Investigation: An Inquiry into American War Crimes*, 1972.

Samuel Freeman



## ``WISE MEN''

The term ``Wise Men" was used in the last days of the [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) administration to describe a group of experienced American diplomats and former public officials who advised the president on the Vietnam War. The group included [W. Averell Harriman](#), Dean [Acheson](#), Paul Nitze, [George Kennan](#), John McCloy, Robert Lovett, and Charles Bohlen, all of whom had a lifetime of experience in European affairs but knew little about Vietnam. Among some antiwar liberals, the term ``Wise Old Men," or ``WOMs," was a derisive name for establishment liberals who had caused the war. But early in 1968 they began to turn against the war, and in a dramatic meeting on March 25, 1968, they advised Johnson to end the war. Less than a week later Johnson announced his decision not to seek reelection.

Source: Walter Issacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, 1986.

## WALT, LEWIS

Lewis Walt was born on February 16, 1913, in Wabaunsee County, Kansas. He graduated from the Colorado School of Mines in 1936 and that summer accepted a commission as a lieutenant in the [Marine Corps](#). Walt saw combat in Tulagi, Guadalcanal, New Britain, and Peleliu during World War II, and he served with the Fifth Marines during [Korea](#). He took command of the [Third Marine Division](#) in 1965 and the [III Marine Amphibious Force](#) in Vietnam. In 1967 Walt returned to the United States, and after a stint as assistant commandant of the United States Marine Corps, he retired in 1971.

Sources: Lewis W. Walt, *Strange War, Strange Strategy*, 1976; Edwin H. Simmons, "Marine Corps Operations in Vietnam: 1965-66, 1967, 1968, 1969-72," in *The Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1972*, 1974.

## WAR OF ATTRITION

The primary, indeed the only strategy the U.S. military pursued in Vietnam was "attrition," the wearing away of enemy forces to the point where they were either unable or unwilling to continue fighting. At that point victory would be achieved. Given this strategy, the goal was to find the most economical tactics, "economical" in maximizing enemy losses while minimizing allied losses. In pursuing this, a number of substrategies were tried and retried, giving rise to tactics like "enclaves," "oil spots," "[search and destroy](#)," "search and clear," "[strategic hamlets](#)," "new life hamlets," and "really new life hamlets." Pacification (see [Rural Reconstruction](#)) was only given lip service by the United States as evidenced by miniscule resources allocated for pacification compared to the resources allocated for military combat operations. General [William Westmoreland](#) believed in attrition, pronouncing in 1967 that the "crossover" point had been reached, that the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese were now losing personnel faster than they could replace them. The [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968 proved Westmoreland wrong but gave him a new basis for justification, Tet enemy losses were so great that the United States now had a stranglehold on enemy [troop](#) strength. He soon learned that such a stranglehold did not really exist.

Eventually the strategy of attrition suffered from at least two serious flaws. First, U.S. military planners had not foreseen the enormous [casualties](#) which the North Vietnamese were willing to accept. American forces were highly effective in their mission of inflicting losses upon the enemy, but attrition alone was not sufficient to destroy North Vietnam's will to wage war. Second, the American military failed to take into consideration American public opinion. American casualties proved to be unacceptable to the public. In retrospect, it can be argued that the most strategically decisive attrition figures were American rather than North Vietnamese. North Vietnam was able and willing to absorb extremely heavy military losses in pursuit of its objectives. American casualties, although a smaller percentage than [North Vietnamese Army](#) losses, were nevertheless sufficient to cause the American public to question the wisdom of a distant war in an alien land.

Sources: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; John E. Mueller, "The Search for the 'Breaking Point' in Vietnam: The Statistics of a Deadly Quarrel," *International Studies Quarterly* 4 (December 1980), 497-519; *Russell F. Weigley, The American Way of War*, 1973; Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, 1982; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.

Samuel Freeman and Sean A. Kelleher

## WAR POWERS RESOLUTION (1973)

By 1973, congressional reaction began to sharpen to the cumulative effect of having been ignored and deceived by the executive branch on the question of the Vietnam-Indochina War. By midsummer, there was ample evidence that the [Nixon](#) administration had consistently and deliberately falsified statistics, data, and reports to Congress to hide the extent of questionable activity in Vietnam, [Cambodia](#) (see Kampuchea), and [Laos](#). Such revelations spurred Congress into belated action, and in July the House and Senate finally agreed on passage of a War Powers Resolution to restrain the president and reassert the authority of Congress over the war-making power, despite the opposition of administration loyalists in Congress and the threat of a presidential veto.

The measure did not apply to the Indochina war, since the president and the Congress had already agreed to a date for cutoff of funds there. But in the future, the bill required that the president must report to Congress within 48 hours if (a) he committed American forces to a foreign conflict, or (b) he "substantially" increased the number of combat troops in a foreign country. Unless Congress approved the president's action within 60 days, the commitment would have to be terminated. However, at the insistence of the Senate, a loophole was inserted allowing the deadline to be extended another 30 days if the president certified that more time was necessary to complete the safe evacuation of American forces. Congress could also order an immediate [withdrawal](#) within the 60- or 90-day period by passing a concurrent resolution, which was veto-proof.

President Richard M. Nixon vetoed the War Powers Resolution, but after nine attempts both House and Senate voted to override the veto on November 7, 1973, and the measure became law.

Sources: *Facts on File*, 1973, pp. 624-625, 928; *United States Code: Congressional and Administrative News*, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, 1973, pp. 2346-2366; *United States Statutes at Large*, 1973, Vol. 87, 1974, pp. 555-559.

Joseph M. Rowe, Jr.

## WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE

The War Resisters League (WRL) headquartered at 339 Lafayette Street, New York City, is "a secular pacifist organization that advocates Gandhian nonviolence to create a democratic society without war, racism, sexism and exploitation." Members pledge that "War is a crime against humanity. I therefore am determined not to support any kind of war, international or civil, and to strive for the removal of all the causes of war." WRL publishes a magazine called *The Nonviolent Activist*. WRL is also linked to a wider organization, War Resisters International. Founded in 1923 by Jessie Wallace Hughan as a secular counterpart to the [Fellowship of Reconciliation](#), WRL played an important role in the antidraft, antiwar tax, and anti-Vietnam War protests of the 1960s and 1970s. As early as Lincoln's birthday in 1947, WRL had helped to sponsor demonstrations around the United States in which some 400-500 men destroyed their draft cards or mailed them to President [Harry Truman](#). Dwight Macdonald spoke on behalf of WRL at the New York rally at which 63 men burned their draft cards. Under attack during the McCarthy era, WRL was supported by such notable figures as Albert Einstein, who wrote in 1953: "The War Resisters League is important because... The existence of such a moral elite is indispensable for the preparation of a fundamental change in public opinion, a change that, under present day circumstances, is absolutely necessary if humanity is to survive." In the late 1950s and early 1960s, WRL actively supported ban-the-bomb demonstrations, civil disobedience against civil defense drills, and black civil rights protests. By 1963, under the leadership of [Dave Dellinger](#) and David McReynolds, WRL focused its protests on the escalation of the Vietnam War and the rise in Selective Service inductions. Dave Dellinger and A.J. Muste edited *Liberation*, an influential radical magazine initially supported by WRL and published from 1956 to 1975. On May 16, 1964, WRL cosponsored a demonstration in New York City at which twelve men burned their draft cards. In December 1964, WRL cosponsored the first nationwide demonstration against the Vietnam War. According to WRL, its membership grew from 3,000 to 15,000 between 1964 and 1973. From 1965 through 1983, WRL's Workshop in Non-violence published a widely read "movement" magazine called WIN. WRL was the major organizer of Stop the Draft Week in late 1967 as well as a cosponsor or endorser of many "teach-ins" and demonstrations, including the May Day demonstrations of 1971. WRL organized draft counseling networks to assist young men who wished to obtain conscientious objector status, refuse registration or induction, or flee into exile. WRL also spearheaded a major campaign to promote refusal of payment of income taxes and of a federal tax on telephone charges levied to raise revenue for the Vietnam War. On April 18, 1974, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) seized \$2,537.43 in taxes not paid by WRL employees during 1969-71. Similar IRS seizures have occurred periodically since then. After the Vietnam War, WRL experienced membership attrition, slipped largely from public view, and turned its attention to such issues as disarmament, amnesty for draft resisters, and U.S. policies in the Middle East and Central America. WRL announced disapproval of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979-80 and strongly protested the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. David McReynolds continues to be the principal figure in WRL.

Sources: Thomas Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home*, 1984; Pauline Maier, *The Old Revolutionaries*, 1980; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975*, 1984.

John Kincaid

## WAR ZONE C

The term "War Zone C" was used by the United States Army to describe a region near the Cambodian border in [III Corps](#) where [Vietcong](#) activity was particularly strong. War Zone C included portions of Tay Ninh Province, Binh Long Province, and Binh Duong Province.

Sources: Bernard William Rogers, *Cedar Falls-Junction City: A Turning Point*, 1974; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 1986.

## WARNKE, PAUL CULLITON

A native of Webster, Massachusetts, Paul Warnke was born on January 31, 1920, and graduated from Yale in 1941 and the Columbia University Law School in 1948. He practiced law in Washington, D.C., until 1966, when he was named general counsel for the Department of Defense. Between 1967 and 1969, Warnke served as assistant [secretary of defense](#) for international security affairs. During those years Warnke came to be a vigorous opponent, within the Defense Department, of the Vietnam War. Warnke was convinced that it was the wrong war in the wrong place, and that the United States would be unable to prevail. Warnke had great influence over Secretary of Defense [Clark Clifford](#), and General [William Westmoreland](#) would later blame Warnke for converting Clifford from a hawk to a dove about Vietnam. Later Warnke became one of Clifford's law partners. When [Richard Nixon](#) won the [election of 1968](#), Warnke found himself exiled with the rest of the Democrats; so he returned to private practice and continued to work on antiwar programs for the Democratic National Committee. Warnke returned to government service in 1977 during the Carter administration as director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and chief negotiator of the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II). Warnke's appointment was quite controversial because of his open opposition to the Vietnam War and because he opposed deployment of the B-1 bomber and the Trident nuclear submarine. Although Warnke had no illusions about Soviet benevolence, he did believe that both countries had the capacity to destroy one another many times over and that weapons reduction was essential to world peace. Warnke continued to work on the SALT II treaty until his resignation in October 1978. Since then he has been a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Sources: *Current Biography*, 1977, 427-30; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; Paul Warnke, "Apes on a Treadmill," *Foreign Policy* 18 (1975), 12-30.

## WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

On January 6, 1961, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev delivered a speech in Moscow in which he predicted that the world was moving toward socialism and that "wars of national liberation" were the primary vehicle of that movement. Furthermore, he pledged Soviet support for indigenous rebellions to overthrow fascists and capitalists. President [John F. Kennedy](#) interpreted the speech as a formal statement of the [Soviet Union](#)'s intention to use surrogate forces to promote its interests rather than direct engagements with the United States. Kennedy saw the Communist movements in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia as part of that large Soviet strategy, and he devised new [counterinsurgency](#) strategies to oppose them. Vietnam became the test case for Kennedy's counterinsurgency program to thwart a war of national liberation.

Sources: Bruce Miroff, *Pragmatic Illusions: The Presidential Politics of John F. Kennedy*, 1976; Bower J. Bell, *The Myth of the Guerrilla*, 1971.



## **WATER BUFFALO**

The water buffalo was the most important domesticated animal in the Vietnamese economy. Throughout all of Vietnam there were more than two million water buffalos, most of which were used as draft animals by Vietnamese farmers.

Source: Danny J. Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, 1976.

## WATERGATE

On June 22, 1972, Washington, D.C., police caught several men attempting to wiretap Democratic Party National Headquarters in the Watergate Building. At their arraignment the next morning, one of the burglars, James McCord, revealed he had worked for the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) and was working for the [Richard Nixon](#) reelection campaign. Under the impact of extraordinary investigative reporting by people like Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of the *Washington Post* and Seymour Hersh of the *New York Times* during 1973 and early 1974, as well as a Senate investigating committee, it became clear that the highest officials in the Nixon administration had orchestrated a series of illegal and unethical campaign programs, and that the president himself had ordered a cover-up of the entire affair. Eventually the House Judiciary Committee voted two articles of impeachment against Richard Nixon, on charges of obstructing justice and abuse of power, and the Supreme Court voted 8 to 0 that Nixon turn over key tapes to the Watergate Special Prosecutor, Leon Jaworski. Richard Nixon resigned the presidency on August 9, 1974. The revelations over Watergate totally eliminated the president's credibility as well as his capacity to act directly in matters of foreign policy. United States troops were all out of [South Vietnam](#) by the time the Watergate crisis erupted, but the Nixon administration was politically unable to marshal any resources to sustain the [Republic of Vietnam](#) against North Vietnamese attack.

Source: [Henry Kissinger](#), *White House Years*, 1979; Theodore H. White, *Breach of Faith*, 1976.

Charles Dobbs

## WEST GERMANY

West Germany, long conceded to be America's strongest ally in Europe next only to [Great Britain](#), had little to do with Vietnam. Officially, West Germany supported the anti-Communist policy in South Vietnam, but privately German leaders had serious reservations about the American commitment there. More important is the question of the impact of Vietnam on West Germany. American preoccupation with Vietnam drew attention away from Europe, and, by default, West Germany assumed a much more significant role in NATO. There is some evidence that Soviet restraint in Vietnam was tacitly bought by U.S. assurances of keeping West Germany from joint nuclear control over weapons stationed on her soil. The denouement of the war contributed to a decline in American prestige in Europe and to a more independent stance by West European nations. West Germany's increasing trade and political contacts with eastern bloc countries attests to her new independence.

Sources: Viola Herms Drath, ed., *Germany in World Politics*, 1979; Wolfram Hanreider, *The Stable Crisis: Two Decades of German Foreign Policy*, 1970; Terence Prittie, *Willy Brandt: Portrait of a Statesman*, 1974.

Gary M. Bell

## WESTMORELAND, WILLIAM CHILDS

William Westmoreland was born on March 26, 1914, in Spartanburg County, South Carolina, to a distinguished family. He entered the United States Military Academy in 1932 and graduated in 1936 as First Captain (the senior cadet in the corps). During World War II Westmoreland served in North Africa, Sicily, [France](#), and Germany, and during the Korean War he commanded the 187th Airborne Infantry Regimental Combat Team. Before his appointment in 1964 as [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) commander, Westmoreland had commanded the [101st Airborne Division](#) and served a stint as superintendent of West Point. He decided to seek a holding action combined with spoiling attacks to prevent a major enemy offensive while the United States constructed the necessary logistical infrastructure to support a larger military force in the south. Later, as that force became larger, Westmoreland turned to a strategy of attrition. He sent United States and [ARVN](#) (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam) forces on "search and destroy" missions, sometimes with success, sometimes without, seeking to kill, wound, capture, or cause to desert more enemy troops than the enemy could resupply. With the enormous firepower of the American military, Westmoreland thought his [war of attrition](#) was succeeding by the end of 1967.

The Communist [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968 proved to be Westmoreland's downfall. The massive attack on South Vietnam's urban areas seemingly belied Westmoreland's claims of approaching victory. Although American and ARVN forces all but annihilated the [Vietcong](#), the Tet Offensive was a strategic victory for the Communists because the American public, forced to choose between Westmoreland's positive analysis of the outcome and the media's view of the strength of the attack, moved decidedly against the war. [Creighton Abrams](#) replaced Westmoreland as MACV commander in July 1968. After serving as army chief of staff during the [Nixon](#) administration, Westmoreland retired from active duty in 1972. He flirted with South Carolina and national politics in the late 1970s, but the Vietnam War proved to be too much of an albatross.

Westmoreland came back into the American headlines in 1982 when the CBS News documentary "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception" accused him of manipulating data on enemy troop strength in 1967 to paint a brighter picture of the military situation in South Vietnam. In response Westmoreland filed a libel suit against CBS, but an out-of-court settlement in 1985 ended the issue without any payments by either party.

Sources: William Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 1976; [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest*, 1972; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army in Vietnam*, 1986; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, 1986.

Charles Dobbs

## WEYAND, FREDERICK CARLTON

Frederick C. Weyand was born on September 15, 1916, in Arbuckle, California. He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1939 and joined the army, serving in the Burma area during World War II and as an infantry officer in [Korea](#). In 1966 Weyand took command of the [25th Infantry Division](#), and early in 1967 he became head of [II Field Force Vietnam](#). Weyand left Vietnam in 1968, spent some time as a military adviser to the Paris peace negotiations in 1969, and in 1970 returned to Vietnam as [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) deputy commander. In June 1972 he replaced General Crieghton Abrams as MACV commander and presided over the American [withdrawal](#) from [South Vietnam](#). Weyand became army chief of staff in 1974 and retired from active duty in 1976.

Sources: Frederick Weyand, "Vietnam Myths and American Military Realities," *Commanders Call*, July/August, 1976; Clark Dougan and David Fulghum, *The Vietnam Experience: The Fall of the South*, 1985.

## WHEELER, EARLE GILMORE

A former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Chairman, JCS](#)), Earle Wheeler was born on January 13, 1908, and after high school decided to attend West Point, where he graduated in 1932. Between 1932 and 1936 he was the company officer with the 29th Infantry. He then saw service in Tientsin, [China](#), from 1937 through 1938. During the first half of World War II, Wheeler trained new [divisions](#) which eventually saw action in the European theater. In 1944 he was reassigned in Europe, where he saw service in logistics. After World War II he was posted to the National War College, and by 1962 was a full general. In that same year he became deputy chief of the U.S. European Command and then army chief of staff. In 1964 Earle Wheeler was appointed chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

After U.S. warships were attacked in the Gulf of [Tonkin](#) in 1964, Wheeler began to press President [Lyndon Johnson](#) for drastic measures. Wheeler was particularly alarmed at the deterioration of the [Saigon](#) regime after [Ngo Dinh Diem](#)'s ouster and subsequent assassination. The chairman received reports, from Pentagon and [Central Intelligence Agency](#) officials, which indicated that the collapse of the South Vietnamese regime might result in a complete takeover of Southeast Asia, the [domino theory](#). By 1965, along with other administration officials, Wheeler was urging direct U.S. intervention in South Vietnam. As the U.S. presence grew in Vietnam, he supported U.S. ground forces engaging the enemy in the field. The chairman had good relations with Congress, especially Senators [John Stennis](#) and Henry Jackson.

By early 1967, the U.S. commitment to Vietnam had grown to massive proportions. The American public began to sour on the war as [casualties](#) mounted. The U.S. media televised in gruesome and realistic detail the ferocity of the war. Congress also began to reassess its commitment to the war, and members of Johnson's administration also questioned their rationale for the continuing involvement in Vietnam. In the summer of 1967, [President Johnson](#) held a special meeting to assess the Vietnam War. In that meeting Johnson asked Wheeler when would the United States succeed and what would be the ultimate [troop](#) commitment to achieve victory. To both questions Wheeler asked for additional manpower and a call-up of the reserves. Johnson and his White House aides were shocked. While [William Westmoreland](#) portrayed optimism, General Wheeler had presented them with a protracted war with no end in sight. President Johnson decided not to run for reelection and offered overtures for de-escalation.

President [Richard Nixon](#) came into office in 1969 pledged to "peace with honor" in Vietnam. [Melvin Laird](#) with Wheeler began the process of [Vietnamization](#). General Wheeler, however, believed in slow disengagement to give the South Vietnamese armed forces enough time to adjust to the transition. In 1970 Wheeler successfully lobbied Nixon for incursions of U.S. combat forces into [Cambodia](#) (see [Kampuchea](#); [Operation Binh Tay](#)) to destroy North Vietnamese [sanctuaries](#). He told Nixon that if these actions were successful, the South Vietnamese would be able to take over the war faster. In 1970 Wheeler retired and then died in December 1975.

Sources: *Current Biography*, November 1965; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; *New York Times*, December 19, 1975.

John S. Leiby

## **WHITE HORSE DIVISION**

Throughout the Vietnamese conflict, the South Koreans maintained a substantial commitment in support of the U.S. military effort. The "White Horse Division" was the nickname of the Republic of Korea's Ninth Infantry Division. The Ninth was in Vietnam between September 27, 1966, and March 16, 1973, and was headquartered in Ninh Hoa.

Source: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981.

## WHITE STAR MOBILE TRAINING TEAM

In July 1959, President [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) authorized the use of United States [Special Forces](#) groups, known as White Star Mobile Training Teams, to help train the Laotian army. Between 1959 and 1962, when they were withdrawn after the negotiated settlement with the [Pathet Lao](#), they worked with both the Laotian army and [Hmong](#) tribal groups in [Laos](#), trying to assist them in resisting the guerrilla tactics of the Pathet Lao. At its peak in 1962, the program had more than five hundred American soldiers working in Laos.

Sources: Charles A. Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere: American Policy Toward Laos Since 1954*, 1973; John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*, 1986.



## WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM?

*Why Are We in Vietnam?* is the title of Norman Mailer's 1967 novel. Although the novel's setting is Texas, New York City, and the Brooks Range of Alaska, it is an antiwar story without ever being directly in Vietnam. A cast of characters, D. J. Jellicoe, Rusty Jellicoe, Alice Lee Jellicoe, Medium Asshole Pete, Medium Asshole Bill, and Tex Hude, end up in the Brooks Range of Alaska on a hunting trip. There, in a pristine and naturally savage environment, they use all the hunting technology they can muster and literally slaughter wolves, caribou, bighorn sheep, and bears. The carnage is extraordinary and, in Norman Mailer's mind, symbolic of what American military technology was doing to the life and habitat of Southeast Asia.

Sources: Norman Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* 1967; Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, 1982.

## WILD WEASEL

The term "Wild Weasel" referred to a new weapons system for tactical fighter aircraft. "Weasel" was used to describe the system's ability to ferret out and destroy enemy surface-to-air missiles ([SAM](#)) and anti-aircraft installations. Usually the "Weasel" was an [F-105](#) equipped with electronic devices capable of tuning in on SAM radar beams. While other aircraft attacked the designated enemy targets, the Wild Weasels went after the SAM and anti-aircraft installations.

Sources: Dewey Waddell and Norm Wood, eds., *Air Power-Vietnam*, 1978; [William Momyer](#), *Airpower in Three Wars*, 1978.

## WILLIAMS, SAMUEL T.

Lieutenant General Samuel T. Williams was chief of the United States Army [Military Assistance and Advisory Group](#) (MAAG), Vietnam, from October 1955 to August 1960. He enlisted in the Texas National Guard as a private in 1916 and was commissioned a second lieutenant, infantry, in 1917. He served as a [platoon](#) and [company](#) commander in World War I and was decorated several times for valor. In World War II he commanded an infantry [regiment](#) and was an assistant [division](#) commander in the Normandy invasion. During the Korean War he commanded the [25th Infantry Division](#) and was deputy commander of a Korean Army Corps. He was commanding general of the Fourth Army at the time of his selection as chief of MAAG, Vietnam.

Known within the Army as "Hanging Sam," Williams was a sharp-tongued commander who demanded strict discipline and maximum effort from his subordinates. His no-nonsense style appealed to [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), and Williams established a good relationship with the South Vietnamese president. Like most American officers of his generation, he thought in terms of conventional, not guerrilla, warfare. He organized and equipped the South Vietnamese Army to protect the South from invasion from the North and to provide internal security against essentially conventional tactics. Even when Diem's government began to experience increasing attacks by guerrilla forces in 1960, Williams tended to view this insurgency as a diversionary move by the regime's enemies in [Hanoi](#). He retired in 1960 after forty-three years of active service and lives in San Antonio, Texas, where he continues to speak and write on military topics.

Source: Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941-1960*, 1983.

David L. Anderson

## WING

“Wing” is a term describing a unit of up to 500 aircraft in the United States [Marine Corps](#). It is commanded by a major general. In the United States Air Force and [Navy](#), a wing is a smaller organizational institution. A naval air wing is commanded by a captain and consists of approximately seventy-five aircraft, usually in the form of two fighter squadrons, four attack squadrons, and reconnaissance aircraft. An air force wing is under the command of a colonel and consists of three squadrons of twenty-five aircraft each, as well as a wing headquarters and supply and engineering squadrons.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.

## WINTER SOLDIER INVESTIGATION

Late in 1969, as the revelation of the [My Lai atrocities](#) caused intense public debate over the nature of the war in Vietnam, the [Vietnam Veterans Against the War](#) wanted to make it clear that My Lai was by no means the only example of war crimes. The American public had been conditioned by the brutality of the Nazis and the Japanese during World War II, and the "brainwashing" of the North Koreans, to assume that only other countries committed war crimes. Between January 31 and February 2, 1971, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War convened the "Winter Soldier Investigation" in Detroit, Michigan. For three days 116 veterans testified of war crimes they had either committed or witnessed. There were also panel discussions on weaponry, medical care, prisoners, racism, the ecological devastation of Vietnam, and the psychological effects of the war on American soldiers.

Source: Vietnam Veterans Against the War, *The Winter Soldier Investigation*, 1972.

## WITHDRAWAL

In April 1969, just three months after [Richard Nixon](#) took office as president, U.S. [troop](#) strength in Vietnam reached its peak of 543,000. He had promised a disengagement from South Vietnam when he was campaigning for president in 1968, and during a visit to Vietnam in July 1969 he ordered General [Creighton Abrams](#), commander of American military forces, to reduce U.S. [casualties](#) and initiate [Vietnamization](#), turning the war over to South Vietnamese military forces. Abrams then developed a fourteen-stage withdrawal process, designed to begin in August 1969 and end in November 1972. By January 1970 troop strength had dropped to 473,00 as Abrams saw to the removal of U.S. Marines first and some of the army infantry [divisions](#). Troop levels steadily declined to 404,000 in July 1970, 336,000 in January 1971, 225,000 in July 1971, 133,200 in January 1972, and 45,600 in July 1972. The last of the combat troops, the Third Battalion of the 21st Infantry, left South Vietnam in August 1972. The final withdrawal of all American troops took place in March 1973, except for a handful of soldiers left with the Defense Attache Office.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 1978.

## **WOMEN, UNITED STATES**

More than 7,500 women saw military service in Vietnam between 1965 and 1973. Most of them were army [nurses](#) and medical technicians. One woman was killed in action in Vietnam, army nurse Sharon Lanz, who died in a rocket attack in 1969.

Source: June A. Willenz, *Women Veterans: America's Forgotten Heroines*, 1984.





**X**

XUAN LOC, BATTLE OF (1975)

XUAN THUY



## **XUAN LOC, BATTLE OF (1975)**

By mid-April 1975 nine [North Vietnamese Army](#) (NVA) [divisions](#) were bearing down on [Saigon](#) from three directions, from Tay Ninh in the northwest, south along Highway 4, and east along Highway 1 (see ["Street Without Joy"](#)). Xuan Loc was located 35 miles northeast of Saigon on the road to [Bien Hoa](#) air base. The 341st NVA Division led the attack on Xuan Loc, which was defended by the 18th [ARVN](#) Division (see Army of the Republic of Vietnam). The fighting was bitter and intense, and the ARVN troops fought well, holding up the assault on Saigon for two weeks. Xuan Loc was reduced to rubble in the struggle, and its population fled in a mass exodus. The North Vietnamese broke through Xuan Loc with Soviet T54 tanks and headed straight toward Bien Hoa, and from there made the southern turn into Saigon at the end of the month. Although defeated at Xuan Loc, ARVN troops in the 18th Division had fought well, the only contingent of ARVN troops to perform well during the 1975 campaign.

Source: Clark Dougan and David Fulghum, *The Vietnam Experience: The Fall of the South*, 1985.

## XUAN THUY

Xuan Thuy, a veteran North Vietnamese diplomat, was born in 1912. He was among the earliest of the Vietnamese nationalists, resisting the French Empire through the [Vietminh](#), being imprisoned and tortured by French officials, but surviving to become the foreign minister of [North Vietnam](#) between 1963 and 1965. Between 1968 and 1970, Xuan Thuy headed the North Vietnamese delegation at the [Paris peace talks](#), always insisting with uncompromising firmness on a unilateral American [withdrawal](#) from [South Vietnam](#), recognition of the National Liberation Front (see [Vietcong](#)) as the legitimate government of South Vietnam, and dissolution of the South Vietnamese government. In 1970 North Vietnam dispatched [Le Duc Tho](#) to Paris to continue the negotiations with [Henry Kissinger](#), and Xuan Thuy served as Tho's chief deputy. Xuan Thuy participated in the signing of the peace treaty between the United States and North Vietnam in January 1973. He died on June 18, 1985, in [Hanoi](#).

Sources: *New York Times*, June 19, 1985; U.S., [Central Intelligence Agency](#), *Who's Who in North Vietnam*, 1969.



**Y-Z**

YANKEE STATION

``ZIPPO WAR''

ZHOU ENLAI



## YANKEE STATION

“Yankee Station” was the place name for the United States [Seventh Fleet](#)'s staging area in the South China Sea. After 1966, Task Force 77, the carrier strike group in the Seventh Fleet, used Yankee Station as the reference point for its operations. Yankee Station was located at 17 dg 30 pr N 108 dg 30 pr E in the South China Sea.

Source: Harry G. Summers, Jr., *Vietnam War Almanac*, 1985.



## ``ZIPPO WAR''

The zippo has long been the lighter of choice for outdoorsmen because of its dependable flame, even under windy conditions, and it was popular for similar reasons among American troops in Vietnam. During search and destroy missions, soldiers often used their zippo lighters to burn the homes of people in [Vietcong](#)-controlled areas. [Television](#) and magazine photographs of American soldiers torching peasant homes with the lighters gave rise to the term ``zippo war." On the other hand, the Vietcong frequently booby-trapped zippos by filling them with explosives and leaving them conspicuously in bars or other places frequented by American troops. Thinking another GI had forgotten it, a soldier would pick it up, only to have it explode in his hand when he tried to light it. The term ``zippo" was also used to describe a flamethrower, especially the M2A17 portable flamethrower.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle*, 1981; Edgar C. Doleman, Jr., *The Vietnam Experience: Tools of War*, 1984.

Samuel Freeman

## ZHOU ENLAI

A leading figure in the development of the [People's Republic of China](#), Zhou Enlai was born in China in 1896. He joined the [Chinese Communist party](#) in 1921 when he was a student in [France](#), and in 1924 he returned to China and joined Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang. In 1927 he was appointed director of the military department of the Chinese Communist Central Committee, and later that year he escaped [Chiang Kai-shek](#)'s purge of Communists in the Kuomintang. A close associate of Mao Tse-tung, Enlai became a leading figure in the Chinese Revolution of 1949. Between 1949 and 1958 he served as foreign minister of the [People's Republic of China](#), and between 1949 and his death in 1976 Enlai was also premier. He was a skilled negotiator.

In his approach to the war in Vietnam, Enlai was suspicious about a united Vietnam. For two thousand years China and Vietnam had been engaged in a struggle for power, and Zhou Enlai preferred a Southeast Asia divided into a number of nation-states instead of one dominated by the Vietnamese, whom he considered imperialistic and aggressive. Enlai therefore supported a negotiated settlement of the conflict, even though the Chinese provided military supplies to the [Vietminh](#), the [Vietcong](#), and the [North Vietnamese Army](#). Enlai also wanted to improve Chinese relations with the United States as a way of gaining leverage with the [Soviet Union](#), and the war in Vietnam complicated that endeavor. When [Richard Nixon](#) began normalizing American relations with China in 1971 and 1972, the North Vietnamese were convinced that the Chinese were out to betray them. Although massive Chinese assistance and a Chinese invasion of North and South Vietnam to fight the United States was an American fear in the 1960s, such a development was unthinkable to Zhou Enlai. He was not that ideologically locked into the Cold War to respond in such rigid ways.

Sources: [Henry Kissinger](#), *White House Years*, 1979; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 1983; *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary*, 1983; Douglas S. Papp, *Vietnam: The View from Moscow, Peking, Washington*, 1981.





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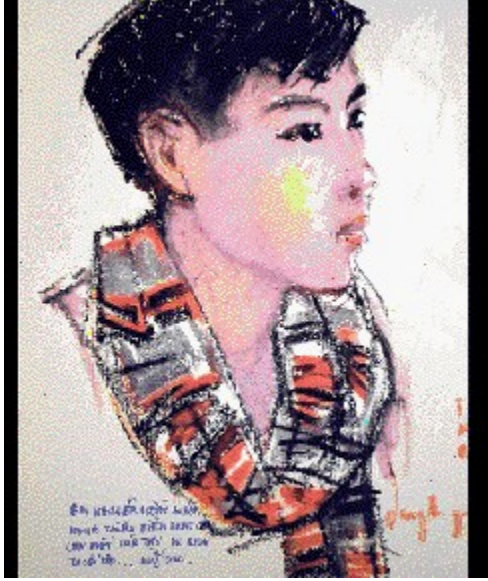




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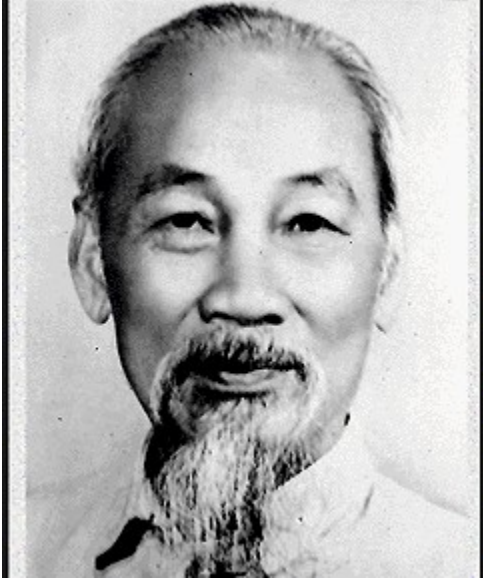
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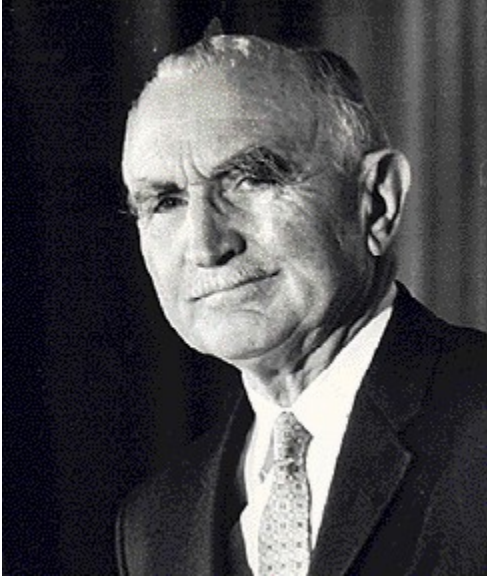


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North Vietnamese ground troops assault a South Vietnamese position.  
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A USAF Skyraider dropping a white phosphorous bomb.  
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William Colby talking with young Vietnamese being trained to establish government services in rural areas as part of the Accelerated Pacification Program.

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Dean Gooderham Acheson, advisor to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and a member of the informal policy group known as "The Wise Men".

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Lyndon B. Johnson.  
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General William Westmoreland (center) with General W.E. DePuy, near Saigon. 1967.  
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Spraying defoliant over areas of South Vietnam where Viet Cong were operating to enable easier detection or deny them use of those areas. The chemicals used have caused serious health problems for American soldiers and Vietnamese as well as widespread environmental damage.

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Rice is the most important agricultural crop in Vietnam. The Mekong Delta is the largest rice growing area.  
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Artists for the National Liberation Front, the Viet Cong, travelled with their forces to make these paintings.

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Heavily armed Cobra gunships gave ground support to military units operating on the ground.  
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Air America flew missions all over South East Asia for the CIA.  
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Phantom fighter bombers were based in South Vietnam, Thailand and also flew from American aircraft carriers for bombing missions in South and North Vietnam.

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Helicopters of the First Cavalry Division land troops near Bong Son, on the Central Coast, February, 1966.

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North Vietnamese pilots head for their Mig fighters.  
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F-105 pilot closes on enemy Mig, fires his 20mm canon and hits the wing near the fuselage. 1967.

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B-52 bombers were used extensively for bombing in North and South Vietnam as well as Cambodia.  
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U.S. troops moving out from a Chinook helicopter.  
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U.S. artillery position being resupplied by a Chinook helicopter.  
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North Vietnamese ground troops assault during the 1972 Spring Offensive.  
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Madame Nhu (center) with members of her family. She was the wife of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem.  
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North Vietnamese ground troops assaulting a South Vietnamese position.  
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Entrance to the Imperial Palace at Hue.  
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A Mandarin, or high official, whose authority was largely eliminated when the French colonized Vietnam.  
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Peace rally at the Pentagon. 1967.  
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Artists for the National Liberation Front, or Viet Cong, travelled with their forces to make these paintings.

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North Vietnamese tanks supplied by the Soviet Union were used in their major offensives.  
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South Vietnamese troops were trained by American military advisers in the early 60s.  
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Blocking force waiting for enemy to be flushed out by another unit.  
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An American army advisor with South Vietnamese troops.  
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South Vietnamese troops in combat.  
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South Vietnamese forces on sweep through rice fields.

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U.S. and South Vietnamese troops check out a village area after a battle. Battles frequently took place in the midst of inhabited areas and civilians were often casualties.

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A navy patrol plane flies low over two boats of the sort used by Vietnamese to escape to neighboring countries after the fall of Saigon.

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9th Inf. Div. activities, Saigon Perimeter. Pfc Peter Haag takes up a position in a suspected VC area during a house to house search. 1968.

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Artists for the National Liberation Front, the Viet Cong, travelled with their forces to make these paintings.

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President John F. Kennedy with his Cabinet, Washington, D.C. 1963.  
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Bao Dai reviews his troops.  
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New South Vietnamese officers graduating from their Military Academy at Da Lat.  
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Artillery position

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An American soldier on a "search and destroy" mission checking a house in a village suspected of supporting the Viet Cong.  
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An American advisor instructing a South Vietnamese pilot.  
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Marines in close combat.  
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Scores of dead after a military operation. Battles often took place in villages where there was little protection from artillery and bombing.

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Americans bomb in Cambodia in attacks on Viet Cong areas there. November, 1970.

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Operation Jeb Stuart. Sfc Floyd Atkins, Platoon leader, 2nd Plt Co."D", disarming a VC booby trap made from a 41mm mortar.

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Major Vernon Gillespie (right), at a change of command ceremony.  
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A Buddhist demonstration against the war.  
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Republic of South Vietnam's Ambassador to Washington, Bui Diem (center), with Congressman George Bush and visiting Vietnamese Senator Huynh Van Cao.

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William Bundy

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Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker at the American military base, Long Binh, just north of Saigon, 1971.

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William Calley, Jr. during his court martial for the My Lai massacre.  
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President Dwight Eisenhower meeting with Vietnamese official, Ngo Dinh Nhu.  
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Fort Meyer, Virginia . General Cao Van Vien of South Vietnam and General William Westmoreland.  
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Phantom jet on a mission over the Central Highlands.  
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Bill Colby ran CIA initiated programs in South Vietnam designed to help South Vietnamese government effectiveness in rural areas.

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Artists for the National Liberation Front, the Viet Cong, travelled with their forces.  
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South Vietnamese troops learning how to air assault from helicopters in the early 60's.  
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General Earle Wheeler reporting to President Johnson on the need for more troops in Vietnam. 1968.

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General William Westmoreland.  
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A member of the psychological warfare group broadcasting to village areas.  
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Two marines and a Vietnamese civilian thatch the roof of a newly built house.  
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Checking sampan for concealed weapons in the canals of the Mekong Delta.  
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Saigon: Joseph Lawton Collins (center right), Personal representative of the U.S. President in Vietnam, presents a check for \$28,571,428.58 to South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem to be used for resettlement of refugees.

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General Westmoreland and President Johnson review troops. Cam Ranh Bay, December, 1967.

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Ho Chi Minh became the undisputed leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party.  
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Long range North Vietnamese artillery brought into South Vietnam shelled military positions.

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U.S. Congress.

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A Viet Cong guerilla captured by the South Vietnamese.  
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A peace march on the Pentagon, October 23, 1967. Dr. Benjamin Spock, center, Dagmar Wilson, Women's Strike for Peace, on his left.

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Women in the military service of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.  
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Lt. Col. A. Peter Dewey, killed by accident at a Viet Ming roadblock in 1945.  
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Ho Chi Minh's victorious Viet Minh troops on top of French bunkers at Dien Bien Phu.  
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President Harry Truman.  
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North Vietnamese ground troops assault behind one of their tanks.  
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John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State under President Eisenhower.  
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A wounded soldier brought from combat by helicopter to a field hospital.  
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Huey helicopters carry troops into the field for operations against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese.

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Army nurse, Lynda Van Devanter, right, assisting during an operation on a wounded soldier.

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Checking out abandoned North Vietnamese position on a hillside after artillery and air strikes.  
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Members of the "C" Company set fire to Viet Cong huts. 1966.  
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President Gerald Ford.  
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With a cocked .45 caliber pistol and an M16 rifle aimed at his head, a suspected Viet Cong is questioned near Da Nang, 1970.

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Captured French forces after the battle of Dien Bien Phu.  
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A French officer decorates Vietnamese serving against Ho Chi Minh's forces.  
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Senator J. William Fulbright.  
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Most operations in Vietnam involved crossing rivers and canals.  
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National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) guerillas moving through one of the canals in the Mekong Delta.  
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President Lyndon Johnson.  
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Special Presidential Envoy Gen. Alexander Haig, Jr. meets Cambodian President Lon Nol, Phnom Penh, 1973.

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Patrol of Viet Minh soldiers on duty in the streets of Hanoi.  
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An American POW being paraded in the streets of Hanoi. Americans captured were almost entirely from downed aircraft.

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Ambassador-at-Large Averell Harriman waves as he and Ambassador Cyrus Vance and Lt. General Andrew Goodpaster emerge from the second official meeting with North Vietnam at the Paris Peace talks.

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Ho Chi Minh and admirers.  
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A military parade in Hanoi after the war.  
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Supplies from North Vietnam moving into South Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.  
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North Vietnam supplied its forces in South Vietnam over a network of trails and roads called the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

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John F. Kennedy

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Students at Kent State throw tear gas canisters back at National Guard troops who opened fire, killing four students. May 4, 1970.

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Viet Cong dead during the Tet Offensive in 1968.  
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Henry Kissinger.

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Ho Chi Minh became the undisputed leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party.  
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Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.  
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Marine, Bill Ehrhart, just before shipping out to Vietnam.  
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Moving through the waterways of the Mekong Delta.  
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Ron Serrizzi, reconnaissance helicopter crew chief, with his M-60 machine gun.  
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Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu.  
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Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara giving a briefing on Vietnam.  
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An American field hospital operating room.  
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Pierre Mendes-France.  
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Women's Strike for Peace.  
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Wayne Lyman Morse.  
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American troops firing mortar.  
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Children run from their village near Saigon after napalm was dropped on them by South Vietnamese planes. June, 1972.

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The USS Mansfield firing off the coast of North Vietnam near Dong Hoi. 1966.  
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General Eugene Navarre with General Gilles. December, 1953.  
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U.S. Marines taking young men from a village near Da Nang where people supported the Viet Cong. 1965.

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Ngo Dinh Diem.

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President Dwight D. Eisenhower meeting with Ngo Dinh Nhu at the White House. 1961.

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Henry Cabot Lodge, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, greets Vietnamese Prime Minister Air Vice Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky.  
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President Nguyen Van Thieu, Republic of South Vietnam, center.  
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Jack Brutchner, 9th Infantry Division, the only American ground unit that operated in the Mekong Delta area south of Saigon.

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President Nixon with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu.  
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Nixon visits troops in July, 1969.  
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A military parade in Hanoi after the war.  
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Major Ralph Kuster, F-105 pilot, closes at 200 knots on an enemy Mig, fires his 20mm canon and hits the wing. His gun camera records the scene.

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U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem at the Presidential Palace in Saigon, 1963.

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A U.S. helicopter evacuating people from a building in Saigon as North Vietnamese move toward Saigon in the final offensive which took over South Vietnam in April, 1975.

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Dr. Henry Kissinger, leader of the U.S. negotiating team at the Paris Peace Talks, initials a Peace Agreement for the U.S.  
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Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's National Security Adviser meeting with North Vietnamese representative Le Duc Tho, right, in Paris.

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Leon Pignon, High Commissioner for Indochina, 1948-50.  
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U.S. soldiers setting up loud speakers to broadcast information to a village area.  
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National Liberation Front painting of women in a guerilla zone making sharpened bamboo stakes to put in traps against enemy soldiers.

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Women and children from a village on the Central Coast near Qui Nhon escape bombing in their village by crossing the river. 1965.

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Secretary of State, Dean Rusk.  
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Saigon street scene, 1972.  
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William Langly applies camouflage grease paint before an operation with a navy SEAL team along the Bassac River. 1967.

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A downed F-105 pilot prepares to be lifted from the jungle by a helicopter. 1972.  
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Robert McNamara and William Westmoreland get a briefing on areas around the demilitarized zone.  
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Ho Chi Minh meets with government officials in a remote headquarters.  
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Buddhist monks and nuns in numerous cities of South Vietnam committed suicide to protest the war.  
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Don Luce, a civilian aid worker and teacher in South Vietnam, discovered the existence of the Tiger Cages where political prisoners of the Saigon government were being held. He is shown here on a recent trip to Vietnam.

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A U.S. soldier checking out an underground shelter on a search and destroy mission in the Central Highlands.

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In the later part of the war, many soldiers decorated their helmets with messages and symbols against the war.

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Vietnam War Memorial, Washington, D.C.  
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General Vo Nguyen Giap, right, commander of North Vietnamese forces.  
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The funeral of Colonel Honay Thuy Nan. Foreign Secretary Vu Van Mau, (far left).  
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Soldiers coined the phrase: We walk until "Charley" finds us. "Charley" refers to the Viet Cong.  
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A U.S. soldier guarding civilians during a search of a village area controlled by the Viet Cong. Quinhon on the Central Coast. 1965.

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Christmas in Vietnam for Army nurse, Lynda Van Devanter, who served in hospitals which treated men brought directly from battlefields.

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A soldier of the 1st Infantry Division setting fire to village houses during a "search and destroy" operation.  
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America's  
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The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975

SECOND EDITION

George C. Herring

University of Kentucky

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For Nancy, John, and Lisa



## FOREWORD

The initial volumes in the "America in Crisis" series appeared in 1965, the year [Lyndon Johnson](#) first sent American combat troops into Vietnam. As editor of the series, I had no thought then of including a volume on the history of the Vietnam conflict. As the war intensified during the next few years, it would have been difficult to write an account free from the deep emotions that the conflict engendered in the United States. The release of the [Pentagon Papers](#) in 1971 made many revealing, behind-the-scenes documents available to historians for the first time, but the continuing controversy over the wisdom of the American commitment prevented calm and objective analysis. When the end of direct American participation in 1973 and the final North Vietnamese victory two years later brought the war to a close, the nation reacted by trying to erase the tragic conflict from its memory. In the late 1970s, however, historians began a long-overdue reappraisal of the quarter century of American involvement in Vietnam.

George Herring draws upon the Pentagon Papers, the recently opened material in the presidential libraries, and the many articles, books, and memoirs about Vietnam to offer a comprehensive and balanced account of the American role from 1950 to 1975. He portrays American participation in the Vietnam War as the logical culmination of the [containment](#) policy that began under [Harry Truman](#) in the late 1940s. Successive administrations never questioned the assumption that the national interest required the denial of [South Vietnam](#) to Communism. The result was the gradual, yet inescapable, intervention in a local civil conflict. At first the United States sought to uphold French control, then to build and maintain South Vietnamese independence, and finally to deny victory to North Vietnam. Five Presidents struggled with the dilemma of Vietnam; none was successful, and for two, Lyndon Johnson and [Richard Nixon](#), the effort proved politically disastrous. Throughout, as Herring makes clear, no one examined the basic premises-



the importance of [South Vietnam](#) to America's position in the world and the viability of South Vietnam as a political entity. The ultimate failure in Vietnam, Herring concludes, revealed the inherent flaws in a policy of global [containment](#). Yet, he understands that the Vietnam story was not a simple case of diplomatic failure the strength of his account lies in his portrayal of the complex challenge that Vietnam posed for the United States and the varied responses it evoked from the American people and their leaders.

ROBERT A, DIVINE

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of *America's Longest War* was written immediately after the end of the Vietnam conflict. Numerous important studies have since been published, and although most of the official U.S. documentation remains unavailable to scholars, significant new material has been released. The purpose of this second edition is to update the book in terms of new information and interpretations and developments in the United States, Southeast Asia, and the world since the end of the war. As in the first edition, the emphasis remains on the American side of the conflict, but I have attempted to sharpen my discussion of the Vietnamese and especially the North Vietnamese/Vietcong role, an area where important revelations have emerged in recent years. I have also expanded the coverage of the antiwar protest movement at home and have attempted to interpret with greater precision its impact on the conduct of the war, the subject of much mythmaking since 1975 and a topic on which important scholarly work is now under way. Despite the "revisionism" of recent years, my primary thesis has not changed. I believe, as I did in 1979, that U.S. intervention in Vietnam was based on a policy fundamentally flawed in its assumptions and major premises. I do not believe that the war could have been "won" in any meaningful sense at a moral or material cost most Americans deemed acceptable.

Numerous people and institutions have assisted me in this revision, and I can single out only a few here. I am grateful to the many reviewers and colleagues who offered constructive criticism of the first edition. I am especially grateful to those colleagues who offered detailed suggestions for this second edition. They were: Richard H. Immerman, the University of Hawaii at Manoa; Gary R. Hess, Bowling Green State University; and Stephen E. Pelz, The University of Massachusetts - Amherst. A special word of thanks goes to Professor Richard W. Leopold of Northwestern University, for his support and encouragement over the years and for reading

the first edition with his customarily keen critical eye. The U.S. Army Military History Institute and the [Lyndon Baines Johnson](#) Foundation provided travel grants to facilitate my research involving their important holdings on Vietnam. At Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, Richard Sommers and David Keough provided invaluable assistance, and in Austin, Texas, David Humphrey exceeded the call of archival duty in helping me to secure newly declassified materials in the Johnson Library.

I have learned far more than I have taught in the various symposia on Vietnam in which I have had the good fortune to participate during the past few years. I thank the sponsors at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the University of Southern California, the Center for Military History, and especially Dr. Harry Wilmer and The Institute for the Humanities at Salado, Texas, for inviting me to take part in these most enlightening gatherings. I also wish to thank my graduate students, past and present, for their assistance and especially for their friendship. Their influence is present in these pages far more than the footnotes and bibliography will indicate.

To Katie Vignery, David Follmer, and Christopher J. Rogers, my thanks for prodding me into undertaking this effort and a belated but by no means grudging admission that revision was justified and indeed necessary.

A very special acknowledgment is due Carol Reardon, who read the proofs and prepared the index with her customary skill and dispatch and whose invaluable assistance in editing Diplomatic History enabled me to complete this revision close to the deadline.

GEORGE C. HERRING

Lexington, Kentucky

September 1985

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

"Vietnam, Vietnam .... There are no sure answers," the veteran Southeast Asian correspondent Robert Shaplen wrote during an especially perplexing period of a long and confusing war.<sup>1</sup> Despite the passage of time, the publication of hundreds of books, and the declassification of thousands of documents, Shaplen's lament remains as real today as when it was penned ten years ago. Why did the United States make such a vast commitment in an area of so little apparent importance, one in which it had taken scant interest before? What did it attempt to do during the nearly quarter of a century of its involvement there? Why, despite the expenditure of more than \$150 billion, the application of its great technical expertise, and the employment of a huge military arsenal, did the world's most powerful nation fail to achieve its objectives and suffer its first defeat in war, a humiliating and deeply frustrating experience for a people accustomed to success? What have been the consequences for American foreign policy of the nation's longest and most divisive war? Although the problems remain as complex and baffling as in Shaplen's day, this book seeks to place American involvement in Vietnam in historical perspective and to offer some answers to these vital questions.

Because of its length, its immensely confusing nature, its proximity to the present, and the emotions that still surround it, the Vietnam War presents extraordinary problems for the historian. I have chosen to give most detailed treatment to the period 1963 to 1973, the decade of heaviest American involvement in Vietnam. But I have also devoted considerable attention to the years 1950-1963. The assumptions that led to the crucial commitments took form during these years. In addition, as Edward Lansdale has observed, without an understanding of this formative period, "one

<sup>1</sup> Robert Shaplen, *The Road from War: Vietnam, 1965-1970* (New York, 1970), p. 283.

is like a spectator arriving in the middle of a complex drama, without true knowledge of the plot or of the identity and motivation of those in the drama."<sup>2</sup> I have relied on the large body of secondary literature on the war, but a vast amount of documentation has been declassified in the United States in recent years and I have attempted to use this material wherever possible. This is not primarily a military history. Rather, in keeping with the purpose of the series, it seeks to integrate military, diplomatic, and political factors in such a way as to clarify America's involvement and ultimate failure in Vietnam. My focus is on the American side of the equation, but I have sought to provide sufficient consideration of the Vietnamese side to make the events comprehensible. I have also attempted to consider American decision-making in the broader context of the nation's global outlook and policies. The United States' involvement in Vietnam was not primarily a result of errors of judgment or of the personality quirks of the policymakers, although these things existed in abundance. It was a logical, if not inevitable, outgrowth of a world view and a policy, the policy of containment, which Americans in and out of government accepted without serious question for more than two decades. The commitment in Vietnam expanded as the [containment policy](#) itself grew. In time, it outlived the conditions that had given rise to that policy. More than anything else, America's failure in Vietnam calls into question the basic premises of that policy and suggests the urgent need for a searching reappraisal of American attitudes toward the world and their place in it. Finally, I have tried to treat the events and personalities with as much detachment as possible in recognition that there was never an easy solution and that choices which at the time seemed most logical and least costly can only in retrospect be judged to have been so injurious and tragic in their consequences.

GEORGE C. HERRING

Lexington, Kentucky

May 1979

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzell, *The Lessons of Vietnam* (New York, 1977), p. 43.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to those who have done so much to assist in the completion of this project. Travel for research was greatly facilitated by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the University of Kentucky Research Foundation. Archivists in the [Truman](#), [Eisenhower](#), [Kennedy](#), and [Johnson](#) libraries painstakingly guided me through the labyrinthine presidential papers of the Cold War era and assisted with the declassification of a number of important documents. It was my extraordinary good fortune, while working in the John F. Kennedy Library, to renew old friendships with William Moss and Robert Stocking. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Martin Elzy of the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, who rendered archival services beyond the call of duty and extended a Texas-size hospitality which made my several visits to Austin most pleasant and productive. Professors Thomas Paterson of the University of Connecticut and Warren Kimball of Rutgers, Newark, read various chapters and generously shared with me their knowledge of recent American diplomatic history. Professor Walter LaFeber of Cornell University provided a most insightful critique of the entire manuscript. My colleague and friend Joe Thompson listened patiently to me discuss Vietnam over the course of several years and read an early draft with great care. His encouragement and sound editorial advice have been invaluable. Robert Divine of the University of Texas, the editor of this series, responded enthusiastically to my proposal to undertake this study and provided much assistance and advice along the way. Wayne Anderson of John Wiley has been a patient-but not too patient-editor, and I appreciate his tolerance in the initial stages and his friendly prodding toward the end. Dorothy Leathers somehow managed to squeeze this manuscript

into her busy typing schedule during the Christmas holidays and handled the chore with customary efficiency, skill, and good humor. From beginning to end, my wife, Nancy, and my children, John and Lisa, have shared with me the frustrations and satisfactions, and this book is dedicated to them, with my love.

G.C.H.

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AMERICA'S LONGEST WAR:  
The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975

Second Edition



## CHAPTER 1

### A Dead-End Alley:

The United States, [France](#), and the First [Indochina](#) War,  
1950-1954

When [Ho Chi Minh](#) proclaimed the independence of Vietnam from French rule on September 2, 1945, he borrowed liberally from Thomas Jefferson, opening with the words "We hold these truths to be self-evident. That all men are created equal." During independence celebrations in [Hanoi](#) later in the day, American warplanes flew over the city, U.S. Army officers stood on the reviewing stand with [Vo Nguyen Giap](#) and other leaders, and a Vietnamese band played the "Star-Spangled Banner." Toward the end of the festivities, Giap spoke warmly of Vietnam's "particularly intimate relations" with the United States - something, he noted, "which it is a pleasant duty to dwell upon."<sup>1</sup> The prominent role played by Americans at the birth of modern Vietnam appears in retrospect one of history's most bitter ironies. Despite the glowing professions of friendship on September 2 the United States acquiesced in the return of French troops to Vietnam and from 1950 to 1954 actively supported French efforts to suppress Ho's revolution, the first phase of a quarter-century American struggle to control the destiny of Vietnam.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in R. Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First [Central Intelligence Agency](#)* (Delta Ed.; New York, 1973), p. 354.

The Vietnamese revolution was, in many ways, the personal creation of the charismatic patriot [Ho Chi Minh](#). Born in the province of Nghe An, the cradle of Vietnamese revolutionaries, Ho inherited from his mandarin father a sturdy patriotism and an adventurous spirit. Departing Vietnam in 1912 as a cabin boy aboard a merchant steamer, he eventually settled in [France](#) with a colony of Vietnamese nationalists, and when the Paris Peace Conference rejected his petition for democratic reforms for Vietnam, he joined the French Communist party. Then known as Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot), he worked for more than two decades as a party functionary and revolutionary organizer in the [Soviet Union](#), [China](#), [Thailand](#), and Vietnam. In 1930, he organized the Indochinese Communist party and helped to incite a series of revolts which were brutally suppressed by the French. When Hitler conquered France in 1940 and [Japan](#) began to move southward into Vietnam, Ho returned to his homeland. A frail and gentle man who radiated warmth and serenity, he was also a master organizer and determined revolutionary who was willing to employ the most cold-blooded methods in the cause to which he dedicated his life.

Establishing headquarters in caves near the Chinese border, by a mountain he named Karl Marx and a river he named Lenin, Ho rounded the [Vietminh](#) political organization and conceived the strategy that would eventually drive the French from Vietnam. For centuries, the Vietnamese had fought bitterly against outside invaders—the Chinese, the Mongols, and most recently the French. Ho and the other Communists who comprised the Vietminh leadership skillfully tapped the vast reservoir of Vietnamese nationalism, muting their commitment to a social revolution and adopting a broad platform stressing independence and "democratic" reforms. Having learned from the abortive uprisings of 1930 the importance of the countryside, they carefully constructed among the people in the northern provinces a solid base for revolution. Displaying an organization and discipline far superior to those of competing nationalist groups, many of which spent as much time fighting each other as the French, the Vietminh established itself as the voice of Vietnamese nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See especially William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colo., 1981), pp. 7-89, and Douglas Pike, *History of Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1976* (Stanford, Calif., 1978), pp. 15-54.

The [Vietminh](#) capitalized on the uniquely favorable circumstances of World War II to launch its revolution. The Japanese permitted the French colonial authorities to retain nominal power throughout most of the war, but the ease with which Japan had established its position discredited the French in the eyes of the Vietnamese. The hardships imposed by the Japanese and their French puppets, along with a devastating famine, fanned popular discontent. By the spring of 1945, Ho had mobilized a base of mass support in northern Vietnam, and with the assistance of [Giap](#), a former professor of history, had raised an army of 5,000 men. After the Japanese deposed the French puppet government in March 1945, the Vietminh, with limited assistance from a U.S. intelligence unit (hence the American presence on September 2), began the systematic harassment of their new colonial masters. When Japan surrendered in August 1945, the Vietminh opportunistically filled the vacuum, occupying government headquarters in [Hanoi](#). Wearing the faded khaki suit and rubber sandals that would become his trademark, [Ho Chi Minh](#) stood before cheering throngs on September 2 and proclaimed the independence of his country.<sup>3</sup>

Independence would not come without a struggle, however, for the French were determined to regain the empire they had ruled for more than half a century. Conscious of their nation's declining position in world affairs, many French politicians felt that [France](#) could "only be a great power so long as our flag continues to fly in all the overseas territory."<sup>4</sup> French [Indochina](#), comprising [Cambodia](#), [Laos](#), and the three Vietnamese colonies of [Annam](#), [Tonkin](#), and [Cochin China](#), was among the richest and most prestigious of France's colonial possessions. The Vietminh had been unable to establish a firm power base in southern Vietnam, and with the assistance of British occupation forces, which had been given responsibility for accepting the Japanese surrender south of the seventeenth parallel, the French were able to expel the Vietminh from [Saigon](#) and reestablish control over the southern part of the country.

For more than a year, France and the Vietminh attempted to

<sup>3</sup> Ellen Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1940-1955* (Stanford, Calif., 1966), pp. 11-53, 94-105, and John T. McAlister, Jr., *Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution* (Anchor Ed.; New York, 1971), passim.

<sup>4</sup> Jean-Jacques Juglas quoted in Ronald E. Irving, *The First Indochina War: French and American Policy, 1945-1954* (London, 1975), p. 144.

negotiate an agreement, but their goals were irreconcilable. French colonial policy had always stressed assimilation, full French citizenship, rather than independence or dominion status, and [France](#) hedged on the [Vietminh](#)'s demand for immediate self-government and eventual independence. For the Vietminh, unification of their country not only represented fulfillment of the centuries-old dream of Vietnamese nationalists, but was also an economic necessity since the south produced the food surplus necessary to sustain the overpopulated, industrial north. The French were determined to keep [Cochin China](#) separate from [Annam](#) and Ton-kin and to maintain absolute control in the southern colony, where their economic interests were largest. Negotiations dragged on inconclusively, mutual suspicions increased, and outbreaks of violence became commonplace. The shelling of Haiphong by a French cruiser in November 1946, resulting in the death of 6,000 civilians, set off a war which in its various phases would last nearly thirty years.<sup>5</sup>

For a time during World War II, the United States actively opposed the return of [Indochina](#) to France. Before 1941, Americans had taken little interest in the area, but the Japanese takeover impressed upon them its importance as a source of foodstuffs and raw materials and as a strategic outpost guarding the major water routes of southern Asia. Some U.S. officials perceived the growth of nationalism in Vietnam and feared that a French attempt to regain control of its colony might provoke a long and bloody war, bringing instability to an area of economic and strategic significance. Even if France should succeed, they reasoned, it would restore monopolistic controls which would deny the United States access to raw materials and naval facilities. President Franklin D. Roosevelt seems instinctively to have recognized that colonialism was doomed and that the United States must identify with the forces of nationalism in Asia. Moreover, Roosevelt profoundly disliked France and its leader Charles de Gaulle, and regarded the French as "poor colonizers" who had "badly mismanaged" Indochina and exploited its

<sup>5</sup> Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina*, pp. 148-202.

<sup>6</sup> Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., *Diary*, March 17, 1944, Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., *Papers*, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va. For Roosevelt and Indochina, see Walter LaFeber, "Roosevelt, Churchill and Indochina,



people.<sup>6</sup> Roosevelt therefore advocated placing [Indochina](#) under international trusteeship as preparation for independence.

In 1945, however, Roosevelt retreated sharply from his earlier forthright stand in support of Indochinese independence. Fearing for their own colonies, the [British](#) had strenuously opposed the trusteeship scheme, and many of Roosevelt's top advisers urged him not to antagonize an important ally by forcing the issue. At Yalta in February 1945, the President watered down his policy by endorsing a proposal under which colonies would be placed in trusteeship only with the approval of the mother country. In view of [France](#)'s announced intention to return to its former colony, this plan implicitly precluded a trusteeship for Indochina.

After [Roosevelt](#)'s death in April 1945, the United States adopted a policy even more favorable to France. [Harry S. Truman](#) did not share his predecessor's personal interest in Indochina or his concern about colonialism. American thinking about the postwar world also underwent a major reorientation in the spring of 1945. Military and civilian strategists perceived that the war had left the [Soviet Union](#) the most powerful nation in Europe and Asia, and the subjugation of Eastern Europe raised growing fears that Joseph Stalin had broader, perhaps global, designs. Assigning top priority to the promotion of stable, friendly governments in Western Europe that could stand as bulwarks against Russian expansion, the Truman administration concluded that the United States "had no interest" in "championing schemes of international trusteeship" that would weaken and alienate the "European states whose help we need to balance Soviet power in Europe."<sup>7</sup> France assumed a role of special importance in the new scheme of things, and the State Department insisted that the United States repair the rift which had opened under Roosevelt by cooperating "wholeheartedly" with France and allaying "her apprehensions that we are

1942-1945," *American Historical Review*, 80 (December 1975), 1277-1295; Gary R. Hess, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and Indochina," *Journal of American History*, LIX (September 1972), 353-368; and Christopher Thorne, "Indochina and Anglo-American Relations, 1942-1945," *Pacific Historical Review*, XLV (February 1976), 73-96.

<sup>7</sup> Office of Strategic Services, "Problems and Objectives of United States Policy," April 2, 1945, Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo., Rose Conway File, Box 15.

going to propose that territory be taken away from her."<sup>8</sup> The [Truman](#) administration quickly scrapped what remained of Roosevelt's trusteeship plan and in the summer of 1945 gave de Gaulle firm assurances that it would not stand in the way of the restoration of French sovereignty in [Indochina](#).

The United States viewed the outbreak of war in Indochina with concern. Along with revolutions in Burma, Malaya, and Indonesia, the Vietnamese upheaval underscored the strength and explosiveness of nationalism in Southeast Asia. [France](#)'s stubborn pursuit of outmoded colonial goals seemed to preclude anything other than a military solution, but the State Department's Far Eastern Office doubted that France had the capacity to subdue the revolution by force and feared that a French defeat would eliminate Western influence from an area of economic and strategic importance. The State Department's Asian experts warned of the dangers of identifying with French colonialism and pressed the administration to use its influence to force France to come to terms with Vietnamese nationalism.

American skepticism about French policy in Asia continued to be outweighed by European concerns, however. In the spring of 1947, the United States formally committed itself to the [containment](#) of Soviet expansion in Europe, and throughout the next two years American attention was riveted on France, where economic stagnation and political instability aroused grave fears of a possible Communist takeover. Warned by moderate French politicians that outside interference in colonial matters would play into the hands of the French Communist party, the United States left France to handle the Indochina question in its own way. An "immediate and vital interest" in keeping in power a "friendly government to assist in the furtherance of our aims in Europe," the State Department concluded, must "take precedence over active steps looking toward the realization of our objectives in Indochina."<sup>9</sup>

By early 1947, moreover, the Truman administration had

<sup>8</sup> James Dunn memorandum, April 23, 1945, 851G.00/4-2345, Department of State Records, National Archives, Washington, D.C. See also George C. Herring, "The Truman Administration and the Restoration of French Sovereignty in Indochina," *Diplomatic History*, I (Spring 1977), 97-117.

<sup>9</sup> Department of State, "Policy Statement on Indochina," September 27, 1948, in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948* (Washington, D.C., 1974), VI, 48. Hereafter cited as FR with date and volume number.

drawn conclusions about Ho's revolution that would determine American policy in Vietnam for the next two decades. On numerous occasions, Ho had openly appealed for American support, even indicating that [Indochina](#) would be a "fertile field for American capital and enterprise" and raising the possibility of an American naval base at Camranh Bay.<sup>10</sup> U.S. diplomats in Vietnam insisted that they could find no evidence of direct Soviet contact with the [Vietminh](#), and they stressed that, regardless of his ideology, Ho had established himself as the "symbol of nationalism and the struggle for freedom to the overwhelming majority of the population."<sup>11</sup> But these arguments failed to persuade an administration increasingly obsessed with the Communist menace in Europe. Intelligence reports stressed that Ho had remained loyal to Moscow throughout his career, and the lack of close ties with the [Soviet Union](#) simply meant that he was trusted to carry out Stalin's plans without supervision. In the absence of irrefutable evidence to the contrary, the State Department concluded, the United States could not "afford to assume that Ho is anything but Moscow-directed." Unwilling, as [Secretary of State](#) George C. Marshall put it, to see "colonial empires and administrations supplanted by philosophies and political organizations emanating from the Kremlin," the administration refused to take any step which might facilitate a "Communist" triumph in Indochina.<sup>12</sup>

As a consequence, during the first three years of the Indochina war, the United States maintained a distinctly pro-French "neutrality." Reluctant to place itself in the awkward position of openly supporting colonialism, the Truman administration gave [France](#) covert financial and military aid.<sup>13</sup> In addition, substantial American funds provided under the Marshall Plan enabled France to use its own resources to prosecute the war in Indochina. Fearful of antagonizing its European ally and of assisting the Vietminh, even indirectly,

<sup>10</sup> Robert Blum, "[Ho Chi Minh](#) and the United States, 1944-1946," in U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The United States and Vietnam: 1944-1947* (Washington, 1972), p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> "Policy and Information Statement on Indochina," July 1947, Philippine and Southeast Asia Branch File, Department of State Records, Box 10. <sup>12</sup> George C. Marshall to U.S. Embassy Paris, February 3, 1947, FR, 1947, VI, 67-68.

<sup>13</sup> George McT. Kahin, *Power and Reality: America's Vietnam Intervention* (New York, 1986), Chap. I.

Washington also refused to acknowledge receipt of Ho's appeals for support and declined to use its leverage to end the fighting or bring about a negotiated settlement.

The possibility of a French defeat, along with the Communist victory in [China](#), brought forth in early 1950 a decision to support [France](#) in [Indochina](#), the first step toward direct American involvement in Vietnam. The French had launched the war in 1946 confident of victory, but Ho had predicted the nature and eventual outcome of the conflict more accurately. "If ever the tiger [Vietminh] pauses," he said, "the elephant [France] will impale him on his mighty tusks. But the tiger will not pause, and the elephant will die of exhaustion and loss of blood."<sup>14</sup> The Vietminh retreated into the countryside, evading major engagements, mobilizing popular support, and harassing French outposts. France held the major towns and cities, but a series of unsuccessful and costly offensives and relentless hit-and-run raids by Vietminh guerrillas placed a growing strain on French manpower and resources and produced increasing war-weariness at home. The collapse of [Chiang Kaishek](#)'s government in China in 1949 and the southward advance of Mao Tse-tung's army raised the ominous possibility of [Chinese](#) Communist collaboration with the Vietminh. From late 1949 on, French officials issued increasingly urgent warnings that without direct American military aid they might be compelled to withdraw from Indochina.

The French appeals came at a time when Washington, already gripped by near-panic, was frantically reassessing its global Cold War strategy. The fall of China and Russia's successful testing of a nuclear device persuaded many American officials that the Communist threat had assumed even more menacing proportions than that posed by the Axis a decade earlier. Any doubts about the direction of Stalin's foreign policy had long since been waved aside: the [Soviet Union](#), "animated by a new fanatic faith," was determined to "impose its absolute authority on the rest of the world." Recent successes seemed to have spurred the Soviet leadership to a new level of confidence and militancy, and Communist expansion, in the eyes of American policymakers, had already reached a point beyond which it must not be permitted to go. Any further "extension

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Jean Lacouture, [Ho Chi Minh](#): A Political Biography (New York, 1968), p. 171.

of the area under the domination of the Kremlin," the [National Security Council](#) warned, "would raise the possibility that no coalition adequate to confront the Kremlin with greater strength could be assembled."<sup>15</sup> Facing a world divided into two hostile blocs, a precarious balance of power, and the possibility, if not likelihood, of global war, the Truman administration initiated plans to increase American military capabilities, shore up the defense of Western Europe, and extend the [containment](#) policy to the Far East.

In the dramatically altered strategic context of 1950, support for [France](#) in [Indochina](#) was considered essential for the security of Western Europe. Massive expenditures for the war against the [Vietminh](#) had retarded France's economic recovery and the attainment of that level of political stability required to fend off the threat of Communism. Certain that Europe was more vulnerable than ever to the Soviet threat, American policymakers in early 1950 began to formulate plans to raise the military forces necessary to defend against the Red Army. Their preliminary proposals required France to contribute sizable numbers of troops and provided for the rearmament of [West Germany](#), measures the French were likely to resist. The administration thus feared that if it did not respond positively to its ally's appeals for aid in Indochina, France might refuse to cooperate with its strategic design for Western Europe.

American willingness to support France in Indochina also reflected a growing concern about the future of Southeast Asia. The raging conflict in Indochina and insurgencies in Burma, Malaya, and Indonesia all sprang from indigenous roots, but in a seemingly polarized world the mere existence of these revolutions and their leftist orientation persuaded Americans that Southeast Asia was the "target of a coordinated offensive directed by the Kremlin." The European colonial powers and the fragile, newly independent governments of the region seemed incapable of subduing the revolutions, and the presence of a hostile China to the north added enormously to the danger.

In the aftermath of the fall of China, American strategists concluded that Southeast Asia was vital to the security of the United States. Should the region be swept by Communism, the National Security Council warned, "we shall have suffered a major political

<sup>15</sup> NSC 68, April 14, 1950, printed in *Naval War College Review* (May-June 1975), 51-108.

roust the repercussions of which will be felt throughout the world." The loss of an area so large and populous would tip the balance of power against the United States. Recent Communist triumphs had already aroused nervousness in Europe, and another major victory might tempt the Europeans to reach an accommodation with the [Soviet Union](#). The economic consequences could be equally profound. The United States and its European allies would be denied access to important markets, and the Europeans would lose a major source of the dollars they desperately needed to rebuild their shattered economies. Southeast Asia was the world's largest producer of natural rubber and was an important source of oil, tin, tungsten, and other strategic commodities. Should control of these vital raw materials suddenly change hands, the Soviet bloc would be enormously strengthened at the expense of the West.

American policymakers also feared that the loss of Southeast Asia would irreparably damage the nation's strategic position in the Far East. Control of the offshore island chain extending from [Japan](#) to the [Philippines](#), America's first line of defense in the Pacific, would be endangered. Air and sea routes between [Australia](#) and the Middle East and the United States and India could be cut, severely hampering military operations in the event of war. Japan, India, and Australia, those nations where the West retained predominant influence, would be cut off from each other and left vulnerable.

The impact on Japan, America's major Far Eastern ally and the richest economic prize in the area, would be especially disastrous. Even before [China](#) fell, the United States was pushing for the reintegration of Japan with Southeast Asia, its rice bowl and breadbasket and an essential source of raw materials and markets. With China having already fallen to Communism, the loss of Southeast Asia would leave Japan no choice but to accommodate with the adversary. The United States thus moved rapidly to defend a region perceived to be a "vital segment" of the "great crescent" of [containment](#) extending from Japan to India.<sup>16</sup>

American officials agreed that [Indochina](#), and especially Vietnam,

<sup>16</sup> NSC 48/1, "The Position of the United States with Respect to Asia," December 23, 1949, [U.S. Congress](#), House, Committee on Armed Services, United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: A Study Prepared by the Department of Defense (Washington, 1971), Book 8, 226-272. Hereafter cited as USVN with book number. Michael Schaller "Securing the Great Crescent: Occupied Japan and the Origins of Containment in Southeast Asia," *Journal of American History*, 69 (September 1982), 392-413.

was the key to the defense of Southeast Asia. Soviet recognition of the [Vietminh](#) on January 30, 1950, confirmed long-standing beliefs about Ho's allegiance, revealing him, in [Secretary of State Dean Acheson's](#) words, in his "true colors as the mortal enemy of native independence in [Indochina](#)." It was also interpreted as a "significant and ominous" portent of Stalin's intention to "accelerate the revolutionary process" in Southeast Asia.<sup>17</sup> Ho's well-organized guerrillas had already scored major gains against [France](#), and with increased Soviet and [Chinese](#) backing might be able to force a French withdrawal, removing the last military bulwark between China and the rest of Southeast Asia. Indochina was in the "most immediate danger," the State Department concluded, and was therefore "the most strategically important area of Southeast Asia."<sup>18</sup>

Indochina was considered intrinsically important for its raw materials, rice, and naval bases, but it was deemed far more significant for the presumed effect its loss would have on other areas. By early 1950, American policymakers had firmly embraced what would become known as the "[domino theory](#)," the belief that the fall of Indochina would bring in rapid succession the collapse of the other nations of Southeast Asia. Acceptance of this concept reflects the perceived fragility of the region in 1950, as well as the experience of World War II, when Hitler had overrun Western Europe in three months and the Japanese had seized much of Southeast Asia in even less time. First employed to justify aid to Greece in 1947, the idea, once applied to Southeast Asia, quickly became an article of faith. Americans were certain that if Indochina fell, the rest of Southeast Asia would be imperiled. The strategic reassessment of 1950 thus ended American "[neutrality](#)" and produced a commitment in early March to furnish France military and economic assistance for the war against the Vietminh. It also established principles that would provide the basis for U.S. policy in Vietnam for years to come and would eventually lead to massive involvement.

The creation of nominally independent governments in Indochina

<sup>17</sup> Department of State Bulletin (February 13, 1950), 244; Charles Yost memorandum, January 31, 1950, FR 1950, VI, 710-711.

<sup>18</sup> [Dean Rusk](#) to James H. Burns, March 7, 1950, [U.S. Congress](#), Senate, Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds, The [Pentagon Papers](#) (The [Senator Gravel](#) Edition) (4 vols.; Boston, 1971), I, 363. Hereafter cited as Pentagon Papers (Gravel).

made it easier for the United States to rationalize support of [France](#). Unable to defeat the [Vietminh](#) militarily, the French had attempted to undercut it politically by forming native governments in [Laos](#), [Cambodia](#), and Vietnam, the latter headed by the former Emperor of [Annam](#), [Bao Dai](#), and according them the status of "free states" within the French Union. Many U.S. officials were skeptical of the so-called Bao Dai solution, warning that it was only a smokescreen for continued French domination and had little chance of success. The State Department acknowledged the strength of these arguments, but Bao Dai seemed the only alternative to "Commie domination of [Indochina](#)," as [Acheson](#) put it, and while American support did not guarantee his success, the lack of it seemed likely to ensure his failure.<sup>19</sup> By backing Bao Dai, moreover, the United States would at least avoid the appearance of being an accomplice of French imperialism. In February 1950, the Truman administration formally recognized the Bao Dai government and the free states of Laos and Cambodia and initiated plans to support them with economic and technical assistance.

In retrospect, the assumptions upon which American policy-makers acted in 1950 appear misguided. The Southeast Asian revolutions were not inspired by Moscow and, although the [Soviet Union](#) and China at times sought to control them, their capacity to do so was limited by their lack of military and especially naval power and by the strength of local nationalism. The American assessment of the situation in Vietnam seems to have been well off the mark. Although a dedicated Communist, Ho was no mere tool of the Soviet Union, and while he was willing to accept help from the major Communist powers - indeed, he had no choice but to do so - he was not prepared to subordinate Vietnamese independence to them. Vietnam's historic fears of its larger northern neighbor made submission to China especially unlikely. "It is better to sniff French dung for a while than eat China's all our life," Ho once said, graphically expressing a traditional principle of Vietnamese foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps most important, regardless of his ideology, Ho by 1950 had captured the standard of Vietnamese nationalism, and by supporting France, even under the guise of the Bao Dai solution, the United States was attaching itself to a losing cause.

<sup>19</sup> [Dean Acheson](#) to U.S. Embassy Manila, January 7, 1950, FR, 1950, VI, 692; Gary R. Hess, "The First American Commitment in Indochina: The Acceptance of the Bao Dai Solution," *Diplomatic History*, 2 (Fall 1978), 331-350.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Lacouture, [Ho Chi Minh](#) p. 119.



American policymakers were not unaware of the pitfalls of intervention in [Indochina](#). Should the United States commit itself to [Bao Dai](#) and should he turn out to be a French puppet, a State Department Asian specialist warned, "we must then follow blindly down a dead-end alley, expending our limited resources ... in a fight that would be hopeless."<sup>21</sup> Some American officials even dimly perceived that the United States might get sucked into direct involvement in Vietnam. But the initial commitment seemed limited and the risks seemed smaller than those of inaction. Caught up in a global struggle reminiscent of World War II, with Russia taking Germany's place in Europe and China [Japan](#)'s place in Asia, U.S. officials were certain that if they did not back [France](#) and Bao Dai, Southeast Asia might be lost, leaving the more awesome choice of making a "staggering investment" to recover the losses or falling back to a "much contracted" line of defense in the western Pacific.<sup>22</sup>

By the time the United States committed itself to assist France, the [Vietminh](#) had gained the military initiative in Indochina. [Ho Chi Minh](#) controlled an estimated two-thirds of the countryside, and Vietminh regulars and guerrillas numbered in the hundreds of thousands. The [Chinese](#) were furnishing [sanctuaries](#) across the border and large stocks of weapons. By early 1950, [Giap](#) felt sufficiently confident of his strength to take the offensive for the first time. The French maintained tenuous control in the cities and the major production centers, but at a very high cost, suffering 1,000 [casualties](#) per month and in 1949 alone spending 167 million francs on the war. Even in the areas under nominal French control, the Vietminh spread terror after dark, sabotaging power plants and factories, tossing grenades into cafes and theaters, and brutally assassinating French officials. "Anyone with white skin caught outside protected areas after dark is courting horrible death," an American correspondent reported.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Charles Reed to C. Walton Butterworth, April 14, 1949, 851G.00/4-1449, Department of State Records.

<sup>22</sup> [Acheson](#) to Truman, May 14, 1950, Truman Papers, Confidential File. For an excellent discussion of the initial commitment in Indochina, see Robert M. Blum, *Drawing the Line: The Origin of the American [Containment](#) Policy in Asia* (New York, 1982), especially pp. 198-213.

<sup>23</sup> Tilman Durdin, "War 'Not for Land But for People,'" *New York Times Magazine* (May 28, 1950), 48.

The [Bao Dai](#) solution, Bao Dai himself ruefully conceded, was "just a French solution."<sup>24</sup> The much-maligned "playboy Emperor" was in fact a tragic figure. An intelligent man, genuinely concerned about the future of his nation, he had spent most of his life as a puppet of [France](#) and then [Japan](#), whiling away the years by indulging an apparently insatiable taste for sports cars, women, and gambling. The agreement of February 1950 gave him little to work with. Under this impossibly complex document of 258 pages, the French retained control of Vietnam's treasury, commerce, and foreign and military policies. They refused even to turn over [Saigon](#)'s Norodom Palace as the seat of the new government. The government itself was composed largely of wealthy southern landowners, many of them more European than Vietnamese and in no sense representative of the people. Nationalists of stature refused to support Bao Dai, and the masses either backed the resistance or remained aloof. The emperor may have wished to become a leader, but he lacked the experience and temperament to do so. Introverted and given to periodic moods of depression and indolence, he lived in isolation in one of his palaces or aboard his 600-ton air-conditioned yacht or escaped to the French Riviera, all the while salting away large sums of money in Swiss bank accounts - not "the stuff of which Churchills are made," U.S. Ambassador Donald Heath lamented with marvelous understatement.<sup>25</sup>

The onset of the Korean War in the summer of 1950 complicated an already difficult problem. The Truman administration perceived North Korea's invasion of South Korea as confirmation of its suspicion that the [Soviet Union](#) sought to conquer all of Asia, even at the risk of war, and the defense of [Indochina](#) assumed even greater importance in American eyes. By the end of the year, however, the United States and France had suffered major reversals. [Chinese](#) intervention in Korea forced General [Douglas MacArthur](#) into a headlong retreat from the Yalu. In the meantime, [Giap](#) had inflicted upon France its "greatest colonial defeat since Montcalm had died at Quebec," trapping an entire army at Cao Bang in northeastern Vietnam and costing the French more than 6,000 troops and enough equipment to stock an entire [Vietminh division](#).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution: The U.S. in Vietnam, 1946-1966* (New York, 1966), p. 64.

<sup>25</sup> Heath to [John Foster Dulles](#), April 28, 1953, FR, 1952-1954, XIII, 523; Ellen Hammer, "The Bao Dai Experiment," *Pacific Affairs*, 23 (March 1950), 58.

<sup>26</sup> [Bernard Fall](#), [Street Without Joy](#) (New York, 1972), p.33.

[Chinese](#) intervention in [Korea](#) raised fears of a similar plunge across the border into Vietnam, and American policy-makers were increasingly concerned that a growing defeatism in [France](#) would raise demands for [withdrawal](#) from [Indochina](#).

Against this background of stunning defeat in the Far East, the [Truman](#) administration struggled to devise a workable policy for Indochina. With large numbers of American troops committed to Korea and with Europe vulnerable to a possible Soviet invasion, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that even should the Chinese invade Indochina, the United States could not commit military forces to its defense. France must remain and bear primary responsibility for the war. More certain than ever that Indochina was essential to American security, the administration was forced to rely on military assistance to bolster French defenses. In late 1950, the United States committed more than \$133 million for aid to Indochina and ordered immediate delivery of large quantities of arms and ammunition, naval vessels, aircraft, and military vehicles.

Most Americans agreed, however, that military equipment by itself would not be enough. As early as May, [Acheson](#) complained that the French seemed "paralyzed, in a state of moving neither forward or backward," and a fact-finding mission dispatched to Indochina before the Cao Bang disaster confirmed his fears.<sup>27</sup> American observers reported that the French state of mind was "fatuous, even dangerous," and warned that unless France prosecuted the war with greater determination, made more effective use of native manpower, and moved boldly and generously to win over the Vietnamese, the United States and its ally might be "moving into a debacle which neither of us can afford."<sup>28</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed that the United States condition its military aid on French pledges to take drastic measures, including the promise of eventual independence.

The administration approached this question with great caution. Acheson conceded that if the United States supported France's "old-fashioned colonial attitudes," it might "lose out." But the French presence was essential to defend Indochina against Communism, he quickly added, and the United States could not

<sup>27</sup> Minutes of meeting, [National Security Council](#), May 4, 1950, Truman Papers, President's Secretary's File.

<sup>28</sup> Melby Mission Report, August 6, 1950, FR, 1950, VI, 843-844; Policy Planning Staff Memorandum, August 16, 1950, *ibid.*, 857-858.

press [France](#) to the point where it would say, "All right, take over the damned country. We don't want it." Admitting the inconsistency of American policy, he concluded that the only choice was to encourage the French to remain until the crisis had eased but at the same time persuade them to "play with the nationalist movement and give [Bao Dai](#) a chance really to get the nationalists on his side."<sup>29</sup> Rejecting any form of pressure, the administration would go no further than to gently urge France to make symbolic concessions and build a Vietnamese army. The State Department, in the meantime, would hold Bao Dai's "feet to the fire" to get him to assert effective leadership under French tutelage.<sup>30</sup>

To strengthen the governments of [Indochina](#) and increase their popular appeal, the United States established a program of economic and technical assistance in 1950 and over the next two years spent more than \$50 million on various projects. American experts provided fertilizer and seeds to increase agricultural production, constructed dispensaries, developed malaria-control programs, and distributed food and clothing to refugees. To ensure that the program would achieve its objectives the United States insisted that the aid go directly to the native governments rather than through France. To secure maximum propaganda advantage, zealous U.S. aid officials tacked posters on pagoda walls and air-dropped pamphlets into villages indicating that the programs were gifts of the United States and contrasting the "real gains" made possible by them with "Communism's empty promises."<sup>31</sup>

The Truman policy brought only limited results. Their hopes of victory revived by the prospect of large-scale American assistance, the French in late 1950 appointed the flamboyant Jean de Lattre de Tassigny to command the armed forces in Indochina and instructed him to prosecute the war vigorously. A born crusader and

<sup>29</sup> [U.S. Congress](#), Senate, Reviews of the World Situation: 1949-1950 Hearings Held in Executive Session Before the Committee on Foreign Relations (Washington, D.C., 1974), pp. 266-268, 292-293.

<sup>30</sup> Livingston Merchant to [Dean Rusk](#), October 19, 1950, FR, 1950, VI, 901-902.

<sup>31</sup> Mutual Security Agency, Dateline [Saigon](#) - Our Quit War in Indochina (Washington, D.C., 1952). The United States Information Service even prepared a Vietnamese-language edition of the Outline History of the United States with an introduction by President Truman expressing hope that an "account of the progress of the American people toward a just and happy society can be an inspiration to those Vietnamese who today know something of the same difficulties as they build a new nation." Roger Tubby to Joseph Short, March 8, 1951, Truman Papers, Official File 203-F.

practitioner of what he called dynamisme, De Lattre announced upon arriving in Vietnam that he would win the war within fifteen months, and under his inspired leadership French forces repulsed a major [Vietminh](#) offensive in the Red River Delta in early 1951. But when de Lattre attempted to follow up his success by attacking Vietminh strongholds just south of [Hanoi](#), [France](#) suffered its worst defeat of the war. De Lattre himself would die of cancer in early 1952, and the French military position was more precarious at the time of his death than when he had come to Vietnam.

In other areas as well, there was little progress. Desperately short of manpower, the French finally put aside their reluctance to arm the Vietnamese, and de Lattre made determined efforts to create a [Vietnamese National Army](#) (VNA). The Vietnamese were understandably reluctant to fight for what they regarded as a French cause, however, and by the end of 1951 the VNA numbered only 38,000 men, far short of its projected strength of 115,000. Responding to American entreaties, the French vaguely promised to "per-fee" the independence of the Associated States, but the massive infusion of American supplies and de Lattre's early victories seemed to eliminate any compelling need for real concessions. The French were unwilling to fight for Vietnamese independence and never seriously considered the only sort of concession that would have satisfied the aspirations of Vietnamese nationalism. France transferred to the native governments some additional responsibilities, but they remained shadow governments lacking in real authority and in popular support.

By 1952, the United States was bearing roughly one-third of the cost of the war, but it was dissatisfied with the results and it found itself with no influence over French military policy. A small [Military Assistance and Advisory Group](#) (MAAG) had been sent to Vietnam in 1950 to screen French requests for aid, assist in the training of Vietnamese soldiers, and advise on strategy. By going directly to Washington to get what he wanted, however, de Lattre reduced the MAAG to virtual impotence. Proud, sensitive, and highly nationalistic, he ignored the American "advisers" in formulating strategy, denied them any role in training the Vietnamese, and refused even to keep them informed of his current operations and future plans.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941-1960* (Washington, D.C., 1983), pp. 115-121.

Deeply suspicious of American intrusion into their domain, the French expressed open resentment against the aid program and placed numerous obstacles in its way. De Lattre bitterly complained that there were too many Americans in Vietnam spending too much money, that the American aid program was making [France](#) "look like a poor cousin in Vietnamese eyes," and that the Americans were "fanning the flames of extreme nationalism." French officials attempted to block projects which did not contribute directly to the war and encouraged Vietnamese suspicions by warning that American aid contained "hidden traps" to subvert their "independence." Largely as a result of French obstructionism, the aid program touched only a small number of people. American officials conceded that its "beneficial psychological results were largely negated because the United States at the same time was pursuing a program of [military] support to the French." America was looked upon "more as a supporter of colonialism than as a friend of the new nation."<sup>33</sup>

While firmly resisting American influence in [Indochina](#), France demanded larger military assistance and an expanded American commitment. Already facing the threat of a military and political collapse in Indochina, the French grew more concerned when American efforts to negotiate an end to the war in [Korea](#) raised the possibility that [Chinese](#) troops would be freed for a drive southward. In early 1952, France pressed Washington relentlessly for additional military aid, a collective security arrangement for the defense of Southeast Asia, and a firm commitment to provide American combat forces should Chinese troops cross the border into Vietnam.

Washington was extremely wary of expanding its commitments. The proposal for a collective security arrangement appeared to be a snare to draw the United States more deeply into the conflict, and the Truman administration promptly rejected it. The "line we took," [Acheson](#) later recalled, was that "in some places such as Europe and NATO, we had a common responsibility. In other places, one or the other of these nations had to take a leading part."<sup>34</sup> The United States also refused to commit ground forces to

<sup>33</sup> Shaplen, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 86-89; Embassy [Saigon](#) to [Secretary of State](#), May 15, 1951, FR, 1951, VI, 419.

<sup>34</sup> [Dean Acheson](#), "Princeton Seminar," March 14, 1954, Dean Acheson Papers, [Harry S. Truman Library](#), Independence, Mo., Box 66. See also "Defense of Southeast Asia," January 2, 1952, Truman Papers, President's Secretary's File, Churchill-Truman Meetings, Box 116.

[Indochina](#) under any circumstances. The administration had initiated a massive rearmament program, but progress had been slowed by the war in [Korea](#), and the [National Security Council](#) concluded that the nation faced the "continuing danger of global war, as well as local aggression in a situation of inadequate military strength."<sup>35</sup> The drawn-out, costly stalemate in Korea had produced considerable frustration among the American people and had made abundantly clear the difficulties of fighting a land war in Asia. It would be "futile and a mistake to defend Indochina in Indochina," [Acheson](#) observed. We "could not have another Korea, we could not put ground forces into Indochina."<sup>36</sup>

The administration was not prepared to abandon [France](#), however. By early 1952, the [domino theory](#) was firmly rooted as a principle of American foreign policy. Policymakers agreed that Southeast Asia must not be permitted to "fall into the hands of the Communists like a ripe plum" and that a continued French presence in Indochina was essential to the defense of that critical region.<sup>37</sup> Aware that the threat to Indochina had increased since 1950, and fearful that the French might pull out if their requests were not met, the administration in June 1952 approved an additional \$150 million in military assistance. Moving one step beyond its commitment of 1950, the National Security Council agreed that if China intervened directly in the war, the United States would have to send naval and air units to defend Indochina and would have to consider the possibility of naval and air operations against China itself.<sup>38</sup>

Although thoroughly dissatisfied with France's performance in the war and deeply annoyed by its secretiveness and obstructionism, the administration refused to attach any strings to its new commitments. The Defense Department urged that the United States use its leverage to force France to adopt a "dynamic program

<sup>35</sup> NSC Staff Study, December 20, 1951, Truman Papers, President's Secretary's File, Box 216.

<sup>36</sup> Acheson memorandum, June 17, 1952, [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), I, 381.

<sup>37</sup> NSC 124/2, June 24, 1952, *ibid.*, 385-386; "Pacific Security Pact," January 2, 1952, Truman Papers, President's Secretary's File, Churchill-Truman Meetings, Box 116.

<sup>38</sup> NSC 124/2, June 25, 1952, [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), I, 385-386.

geared to produce positive improvement in the military and political situation." The State Department feared, however, that if the administration "pressed the French too hard they would withdraw and leave us holding the baby."<sup>39</sup>

America's [Indochina](#) policy continued to be a hostage of its policy in Europe, the area to which Truman and [Acheson](#) assigned the highest priority. Since 1951, the United States had been pressing for allied approval of the European Defense Community, a plan for the integration of French and German forces into a multinational army originally put forward by [France](#) to delay German rearmament. The French repeatedly warned that they could not furnish troops for European defense without generous American support in Indochina, a ploy Acheson accurately described as "blackmail." The European Defense Community had also become a volatile political issue in France, where there was strong nationalistic resistance to surrendering the identity of the French army and to collaborating with a recent, and still despised, enemy. With the question awaiting ratification by the French parliament, Acheson later recalled, no one "seriously advised" that it would be "wise to end, or threaten to end, aid to Indochina unless an American plan of military and political reform was carried out."<sup>40</sup> NSC 124/2, a major policy statement on Indochina of June 1952, would go no further than state that the United States should use its "influence" to "promote positive political, military, economic, and social policies. . . "<sup>41</sup>

During the last half of 1952, Acheson did make a concerted effort to break through French secretiveness. The [Secretary of State](#) bluntly informed French officials in July that since the United States was paying about one-third of the cost of the war, it did not seem "unreasonable" to expect some detailed information about its progress. The French did not dissent, Acheson later recalled, but "not much happened as a result." Following a long and heated session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Paris in December, the French again requested additional military assistance. "At this point tired, hungry and exasperated," Acheson later wrote, "I ran

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in John M. Allison, *Ambassador from the Prairie, or Allison Wonderland* (New York, 1976), pp. 191, 194.

<sup>40</sup> Dean G. Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York, 1969), p. 676.

<sup>41</sup> NSC 124/2, June 25, 1952, [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), I, 387.



out of patience." He complained forcefully that the United States was "thoroughly dissatisfied" with the information it was getting and warned that this situation "had to be remedied. We must know exactly what the situation was and what we were doing if, as and when we were to take any further step."<sup>42</sup> [Acheson](#)'s protest revealed the depth of American frustration with more than two years of partnership with [France](#), but it came too late to have any effect. Within less than a month, the Truman administration would leave office, freeing it from further responsibility.

Despite a considerable investment in [Indochina](#), [Truman](#) and Acheson left to their successors a problem infinitely more complex and dangerous than the one they had taken on in 1950. What had begun as a localized rebellion against French colonialism had expanded into an international conflict of major proportions. The United States was now bearing more than 40 percent of the cost of the war and had established a stake in its outcome. [Chinese](#) aid to the [Vietminh](#) had increased from 400 tons per month to more than 3,000, and as many as 4,000 Chinese "volunteers" assisted the Vietminh in various ways. The war had spilled over into neighboring [Laos](#) and [Thailand](#), where China and the Vietminh backed insurgencies against governments supported by the United States and France. In Vietnam itself, French control had been reduced to enclaves around [Hanoi](#), Haiphong, and [Saigon](#), and a narrow strip along the Cambodian border, and France faced a new and much more ominous type of military threat. "The enemy, once painted as a bomb-throwing terrorist or hill sniper lurking in night ambush," the veteran correspondent Theodore White observed, "has become a modern army, increasingly skillful, armed with [artillery](#), organized into divisional groups."<sup>43</sup> The French had naively hoped that American aid might be a substitute for increased sacrifice on their own part, but they had come to realize that it only required more of them. Fearful of their nation's growing dependence on the United States and aware that victory would require nothing short of an all-out effort, in late 1952 some French political leaders outside the Communist party began for the first time to recommend withdrawal from Indochina. The "real" problem, Acheson warned

<sup>42</sup> Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 676-677.

<sup>43</sup> Theodore H. White, "France Holds on to the Indo-China Tiger," New York Times Magazine (June 8, 1952), 9.

the incoming administration, was the "French will to carry on the ... war."<sup>44</sup>

The Republican administration of [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) accepted without modification the principles of [Indochina](#) policy bequeathed by the Democrats. Eisenhower and his [Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles](#), agreed that [Ho Chi Minh](#) was an instrument of international Communism and that the fall of Indochina would cause the loss of all of Southeast Asia with disastrous political, economic, and strategic consequences for the United States. In the campaign of 1952, the Republicans had attacked the Democrats for failing to halt the advance of Communism, and they were even more determined than their predecessors to prevent the fall of Indochina. While vowing to wage the Cold War with vigor, Eisenhower and Dulles had also promised cuts in defense spending, and their "New Look" defense policy called for sharp reductions in American ground forces. They were even more reluctant than [Truman](#) and [Acheson](#) to commit American combat forces to Southeast Asia and agreed that [France](#) must remain in Indochina and bear the burden of the conflict.

The changes introduced by Eisenhower and Dulles were changes of mood and tactics rather than of substance. As would happen so often during the long history of American involvement in Vietnam, a new administration came into office confident that new methods or the more persistent application of old ones could turn a deteriorating situation around. The Republicans quickly concluded that the United States and France had made critical errors. Eisenhower insisted that the French generals in Indochina were a "poor lot" and that new leadership was needed. The U.S. military deplored France's cautious, defensive strategy and its reluctance to use Vietnamese troops. The United States Army had achieved great success in the Korean War by training South Korean troops and employing aggressive, offensive tactics against the [Chinese](#) and the North Koreans. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore concluded that France could win the war within a year if it made greater use of Vietnamese forces and adopted an aggressive strategy designed to destroy the enemy's regular units. Most U.S. officials also agreed that France had not done enough to win nationalist support by making timely and substantive political concessions.

<sup>44</sup> [Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.](#), *As It Was* (New York, 1976), p. 36.

[Eisenhower](#) and [Dulles](#) felt that the [Truman](#) administration had carelessly squandered the leverage available to it, and they concurred with [General J. Lawton Collins](#) that it was necessary to "put the squeeze on the French to get them off their fannies."<sup>45</sup>

The new administration set out zealously to correct the mistakes of its predecessor. Alarmed by growing signs of war-weariness in [France](#), Eisenhower and Dulles gave firm assurances of continued assistance and promised that the nation's "tiredness" would "evaporate in the face of a positive and constructive program."<sup>46</sup> The administration also made clear, however, that continued aid would be conditioned on detailed and specific information about French military operations and plans and on firm French pledges to expand the [Vietnamese National Army](#) and to develop a new, aggressive strategy with an explicit timetable for the defeat of the enemy's main forces.

Eisenhower himself advised Ambassador Douglas Dillon in Paris to impress upon the French the importance of appointing a "forceful and inspirational leader, empowered with the means and authority to win victory," and of making "clear and unequivocal public announcements, repeated as often as may be desirable," that complete independence would be granted "as soon as victory against the Communists had been won."<sup>47</sup>

Under mounting pressure to do something or withdraw from [Indochina](#), the French government responded quickly. In early May 1953, it appointed General Henri Navarre to command French forces in Indochina. Two months later, a new cabinet, headed by Joseph Laniel, promised to "perfect" the independence of the Associated States by turning over responsibilities exercised by France. Shortly after, the French presented for American approval a new strategic concept, the so-called [Navarre Plan](#). Tailored to meet many of the specifications set down earlier by the American Joint Chiefs, the plan called for a vast augmentation of the Vietnamese National Army and for the establishment of a new training program, along with the commitment to Indochina of an additional nine battalions of French regulars. Navarre proposed to withdraw his scattered forces from their isolated garrisons, combine

45 J.C.S. meeting, April 24, 1953, FR, 1952-1954, XIII, 500.

46 Dulles to American Embassy Paris, March 27, 1953, USVN, Book 9, 20.

47 Eisenhower to Dillon, May 6, 1953, [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kans., International File: France, 1953 (3), Box 10.

them with the new forces available to him, and initiate a major offensive to drive the [Vietminh](#) from its stronghold in the Red River Delta. In a secret report to Paris, Navarre warned that the war could not be won in a strictly military sense and that the best that could be hoped for was a draw. The Laniel government apparently adopted the plan as a last-ditch measure to salvage some return on the huge investment that had been made and to ensure continued American support. It also attached a high price tag, advising Washington that without an additional \$400 million in aid it could not implement the plan and would have to consider [withdrawal](#) from [Indochina](#).

Although dubious of French intentions and capabilities, Washington saw no alternative but to accept the proposal. [Eisenhower](#) privately complained that Laniel's promise of independence had been made "in an obscure and roundabout fashion-instead of boldly, forthrightly and repeatedly."<sup>48</sup> The Joint Chiefs were skeptical of [France](#)'s willingness and ability to pursue the [Navarre Plan](#) vigorously. By this time, however, the two nations were caught up in a tangle of mutual dependence and spiraling commitments, and the United States felt compelled to go along with France. The Joint Chiefs concluded that the Navarre Plan at least offered a hope of success. The State Department warned that the Laniel government was the first French government which seemed "prepared to do what needs to be done to wind up the war in Indo-China," and if it fell it would probably be succeeded by a government committed to a negotiated settlement, which would mean "the eventual loss to Communism not only of Indochina but of the whole of Southeast Asia."<sup>49</sup> After extracting a formal French promise to pursue the Navarre Plan with determination, the administration in September 1953 agreed to provide France with an additional \$385 million in military assistance. With characteristic bravado, [Dulles](#) publicly proclaimed that the new French strategy would "break the organized body of Communist aggression by the end of the 1955 fighting season."<sup>50</sup>

Within six months after the United States and France had

<sup>48</sup> Eisenhower to Ralph Flanders, July 7, 1953, Eisenhower Papers, Diary Series, Box 2.

<sup>49</sup> State Department report to NSC, August 5, 1953, USVN, Book 9, 128.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in [Bernard Fall](#), *The Two Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis* (New York, 1967), p. 122.

agreed upon the "end-the-war offensive," the military and political situation in [Indochina](#) drastically deteriorated. Navarre was forced to scrap his ill-fated plan in its initial stages. In the fall of 1953, he began to mobilize his forces for the anticipated offensive in the delta. Recognizing that he must strike a decisive blow before the impact of expanded American aid could be felt, [Giap](#) invaded central and southern [Laos](#), intensified guerrilla activity in the delta, and prepared for a major strike into northern Laos. The only response Navarre could devise was to scatter the very forces he had just combined to counter the [Vietminh](#) thrusts.

By early 1954, both sides had committed major forces to the remote village of [Dienbienphu](#) in the northwest corner of Vietnam. Navarre established a position at the intersection of several major roads near the Laotian border in hopes of cutting off the anticipated invasion and luring Vietminh main units into open battle. In a broad valley surrounded by hills as high as 1,000 feet, he constructed a garrison ringed with barbed wire and bunkers, and hastily dispatched twelve battalions of regulars supported by aircraft and heavy [artillery](#). Giap took the "bait." After a quick strike into Laos, he retraced his steps and encircled the French garrison. Navarre now found 12,000 of his elite forces isolated in a far corner of Vietnam. Although increasingly uncertain that they could hold out against superior Vietminh numbers, in January he decided to remain.

In the meantime, an outburst of Vietnamese nationalism further undercut [France's](#) already tenuous political position. When the French opened negotiations to "perfect" Vietnamese independence, non-Communist nationalists, including some of [Bao Dai's](#) associates, demanded not only complete independence but also severance of all ties with France. The United States found itself in an awkward predicament. Although it had taken a forthright stand in favor of eventual independence, it feared that the Vietnamese demands would provoke a French withdrawal, and it was certain that the Bao Dai government could not survive by itself. Ambassador Heath charged the Vietnamese with "childlike" and "irresponsible" behavior. [Dulles](#) angrily denounced the "ill-considered" actions of the nationalists and dangled in front of them promises of large-scale American aid if they cooperated.<sup>51</sup> The American Embassy

<sup>51</sup> Heath to State Department, October 18, 1953, FR, 1952-1954, XIII, 836; Dulles to American Embassy [Saigon](#), October 21, 1953, USVN, Book 9, 169-170.

in [Saigon](#) pressed the Vietnamese to tone down their demands - "We are the last French colonialists in [Indochina](#)," an American diplomat remarked with wry humor.<sup>52</sup> Despite American attempts to mediate, the French and Vietnamese could not reach an agreement on the status of an independent Vietnam.

The political crisis of late 1953, along with an apparent shift in Soviet foreign policy, heightened French tendencies toward a negotiated settlement. Many French politicians concluded that Vietnamese association with the French Union, if only symbolic, was all that could be salvaged from the war and without this there was no reason to prolong the agony. The leaders who had assumed power in the Kremlin after Stalin's death in February had taken a conciliatory line on a number of major Cold War issues, Indochina included, and the French government hoped that Soviet influence would enable it to secure a favorable settlement. Over [Dulles](#)'s vigorous opposition, [France](#) in early 1954 agreed to place Indochina on the agenda of an East-West conference scheduled to meet in Geneva to consider Far Eastern problems.

Eisenhower and Dulles could only acquiesce. Distrustful of the Soviet overtures and skeptical of the wisdom of the French decision, they were nevertheless unwilling to put the United States in the position of being the only great power to oppose peaceful settlement of a major international crisis. Moreover, despite Dulles's threats of an "agonizing reappraisal" of American commitments, the French still refused to ratify the European Defense Community, and the new Soviet line had complicated the prospect by easing European fears of a Russian attack. Like [Acheson](#) before him, Dulles hesitated to press France too hard on Indochina lest it reject the European Defense Community altogether, splitting the Western alliance and playing into the hands of the Russians.

In January 1954, the United States for the first time faced the prospect of direct military intervention in Indochina. Speaking with "great force," Eisenhower told the [National Security Council](#) how "bitterly opposed" he was to putting American troops into the jungles of Indochina. He went on to insist, however, that the United States must not forget its vital interests there. Comparing the region to a "leaky dike," he warned that with such situations it was "sometimes better to put a finger in than to let the whole

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina*, p. 319.

structure wash away."<sup>53</sup> American officials especially feared that French war-weariness would result in a surrender at Geneva. A special committee appointed by the President to review [Indochina](#) policy recommended in mid-March that prior to the conference the United States should attempt to discourage defeatist tendencies in [France](#) and should use its influence at Geneva to ensure that no agreements were reached. If, despite American efforts, the French accepted an unsatisfactory settlement, the United States might have to arrange with the Associated States and other interested nations to continue the war without France.<sup>54</sup>

While [Eisenhower](#) and his advisers pondered the long-range possibility of American intervention in Indochina, [Giap](#) tightened the noose around Dienbienphu. On March 13, the [Vietminh](#) launched an all-out attack and within twenty-four hours had seized hills Gabrielle and Beatrice, the outposts established by France to protect the fortress in the valley below. American and French experts had predicted that it would be impossible to get [artillery](#) up to the high ground surrounding the garrison. But the Vietminh formed "human anthills," carrying disassembled weapons up piece by piece, then reassembling them and camouflaging them so effectively that they were impervious to artillery and strafing. The heavy Vietminh guns quickly knocked out the airfield, making re-supply impossible except by parachute drop and leaving the garrison of 12,000 men isolated and vulnerable.

The spectacular Vietminh success at Dienbienphu raised the prospect of immediate American intervention. During a visit to Washington in late March, French Chief of Staff General [Paul Ely](#) still estimated a "50-50 chance of success" at Dienbienphu and merely requested the transfer of additional American aircraft to be used by France for attacks on Vietminh lines around the fortress. Ely was deeply concerned about the possibility of [Chinese](#) intervention, however, openly inquiring of [Dulles](#) how the United States would respond in such a contingency.<sup>55</sup> Much less optimistic about [Dienbienphu](#) was Admiral [Arthur Radford](#), Chairman of the Joint

<sup>53</sup> Record of NSC meeting, January 8, 1954, FR, 1952-1954, XIII, 949, 952.

<sup>54</sup> Pentagon Papers (Gravel), I, 90-92.

<sup>55</sup> Memorandum of conversation, Ely and Dulles, March 23, 1954, 751G.00/3-2354, Department of State Records. For a more detailed discussion of these events, see George C. Herring and Richard H. Immerman, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu: 'The Day We Didn't Go to War' Revisited," *Journal of American History*, 71 (September 1984), 343-363.

Chiefs of Staff, who during the [Ely](#) visit began to give serious consideration to a scheme originally devised by French and American officers in [Saigon](#). The plan called for a massive strike by American B-29s and carrier-based aircraft, possibly using tactical atomic weapons, to relieve the siege of Dienbienphu. Although Radford made no commitments, he apparently led Ely to believe that he would push for approval of the plan should the French formally request it.

The proposed air attack won little support in Washington. [Eisenhower](#) briefly toyed with the idea of a "single strike [flown by U.S. pilots in unmarked planes], if it were almost certain this would produce decisive results." "Of course, if we did, we'd have to deny it forever," he quickly added.<sup>56</sup> [Dulles](#) was prepared to consider air and naval operations in [Indochina](#), but only as a last resort. Less worried about the immediate threat to [Dienbienphu](#) than about the long-range threat to Southeast Asia, the Secretary preferred what he called "United Action," the formation of a coalition composed of the United States, [Great Britain](#), [France](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), the [Philippines](#), [Thailand](#), and the Associated States, to guarantee the security of Southeast Asia. Such a coalition, by its very existence, might deter [Chinese](#) intervention in the Indochina War and Chinese aggression elsewhere in Asia. If military intervention became necessary, United Action would remove the stigma of a war for French colonialism and would ensure that the entire burden did not fall upon the United States. In keeping with the doctrine of the New Look defense policy, local and [regional forces](#) could bear the brunt of the ground fighting while the United States provided air and naval support, furnished money and supplies, and trained indigenous troops.

Dulles and Eisenhower were also unwilling to intervene unless they could extract major concessions from the French. Dulles warned that if the United States intervened, its prestige would be "engaged to a point where we would want to have a success. We could not afford a defeat that would have world-wide repercussions."<sup>57</sup> The administration attributed France's failure to its mishandling of the Vietnamese and its refusal to wage the war aggressively;

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum of conversation, Eisenhower and Dulles, March 24, 1954, Lot 64D199, Box 222, Department of State Records; James Hagerty Diary, April 1, 1954, James Hagerty Papers, [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) Library, Abilene, Kans.

<sup>57</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (New York, 1963), p.345.



persistent efforts to change French attitudes had been fruitless. Indeed, [Ely](#) had only recently rebuffed a proposal to expand the role of the American military advisory group, bitterly complaining about the "invading nature" of the Americans and their "determination to control and operate everything of importance."<sup>58</sup> [Dulles](#) and [Eisenhower](#) agreed that the United States must not risk its prestige in [Indochina](#) until [France](#) had made firm commitments to keep its troops there, accelerate the move toward eventual independence, and permit the United States a larger role in training indigenous forces and in formulating military strategy.

Most of Eisenhower's top military advisers raised serious objections to air intervention at Dienbienphu. Some questioned whether an air strike could relieve the siege without destroying the fortress itself; others wondered whether intervention, once undertaken, could be kept limited "One cannot go over Niagara Falls in a barrel only slightly," a Defense Department analyst warned.<sup>59</sup> Among the Joint Chiefs of Staff, only Air Force General Nathan F. Twining approved an air attack on Dienbienphu and he insisted on attaching conditions that the French were unlikely to accept. The other chiefs warned that air intervention posed major risks and would not decisively affect the outcome of the war. Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway was particularly outspoken, responding to Radford's query about the proposed air strike with an "emphatic and immediate 'No.'" Alarmed by what he viewed as "the old delusive idea... that we could do things the cheap and easy way," Ridgway later warned Eisenhower that [air power](#) alone could not ensure victory in Indochina and that any ground forces sent there would have to fight under difficult logistic circumstances and in a uniquely inhospitable terrain.<sup>60</sup>

Although profoundly skeptical concerning the proposed air strike at Dienbienphu, the administration was sufficiently alarmed by the emerging crisis in Indochina to seek Congressional support for possible American military intervention. The fall of Dienbienphu

<sup>58</sup> Radford to Eisenhower, March 29, 1954, USVN, Book 9, 283-284.

<sup>59</sup> [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), I, 89.

<sup>60</sup> Ridgway memorandum for the Joint Chiefs, April 2, 1954, Matthew B. Ridgway Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.; Matthew B. Ridgway, *Soldier* (New York, 1956), pp. 276-277.

seemed certain by early April. [Eisenhower](#) and [Dulles](#) preferred to act in concert with other nations, but they feared that a defeat at [Dienbienphu](#) might produce a French collapse before plans for United Action could be put into effect, leaving American naval and [air power](#) as the only means to save [Indochina](#). Sensitive to [Truman's](#) fate in [Korea](#), they were unwilling to act without backing from Congress, and Eisenhower instructed Dulles to explore with Congressional leaders the conditions under which the use of American military power might be approved. The purpose of the dramatic meeting at the State Department on April 3 was not, as has often been assumed, to secure approval for an immediate air attack, but rather to gain discretionary authority to employ American naval and air forces - with allies if possible, without them if necessary - should the fall of Dienbienphu threaten the loss of all Indochina.

The administration encountered stubborn resistance. Dulles and Radford grimly warned that failure to act decisively might cost the United States all of Southeast Asia and advised that the President should have the power to use naval and air forces "if he felt it necessary in the interest of national security." No one questioned this assessment of the gravity of the situation, but the Congressmen insisted that there must be "no more Koreas, with the United States furnishing 90% of the manpower," and made clear that they would approve nothing until the administration had obtained firm commitments of support from other nations. Dulles persisted, assuring the legislators that the administration had no intention of sending ground troops to Indochina and indicating that he could more easily gain commitments from allies if he could specify what the United States would do. The Congressmen were not swayed by the Secretary's arguments. "Once the flag is committed," they warned, "the use of land forces would surely follow." Sharing the administration's distrust of [France](#), they also insisted that the United States must not go to war in support of colonialism. They would only agree that if "satisfactory commitments" could be secured from [Great Britain](#) and other allies to support military intervention, and from France to "internationalize" the war and speed up the move toward independence, a resolution could be obtained authorizing the President to commit American forces to the defense of Indochina. Congressional insistence on prior allied commitments, particularly from Great Britain, eliminated the option of unilateral

American intervention and placed major obstacles in the way of United Action.<sup>61</sup>

The April 3 session doomed any possibility of an air strike at [Dienbienphu](#). Although unenthusiastic about the prospect of American intervention in any form, the French government eventually concluded that an air strike offered the only hope of saving the beleaguered fortress and on April 5 requested implementation of the plan. [Eisenhower](#) promptly rejected the French request, expressing great annoyance with Radford for misleading the French about American intentions and emphatically stating that the proposal was "politically impossible."<sup>62</sup> At a meeting on April 6, the [National Security Council](#) agreed that planning and mobilization for possible later intervention should "promptly be initiated," while the administration made a determined effort to meet the essential preconditions for United Action.<sup>63</sup>

While the fate of Dienbienphu hung in the balance, the United States frantically promoted United Action. [Dulles](#) immediately departed for London and Paris to consult with British and French leaders. Eisenhower penned a long personal letter to Prime Minister Winston Churchill urging British support for a coalition that would be "willing to fight" to check Communist expansion in Southeast Asia. At a much publicized news conference on April 7, the President laid the foundation for possible American intervention. Outlining in simple language the principles that had formed the basis for American policy for four years, he emphasized that [Indochina](#) was an important source of tin, tungsten, and rubber, and that having lost China to "Communist dictatorship," the United States "simply can't afford greater losses." More important, he warned, should Indochina fall, the rest of Southeast Asia would "go over very quickly," like a "row of dominoes" when the first one is knocked down, causing much greater losses of raw materials and people, jeopardizing America's strategic position in the Far East, and driving [Japan](#) into the Communist camp. "So the possible consequences

<sup>61</sup> Dulles memorandum, April 5, 1954, "Conference with Congressional Leaders, April 3, 1954," [John Foster Dulles](#) Papers, [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) Library, Abilene, Kans.

<sup>62</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Eisenhower and Dulles, April 5, 1954, Eisenhower Papers, Diary Series, Box 3.

<sup>63</sup> Record of NSC meeting, April 6, 1954, FR, 1952-1954, XIII, 1253.

of the loss," he concluded, "are just incalculable to the free world."<sup>64</sup>

The flurry of American diplomatic activity in April 1954 revealed deep differences between the United States and its allies. The Churchill government was prepared to join a collective security arrangement after Geneva, but it was adamantly opposed to immediate intervention in [Indochina](#). Churchill and his Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, did not share the American fear that the loss of all or part of Indochina would bring the fall of Southeast Asia. They were convinced that [France](#) retained sufficient influence to salvage a reasonable settlement at Geneva, and they feared that outside military intervention would destroy any hope of a negotiated settlement and perhaps even provoke a war with China. Most important, they had no desire to entangle [Britain](#) in a war they felt could not be won.

Dulles's discussions with France were equally unproductive and made clear the widely divergent approaches of the two nations toward the war and the Geneva negotiations. The United States was willing to intervene in Indochina, but only on condition that France resist a negotiated settlement at Geneva, agree to remain in Indochina and fight indefinitely, concede to its ally a greater role in planning strategy and training indigenous forces, and accept Vietnamese demands for complete independence. The French insisted that Vietnam must retain ties with the French Union. They wanted nothing more than an air strike to relieve the siege of Dienbienphu. They opposed internationalization of the war, which would not only threaten their prestige in Indochina but would also remove control from their hands. Dulles may have hoped that by offering help to France he could yet save the European Defense Community, but the French government made clear that EDC would have no chance of approval if France had to commit itself to keep troops in Indochina indefinitely.

The administration was deeply annoyed by the response of its allies. U.S. officials complained that the [British](#) were "weak-kneed," and [Eisenhower](#) privately lamented that Churchill and Eden showed a "woeful unawareness" of the risks of inaction in

<sup>64</sup> Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, pp. 346-347; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Public Papers, 1954* (Washington, D.C., 1955), pp. 382-384.

Southeast Asia.<sup>65</sup> [Dulles](#) misinterpreted Eden's willingness to discuss long-range security arrangements as a tentative commitment to United Action, and when informed of the actual British position he was incensed. The White House and State Department were outraged by the French intransigence. [Eisenhower](#) placed full blame on the French for their present plight - they had used "weasel words in promising independence," he wrote a friend, "and through this reason as much as anything else have suffered reverses that have been inexcusable." He refused to consider intervention on [France](#)'s terms. The French "want us to come in as junior partners and provide materials, etc., while they themselves retain authority in that region" and he would "not go along with them... on any such notion."<sup>66</sup>

Congressional opposition reinforced the administration's determination to avoid unilateral intervention in support of France. In a speech that won praise from both sides of the aisles, Democratic Senator [John F. Kennedy](#) of Massachusetts warned that no amount of military aid could conquer "an enemy of the people which has the support and covert appeal of the people," and that victory could not be attained in [Indochina](#) as long as France remained. When a "high administration source," subsequently identified as Vice President [Richard M. Nixon](#), remarked "off the record" that if United Action failed the United States might have to act alone, the reaction was immediate and strong.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, even when France relented a bit, continued British opposition to military intervention settled the fate of United Action. In late April, Foreign Minister Georges [Bidault](#), whom Dulles described as "close to the breaking point," made a last desperate appeal for American support, warning that only a "massive" air attack would save Dienbienphu and hinting that France was prepared to accept internationalization of the war. With his hopes of implementing United Action suddenly revived, Dulles informed

65 Hagerty Diary, April 25, 1954, Hagerty Papers; Eisenhower Diary, April 27, 1954, Eisenhower Papers, Diary Series, Box 3.

66 Eisenhower to E. E. Hazlett, April 27, 1954, Eisenhower Papers, Diary Series, Box 4; record of telephone conversation, Eisenhower and [Walter Bedell Smith](#), April 24, 1954, *ibid.*, Box 3.

67 The Nixon statement has sometimes been regarded as a trial balloon, but it was unauthorized and did not reflect the administration's thinking at this time. See Hagerty Diary, April 17, 1954, Hagerty Papers, and Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York, 1978), pp. 152-153.

[Bidault](#) that if the [British](#) could be persuaded to go along, the administration would seek a Congressional resolution authorizing intervention. Over the next three days, the Secretary made frantic efforts to convert Eden, urgently warning that without support from its allies [France](#) might give up the fight. The British would have none of it, however, and the administration was forced to back off. [Eisenhower](#) informed Congressional leaders on April 26 that it would be a "tragic error to go in alone as a partner of France" and made clear that the United States would intervene only as part of a "grouping of interested nations." Three days later, the [National Security Council](#) formally decided to "hold up for the time any military action in [IndoChina](#) until we see how Geneva is coming along."<sup>68</sup>

The American decision sealed [Dienbienphu](#)'s doom. Without American [air power](#), France had no means of saving the fortress. Subjected to merciless pounding from [Vietminh artillery](#) and to a series of human-wave assaults, the hopelessly outmanned defenders finally surrendered on May 7 after fifty-five days of stubborn but futile resistance. The attention of belligerents and interested outside parties immediately shifted to Geneva, where the following day the [Indochina](#) phase of the conference was set to begin. Buoyed by its victory, the Vietminh confidently savored the prize for which it had been fighting for more than seven years. Its influence in northern Vietnam now reduced to a small pocket around [Hanoi](#), France began preparations to abandon the north and to salvage as much as possible in the area below the sixteenth parallel. The French delegation came to Geneva, Bidault lamented, holding a "two of clubs and a three of diamonds."<sup>69</sup>

The United States was a reluctant participant at Geneva. Negotiation with any Communist nation was anathema, but the presence of Communist China made the conference especially unpalatable. [Dulles](#) remained in Geneva only briefly and, in the words of his biographer, conducted himself like a "puritan in a house of ill repute."<sup>70</sup> On one occasion, he remarked that the only

<sup>68</sup> Dulles to State Department, April 22, 23, 1954, Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File; Summary of meeting, April 26, 1954, Eisenhower Papers, "Cleanup" File, Box 16; Hagerty Diary, April 29, 1954, Hagerty Papers.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in [Chester Cooper](#), *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam* (New York, 1970), p. 79.

<sup>70</sup> [Townsend Hoopes](#), *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston, 1973), p. 222.

way he and Chou En-Lai, the top [Chinese](#) delegate, would meet was if their cars collided, and when they actually met face-to-face and Chou extended his hand, the Secretary reportedly turned his back. The administration had long feared that the conference would merely provide a fig leaf of respectability for the French surrender of [Indochina](#), and the fall of [Dienbienphu](#) increased its concern. After departing Geneva, [Dulles](#) instructed the American delegation that it should participate in the conference only as an "interested nation," not as a "belligerent or a principal in the negotiations," and should not endorse an agreement which in any way impaired the territorial integrity of the Associated States.<sup>71</sup> Given the military position of the [Vietminh](#) when the conference opened, Dulles was saying that the United States would approve no settlement at all.

Indeed, the administration probably hoped there would be no agreement, and during the first five weeks of the conference it kept alive the prospect of military intervention. When Laniel requested American military support in the event the Chinese should stall the talks while the Vietminh pressed on for military victory, Dulles and [Eisenhower](#) seriously considered a new plan for intervention. The Joint Chiefs of Staff drew up detailed contingency plans for deploying U.S. forces, one provision of which was that nuclear weapons would be used if it were militarily advantageous. Administration officials drafted a Congressional resolution authorizing the President to employ military forces in Indochina. As before, however, the United States and [France](#) could not agree on the terms. This time, the administration did not make intervention conditional on British backing, but it stiffened the concessions demanded of France, insisting upon an unequivocal advance commitment to internationalize the war and a guarantee that the Associated States could withdraw from the French Union at any time. The French indicated a willingness only to discuss the American conditions and added demands of their own which were unacceptable to Washington, including at least a token commitment of American ground forces and a prior commitment to employ [air power](#) should the Chinese intervene. As the discussions dragged on inconclusively, each side grew wary. The French government eventually concluded that it must exhaust every possibility of a negotiated settlement before considering prolongation of the war. Eisenhower

<sup>71</sup> Dulles to Smith, May 12, 1954, USVN, Book 9, 457-459.

and [Dulles](#) surmised that [France](#) was interested primarily in keeping alive the possibility of American intervention "as a card to play at Geneva," and they were unwilling to "grant France an indefinite option on us." The talks had all but ended by mid-June.<sup>72</sup>

In the meantime, the conferees at Geneva struggled toward an agreement. As a result of pressure applied by the [Chinese](#) and Russians, the [Vietminh](#) reluctantly agreed to the principle of a temporary partition of Vietnam to permit the regrouping of military forces following a cease-fire. Laniel had made firm commitments to [Bao Dai](#) not to accept any form of partition, but his government fell on June 12 and was replaced by a government headed by Pierre Mendes-France. The new Prime Minister was flexible on the issue of partition, and upon taking power he had also promised to resign if a settlement were not reached by July 21. Although many details remained to be worked out, the outlines of a political agreement had begun to take form when the heads of the delegation agreed to a short recess on June 19.

At this point, the [Eisenhower](#) administration adopted a change of policy with momentous long-range implications. Recognizing that the war could not be prolonged without unacceptable risks and that part of Vietnam would probably be lost at Geneva, the administration began to lay plans for the defense of the rest of [Indochina](#) and Southeast Asia. Dulles informed Congressional leaders on June 24 that any agreement that emerged from Geneva would be "something we would have to gag about," but he nevertheless expressed optimism that the United States might still be able to "salvage something" in Southeast Asia "free of the taint of French colonialism." The United States would have to take over from France responsibility for defending [Laos](#), [Cambodia](#), and that part of Vietnam beneath the partition line. The first essential was to draw a line which the Communists would not cross and then to "hold this area and fight subversion within it with all the strength we have" by providing economic assistance and building a strong military force. The United States would also have to take the lead in forming a strong regional defense grouping "to keep alive freedom" in Southeast Asia.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Dulles to American Consulate Geneva, June 8, 1954, *ibid.*, 541.

<sup>73</sup> Hagerty Diary, June 23, 24, 28, 1954, Hagerty Papers.



Over the next few weeks, [Dulles](#) worked relentlessly to get the kind of settlement that would enable the United States to defend [Indochina](#) and Southeast Asia after Geneva. He secured [British](#) agreement to a set of principles that would constitute an "acceptable" settlement, including the freedom of [Laos](#), [Cambodia](#), and southern Vietnam to maintain "stable, non-communist regimes" and to accept foreign arms and advisers. He applied extreme pressure, even threatening to disassociate the United States entirely from Geneva, until Mendes-France accepted the so-called seven points as the basis for the French bargaining position. Although armed with firm British and French promises, Dulles still approached the last stages of the conference with great caution and with a determination to retain complete freedom of action. The United States should play no more than a passive role in the negotiations, he instructed the head of the American delegation, [Walter Bedell Smith](#). If the agreement lived up to its standards, the administration would issue a unilateral statement of endorsement, but if it fell short the United States would reserve the freedom to "publicly disassociate itself." Under no circumstances would it be a "cosignatory with the Communists," and it would not be placed in a position of guaranteeing the results.<sup>74</sup>

When the conference reconvened, pressures for a settlement had increased significantly. The July 21 deadline was rapidly approaching for [Mendes-France](#), and Anglo-American support strengthened his bargaining position. Perhaps more important, although the [Vietminh](#)'s military position gave it strong claim for influence throughout Vietnam, both the Russians and the [Chinese](#) exerted heavy pressure for a compromise peace. The [Soviet Union](#) had only limited interests in Southeast Asia and appears to have pursued a conciliatory line toward France in order to encourage French rejection of the European Defense Community. China sought to enhance its international prestige and to cultivate influence among the neutral nations of South and Southeast Asia by playing the role of peacemaker. Moreover, the Chinese apparently feared that a prolonged war ran serious risks of American intervention, and they may have felt that a partition arrangement would make the Vietminh more susceptible to their influence. For reasons of their own, the Russians and the Chinese moderated the Vietminh demands and played a crucial role in arranging the settlement.

74 [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), I, 152.

The [Geneva Accords of 1954](#) reflected these influences. Vietnam was to be partitioned along the seventeenth parallel to permit the regrouping of military forces from both sides. The agreements stressed that the division was to be only temporary and that it should not be "interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary." The country was to be reunified by elections scheduled for the summer of 1956 and to be supervised by an international commission composed of [Canada](#), Poland, and India. To insulate Vietnam against a renewal of conflict during the transitional period, the agreements provided that forces should be withdrawn from the respective partition zones within 300 days, and they prohibited the introduction of new forces and equipment and the establishment of foreign military bases. Neither portion of Vietnam was to join a military alliance. The agreements also established cease-fire arrangements for [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#). The two nations' right to self-defense was explicitly recognized, but to assuage [Chinese](#) fears of American intervention, they were not to enter military alliances or permit foreign bases on their soil except in cases where their security was clearly threatened.

The [Eisenhower](#) administration viewed the Geneva Agreements with mixed feelings. As had been feared, the settlement produced some domestic political backlash; Republican Senate Leader William Knowland denounced it as the "greatest victory the Communists have won in twenty years." The administration itself regarded the loss of northern Vietnam—"the keystone to the arch of Southeast Asia"—with concern. Eisenhower and [Dulles](#) realized, as Smith put it, that "diplomacy has rarely been able to gain at the conference table what cannot be held on the battlefield." The administration protected itself against domestic criticism and retained its freedom of action by refusing to associate itself directly with the agreements. In a unilateral statement, Smith simply "took note" of the Geneva Accords and said that the United States would not "disturb them" by the "threat or the use of force."<sup>75</sup>

The administration was not altogether displeased with the results, however. The agreements were better than had been anticipated when the conference opened, and they allowed sufficient latitude to proceed along the lines Dulles had already outlined. Partition was unpalatable, but it gave the United States the opportunity to build up non-Communist forces in southern Vietnam, a

75 Ibid., 571-572.

challenge [Eisenhower](#) and [Dulles](#) took up eagerly. The accords placed some limits on outside intervention, to be sure, but the administration did not view them as prohibitive. And some of the provisions seemed advantageous. Eisenhower and Dulles agreed, for example, that if elections were held immediately, [Ho Chi Minh](#) would be an easy victor. But the two-year delay gave the United States "fairly good time" to get ready, and [Canada](#)'s presence on the commission would enable it to "block things."<sup>76</sup>

Eisenhower and Dulles viewed the apparent demise of French colonialism in Southeast Asia with equanimity, if not outright enthusiasm. From the start, the Franco-American partnership in [Indochina](#) had been marked by profound mutual suspicion and deep-seated tensions. From 1950 to 1954, the United States had provided [France](#) more than \$2.6 billion in military aid, but its efforts to influence French policies by friendly persuasion and by attaching strings had failed, and the commitment to France had indeed turned out to be a "dead-end-alley." Eisenhower and Dulles attributed France's failure primarily to its attempts to perpetuate colonialism in Indochina, and they were confident that without the problems posed by France, the United States could build a viable non-Communist alternative to the [Vietminh](#). "We must work with these people, and then they themselves will soon find out that we are their friends and that they can't live without us," Eisenhower observed.<sup>77</sup> Conceding that the [Geneva Accords](#) contained "many features which we did not like," Dulles nevertheless insisted that they included many "good aspects," most important, the "truly independent status" of [Laos](#), [Cambodia](#), and southern Vietnam. The "important thing," he concluded, was "not to mourn the past but to seize the future opportunity to prevent the loss in Northern Vietnam from leading to the extension of communism throughout Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific."<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Eisenhower and Dulles, July 20, 1954, Eisenhower Papers, Diary Series, Box 4.

<sup>77</sup> Hagerty Diary, July 23, 1954, Hagerty Papers.

<sup>78</sup> Dulles news conference, July 23, 1954, [John Foster Dulles](#) Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton, N.J.



## CHAPTER 2

Our Offspring:

Nation-Building in

[South Vietnam](#), 1954-1961

"The fundamental tenets of this nation's foreign policy... depend in considerable measure upon a strong and free Vietnamese nation," Senator [John F. Kennedy](#) stated in 1956. "Vietnam represents the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, the keystone in the arch, the finger in the dike," and should the "red tide of Communism" pour into it, Kennedy warned, much of Asia would be threatened. Vietnam's economy was essential to the economy of Southeast Asia, the Senator went on to say, its "political liberty" an "inspiration to those seeking to obtain or maintain their liberty in all parts of Asia-and indeed of the world." The United States had special obligations to Vietnam which extended beyond mere considerations of the national interest, Kennedy stressed in conclusion: "It is our offspring, we cannot abandon it, we cannot ignore its needs."<sup>1</sup>

Kennedy was addressing the [American Friends of Vietnam](#), and he may have been indulging in hyperbole, but his speech summed up the rationale of American policy in Vietnam in the 1950s, touched on the pivotal role played by the United States at its birth, and highlighted the importance it came to assume. Certain that the fall of Vietnam to Communism would lead to the loss of all of Southeast Asia, the [Eisenhower](#) administration after Geneva firmly committed itself to creating in the southern part of the country a nation that would stand as a bulwark against Communist expansion

<sup>1</sup> John F. Kennedy, "America's Stake in Vietnam," *Vital Speeches*, 22 (August 1, 1956), 617-619.

and serve as a proving ground for democracy in Asia. Originating out of the exigencies of the Cold War, the experiment in nation-building tapped the wellsprings of American idealism and took on many of the trappings of a crusade. Begun as a high-risk gamble, it appeared for a time one of the great success stories of postwar American foreign policy. Only at the end of the decade, when [South Vietnam](#) was swept by revolution, did Americans fully perceive the magnitude and complexity of the problem they had taken on.

Warning that Geneva had been a "disaster" which had made possible a "major forward stride of Communism," the [National Security Council](#) (NSC) in the summer of 1954 called for a "new initiative" to shore up the United States's position in Southeast Asia. The NSC recommended, among other things, the use of "all available means" to weaken the infant [Vietminh](#) regime in northern Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the rest of the year, a [CIA](#) team stationed in [Saigon](#) and headed by Colonel [Edward Lansdale](#) devised numerous clandestine methods to harass the [Hanoi](#) government. Paramilitary groups infiltrated across the [demilitarized zone](#) on sabotage missions, attempting to destroy the government's printing presses and pouring contaminants into the engines of busses to demobilize the transportation system. The teams also carried out "[psywar](#)" [operations](#) to embarrass the Vietminh regime and encourage emigration to the south. They distributed fake leaflets announcing the harsh methods the government was prepared to take and even hired astrologers to predict hard times in the north and good times in the south.<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime, [Dulles](#) hastened off to Manila and negotiated the Southeast Asian security pact he had promoted so vigorously during the [Dienbienphu](#) crisis. The [Southeast Asian Treaty Organization](#) (SEATO) had obvious weaknesses. The major neutralist nations of the region, Burma, India, and Indonesia, declined to join, and because of restrictions imposed by the [Geneva Accords](#), [Laos](#), [Cambodia](#), and southern Vietnam could not formally participate.

<sup>2</sup> NSC, "Review of U.S. Policy in the Far East," August 1954, [U.S. Congress](#), House, Committee on Armed Services, United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: A Study Prepared by the Department of Defense (Washington, D.C., 1971), Book 10, 731-741.

<sup>3</sup> Nell Sheehan et al., The [Pentagon Papers](#) as Published by the New York Times (New York, 1971), pp. 16-18. Hereafter cited as Pentagon Papers (NYT).

The member nations bound themselves only to "meet common danger" in accordance with their own "constitutional processes" and to "consult" with each other. From [Dulles's](#) standpoint, however, [SEATO](#) was more than satisfactory. He hoped that the mere existence of the alliance would deter Communist aggression in the region. More important, a separate protocol specifically designated [Laos](#), [Cambodia](#), and southern Vietnam as areas which, if threatened, would "endanger" the "peace and security" of the signatories. During the Dienbienphu crisis, Dulles had felt hampered by the lack of any legal basis for intervention in [Indochina](#). The SEATO protocol not only remedied this defect, but also established the foundation should United Action become necessary in the future and gave [South Vietnam](#) a semblance of international status as a "free" nation.<sup>4</sup>

The key to the new American "initiative" was South Vietnam. The [National Security Council](#) recommended in August that the United States "must make every possible effort, not openly inconsistent with the U.S. position as to the armistice agreements... to maintain a friendly non-Communist South Vietnam and to prevent a Communist victory through all-Vietnam elections."<sup>5</sup> Violating the spirit and sometimes the letter of the Geneva Accords, the [Eisenhower](#) administration in 1954 and after firmly committed itself to the fragile government of [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), eased the French out of Vietnam, and used its resources unsparingly to construct in southern Vietnam a viable, non-Communist nation that would stand as the "cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia."

Had it looked all over the world, the United States could not have chosen a less promising place for an experiment in nation-building. The partition settlement left an estimated 14 of 25 million Vietnamese above the seventeenth parallel. The North Vietnamese regime was not without internal opposition, and it faced an enormous challenge of postwar reconstruction. At the same time, it had a large, reasonably well-equipped army and a tightly organized government. [Ho Chi Minh](#) was the best-known nationalist leader in

<sup>4</sup> The members of SEATO were the United States, the United Kingdom, [France](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), [Thailand](#), the [Philippines](#), and Pakistan. For an insightful view of Dulles's attitudes toward the alliance, see Richard Bissell oral history interview, Dulles Papers, Princeton, N.J.

<sup>5</sup> NSC, "Review of U.S. Policy in the Far East," August 1954, USVN, Book 10, 731-741.

all of Vietnam, and the [Vietminh](#) had won broad popular respect for having led the struggle against [France](#). Ho and his colleagues remained deeply committed to the unification of Vietnam, and they left between 10,000 and 15,000 operatives in the south to promote that goal by legal and extralegal means.

In southern Vietnam, chaos reigned. The colonial economy depended entirely on exports of rice and rubber to finance essential imports. It had been devastated by nearly fourteen years of war and was held together by enormous French military expenditures that would soon cease. The French had finally granted unqualified independence to the State of Vietnam in June 1954, but the government, still nominally presided over by [Bao Dai](#), was a fiction. Assuming the premiership in the summer of 1954, the staunchly anti-French [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) inherited antiquated institutions patterned on French practices and ill-suited to the needs of an independent nation - an "oriental despotism with a French accent," one American scornfully labelled it. Diem's government lacked experienced civil servants. Tainted by its long association with France, it had no base of support in the countryside or among the non-Communist nationalists in [Saigon](#). Its army had been created by the French out of desperation in the last stages of the war, and was accurately dismissed by General Navarre as a "rabble."<sup>6</sup>

The French had employed the classical imperialist device of divide and conquer to rule their Indochinese colonies, and political fragmentation was the fundamental fact of life in post-Geneva [South Vietnam](#). The French army remained, and the French government clung stubbornly to hopes of exerting some influence in its former colony. The Vietminh retained pockets of control, even on the doorstep of Saigon. The so-called sects, politico-religious organizations with their own governments and armies, ruled the [Mekong Delta](#) and the suburbs of Saigon as their private fiefdoms. Viewing a mass emigration from [North Vietnam](#) as a possible means of tipping the political balance toward the south and perhaps even winning the 1956 elections, the French and the Americans actively encouraged northerners to cross the seventeenth parallel. Within weeks after Geneva, northern Catholics began pouring into predominantly [Buddhist](#) South Vietnam at the rate of 7,000 a day, adding new religious and ethnic tensions to an already volatile mix.

<sup>6</sup> Robert McClintock to State Department, May 20, 1953, and May 8, 1954, FR, 1952-1954, XIII, 575, 1519.



Some American officials issued stern warnings about the pitfalls of nation-building in [South Vietnam](#). A National Intelligence Estimate of August 1954 admonished that even with solid support from the United States, the chances of establishing a strong, stable government were "poor."<sup>7</sup> When asked to formulate a program for training a South Vietnamese army, the Joint Chiefs of Staff demurred, advising that it would be "hopeless" to build an army without a "reasonably strong, stable civil government in control."<sup>8</sup> Agreeing that the situation in South Vietnam was "utterly hopeless," [Secretary of Defense](#) Charles E. Wilson urged that the United States get out as "completely and as soon as possible." In words that would take on the ring of prophecy in little more than a decade, Wilson warned that he could "see nothing but grief in store for us if we remained in that area."<sup>9</sup>

[Eisenhower](#) and [Dulles](#) were not deterred by these gloomy forecasts. Dulles admitted that the chances of success might not be better than one in ten. On the other hand, he and the President agreed that to do nothing risked the probable loss of a vital area to Communism. They seem also to have felt that because of the purity of its motives and the superiority of its methods, the United States might succeed where the French had failed in creating a strong South Vietnamese army and a viable government. In its first two years in office, moreover, the administration with limited effort had toppled unfriendly governments in Iran and Guatemala, and Eisenhower and Dulles may have concluded that they could beat the odds in Vietnam as well. Admitting that he was indulging in the "familiar hen-and-egg argument as to which comes first," Dulles flatly informed the Joint Chiefs that a strong army would do more than anything else to stabilize the government of South Vietnam.<sup>10</sup> His arguments eventually prevailed with the President. At an NSC meeting on October 22, 1954, Eisenhower resorted to aphorism, affirming with "great conviction" that "in the lands of the blind, one-eyed men are kings," by which he presumably meant that despite the obstacles the United States had the resources and ingenuity

<sup>7</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 63-5-54, "Post-Geneva Outlook in [Indochina](#)," August 3, 1954, USVN, Book 10, 692.

<sup>8</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense, August 4, 12, 1954, *ibid.*, 701-702, 759-760.

<sup>9</sup> Record of [National Security Council](#) meeting, October 26, 1954, FR, 1952-1954, XIII, 2184-2186.

<sup>10</sup> Dulles. to Charles E. Wilson, August 18, 1954, USVN, Book 10, 728-729.

to succeed.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after, the administration committed itself to a major aid program for [South Vietnam](#). The commitment was carefully limited and was made conditional on Diem's instituting major reforms, but the significance of the step was unmistakable: the experiment in nation-building was under way.

The man to whom [Eisenhower](#) made the fateful commitment had impeccable credentials as a nationalist and, from the American standpoint, more important, as an anti-Communist. One of nine children of Ngo Dinh Kha, an official at the imperial court of [Hue](#), [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) attended French Catholic schools in Hue and the school of public administration in [Hanoi](#), where, after finishing at the top of his class, he was given an appointment in the bureaucracy of the protectorate of [Annam](#). A devout Catholic, he became a staunch opponent of Communism before he became a nationalist. As a village supervisor in central Vietnam, he unearthed a Communist-inspired uprising in 1929 and severely punished its leaders. The French rewarded him with an appointment as Minister of the Interior, the highest position in the government, but when they refused to enact reforms which he had proposed, he resigned and would not return to his post even when threatened with deportation. For most of the next two decades, Diem was a virtual exile in his own land, living as a scholar-recluse and refusing offers from the Japanese, the [Vietminh](#), and [Bao Dai](#) to participate in the various governments formed after World War II. He eventually left the country, traveling to Rome and then settling at a Maryknoll seminary in Lakewood, New Jersey. While in the United States he lectured widely, and his fervent appeals for an independent, non-Communist Vietnam attracted him to such luminaries as Francis Cardinal Spellman and Democratic Senators [John F. Kennedy](#) and [Mike Mansfield](#).<sup>12</sup>

Diem's nationalism and his administrative experience made him appear a logical choice for the premiership of an independent Vietnam, but he lacked many of the qualities required for the imposing challenges he faced. His most noteworthy characteristics seemed to have been a stubborn determination to persist in the face of great danger and a remarkable penchant for survival. A man of principle, he inclined toward an all-or-nothing integrity which deprived

<sup>11</sup> Record of [National Security Council](#) meeting, October 22, 1954, FR, 1952-1954, XIII, 2154.

<sup>12</sup> Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (Boston, 1972), pp. 80-84, 98-99.

him of the flexibility necessary to deal with the intractable problems and deep-seated conflicts he confronted. His love for his country in the abstract was profound, but he was an elitist who had little sensitivity to the needs and problems of the Vietnamese people. Not perceiving the extent to which the French and the [Vietminh](#) had destroyed traditional political processes and values, he looked backward to an imperial Vietnam that no longer existed. He had no blueprint for building a modern nation or mobilizing his people. Introverted and absorbed in himself, he lacked the charisma of [Ho Chi Minh](#). "He was a short, broadly built man with a round face and a shock of black hair, who walked and moved jerkily, as if on strings," Robert Shaplen has recalled. "He always dressed in white and looked as if he were made out of ivory." A compulsive talker "a single question was likely to provoke a dissertation for an hour or more" he was a poor listener who seemed almost indifferent to the reaction he evoked in others.<sup>13</sup>

Diem's route to the premiership of [South Vietnam](#) remains obscure. The Catholic leader approached the U.S. government as early as 1951, attacking [Bao Dai](#)'s leadership and expressing "somewhat wistfully" his hope that American troops might be used in Vietnam. Diem's virulent Francophobia seems to have been too much for [Dean Acheson](#)'s State Department, and American diplomats regarded the self-exiled nationalist as too rigid, too Catholic, and too "monkish" to be an effective leader. Diem also came to the attention of General William Donovan, chief of U.S. intelligence in World War II, who at this time was orchestrating from his Wall Street office a global network of anti-Communist operations. Donovan and prominent Catholic-Americans such as Spellman and [Mansfield](#), with or without the support of the [CIA](#), may have forced Diem on a reluctant Bao Dai. Or the emperor may have turned to Diem as a means of getting the American support he needed to break free from French dominance.<sup>14</sup>

Although the United States may have influenced the appointment,

<sup>13</sup> Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution: The U.S. in Vietnam, 1946-1966* (New York, 1966), p. 104.

<sup>14</sup> Acheson to Legation [Saigon](#), January 16, 1951, document #3051, William J. Donovan Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. Donovan's anti-Communist activities are discussed in Anthony Cave Brown, *The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan* (New York, 1984), pp. 820-822, 828. For possible Catholic lobby and CIA involvement in Diem's rise to power, see Congressional Research Service, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War, Part I* (Washington, D.C., 1983), pp. 261-262.

many top U.S. officials found little encouragement in [Diem](#)'s assumption of power. Indeed, what is striking in retrospect is the extent to which early on-the-scene estimates of the prime minister's leadership potential pointed directly toward the major problems that would develop later. From Geneva, [Walter Bedell Smith](#) did express hope that Diem might be a "modern political Joan of Arc" who could "rally the country behind him." In Paris, however, Ambassador Douglas Dillon was reassured by the emergence of this "Yogi-like mystic" only because the standard set by his predecessors had been so low. Within weeks after Diem took office, Charge Robert McClintock in [Saigon](#) characterized him as a "messiah without a message," complained of his "narrowness of view," and commented scornfully that his only "formulated policy is to ask immediate American assistance in every form."<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the fall and winter of 1954-1955, Diem was the focal point of a bitter and protracted conflict between the United States and [France](#). Controversy was probably inevitable given the accumulated tensions of four years of uneasy partnership, and it was sharpened by profound mutual suspicions which extended from top policy levels in Paris and Washington down to the operational level in Saigon. French support for Diem was at best lukewarm, and the Americans feared, probably with some justification, that Paris was playing a double game, seeking to maintain its position in the south while attempting to build bridges to [Hanoi](#). U.S. officials also feared that the French government's apparent inclination to let the best man win the upcoming election might facilitate a [Ho Chi Minh](#) victory. The French had always resented American intrusion in Vietnam, and they suspected that the United States was using Diem to try to supplant them. Diem has that "one rare quality, so precious in Asia," a French journalist snarled, "he is pro-American."<sup>16</sup> Differences over Vietnam were exacerbated by French rejection of the European Defense Community, which strained Franco-American relations to the breaking point and, at least momentarily, left the Western alliance in disarray.

In Vietnam, the United States held most of the cards and it was

<sup>15</sup> T. B. Millar, ed., *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey, 1951-1960* (London, 1972), p. 159; Dillon to State Department, May 24, 1954, FR, 1952-1954, XIII, 1608-1609; McClintock to State Department, July 4, 1954, *ibid.*, 1783-1784.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in FR, 1952-1954, XIII, 2333.

eventually able to impose its policy on a recalcitrant [France](#). The French still depended upon American aid to support their army in Vietnam, and Washington used this leverage in the fall of 1954 to extract from Paris a commitment to support [Diem](#). The [Eisenhower](#) administration also insisted on giving its economic and military aid directly to the Diem government rather than funneling it through the French mission in [Saigon](#), as Paris had proposed. Throughout the winter of 1954-1955, French officials insisted that Diem was incapable of running the government and proposed that he be replaced by [Bao Dai](#) or some other reputable nationalist figure. But [Dulles](#) would have none of it. If, as the French argued, Bao Dai was the only person who could save Vietnam, the Secretary concluded, "then indeed we must be desperate." He conceded Diem's shortcomings, but he accepted Ambassador Donald Heath's argument "that there is no one to take his place who would serve US interests better."<sup>17</sup> More than any other single factor, the unstinting support provided by Dulles and the United States enabled Diem to remain in power against strong French opposition.

Timely American support enabled Diem to thwart a series of military plots against his government. The U.S. Embassy foiled a coup attempt in the fall of 1954 by letting it be known that a change of government would result in termination of American aid. [Edward Lansdale](#) singlehandedly stopped another coup in November. A former advertising executive, Lansdale had served in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II and afterwards had assisted Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay in suppressing the Huk rebellion. A flamboyant and imaginative operator whose schemes ranged from the macabre to the bizarre, he had quickly ingratiated himself with Diem and became one of the Prime Minister's most trusted advisers and vocal supporters. Learning that a group of army officers was plotting to overthrow the government, Lansdale lured several of the ringleaders out of the country by giving them an expense-paid trip to Manila and the scheme quickly collapsed. <sup>18</sup>

The United States also enabled Diem to cope with some of the enormous problems he confronted in his first year, most notably the

<sup>17</sup> Embassy Paris to State Department, December 19, 1954, USVN, Book 10, 826-834; Heath to Walter Robertson, December 17, 1954, *ibid.*, 824-825.

<sup>18</sup> Sheehan, [Pentagon Papers](#) (NYT), p. 20.

massive influx of refugees from the north. Responding to the fervent appeals of the northern Catholic hierarchy that "Christ has gone to the south" and to warnings that their lives would be in danger if they remained under Communism, an estimated 900,000 refugees, most of them Catholics, fled from the north after Geneva. The United States organized a task force of some fifty ships in what was dubbed "[Passage to Freedom](#)" and, along with private charities, established reception centers offering emergency food, clothing, and medical care to the newcomers. Himself a northerner, Diem was sympathetic to the refugees, and his government provided a subsidy to help them build new dwellings and to purchase clothing and food. Foreign Operations Administrator Harold Stassen called Passage to Freedom "one of the epochs" of modern Far Eastern history, and Diem's effective handling of the short-term problems created by the refugees was cited as early evidence of his ability to govern [South Vietnam](#) under American tutelage. The long-range problem of resettlement and integration proved much more difficult, however, and Diem's favoritism for the northerners was one of the major articles in the later indictment against him.<sup>19</sup>

Even with American help, Diem barely survived the sect crisis of 1955. The [Cao Dai](#) and [Hoa Hao](#) represented the most potent political forces in the fragmented society of post-Geneva Vietnam. Organized along the lines of the Catholic Church with a "pope" as head, the Cao Dai claimed two million adherents, maintained an army of 20,000, and exercised political control over much of the [Mekong Delta](#). The Hoa Hao, with as many as one million followers and an army of 15,000, dominated the region northwest of [Saigon](#). In addition, the [Binh Xuyen](#), a mafia-like organization headed by a colorful brigand named [Bay Vien](#), had an army of 25,000 men, earned huge revenues from gambling and prostitution in Saigon, and actually ran the city's police force. Unable to subdue the sects while fighting the [Vietminh](#), the French had given them virtual autonomy. Accustomed to running their own affairs, the sects were not willing to surrender their power or fortunes to the new national government.<sup>20</sup>

Diem's divide-and-conquer tactics only united the sects against

<sup>19</sup> Stassen to [Eisenhower](#), June 7, 1955, Eisenhower Papers, Office File 181-B, Box 862; Gertrude Samuels, "Passage to Freedom," *National Geographic*, 107 (June 1955), 858-874.

<sup>20</sup> FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake*, pp. 56-57.

him. He offered the [Cao Dai](#) and [Hoa Hao](#) cabinet posts, and Lansdale journeyed deep into the jungles near the Cambodian border and bribed the most important Cao Dai leaders to work with the government. The U.S. Embassy backed Diem by warning that if the sects overthrew the President, American aid would be withdrawn, leaving [South Vietnam](#) at the mercy of the [Vietminh](#). Diem stubbornly refused to negotiate with the [Binh Xuyen](#), however, and his rapprochement with the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao broke down when he refused their demands for autonomy within their own territories. In the spring of 1955, the sects joined the Binh Xuyen in an all-out assault against the government. By March, government forces and sect armies waged open warfare in the streets of [Saigon](#).

Diem's mishandling of the sects persuaded top French and American officials in Saigon that he must be removed. General [Paul Ely](#), the French High Commissioner for Vietnam, advised the U.S. Embassy that Diem verged on megalomania, that he probably could not be saved, and that if he were saved "we shall have spared for Vietnam the worst Prime Minister it ever had." [General J. Lawton Collins](#), whom [Eisenhower](#) had appointed Ambassador to Vietnam in December, concurred. Collins had expressed misgivings about Diem from the time he arrived in Vietnam, and the sect crisis convinced him that he had been correct. On April 7, he advised the State Department that Diem did not have the "capacity to achieve the necessary unity of purpose and action... to prevent the country from falling under Communist control."<sup>21</sup>

Several weeks later, Collins returned to Washington to plead the case for Diem's removal. [Dulles](#) stood his ground, arguing that Diem's problems were caused by French intrigue and Vietnamese "warlords" and that if the French viewpoint won out, "we will be paying the bill and the French calling the tune."<sup>22</sup> Collins was able to persuade the President, however, and Dulles and the State Department could do nothing more than arrange a face-saving compromise by which Diem would be retained as President, a largely titular position, while the actual authority of government was given to someone else.

While Collins was en route to Vietnam to implement the

<sup>21</sup> Collins to State Department, April 7, 1955, Eisenhower Papers, International File, Vietnam (2), Box 50.

<sup>22</sup> Hagerty Diary, March 30, April 12, 20, 1955, Hagerty Papers; USVN, Book 10, 909.

change, a sudden turn of events gave American backers of [Diem](#) another chance. When the [Binh Xuyen](#) launched a mortar attack against the presidential palace, Diem ordered his army into battle, and to the surprise of everyone, it quickly drove the opposition back into [Cholon](#), the [Chinese](#) district of [Saigon](#). Although instructed to remain neutral, many Americans openly sided with Diem. According to [Lansdale](#), General John W. O'Daniel, the chief of the U.S military mission, "rode past the Vietnamese troops in his sedan, flying the American flag ... and gave them the thumbs-up sign, shouting 'Give 'em hell, boys.'"<sup>23</sup> Lansdale himself convinced a skeptical Embassy that the successful counterattack demonstrated the loyalty of the army and Diem's strength as a leader. At a critical moment in the struggle, moreover, the ubiquitous [CIA](#) agent persuaded Diem to ignore a cable from [Bao Dai](#) demanding his resignation.

Diem's success against the Binh Xuyen produced an American policy reversal of enormous long-range significance. Senate leaders, including [Mansfield](#) and California Republican William Knowland, lobbied furiously for Diem's retention. Having lost the first round to Collins, [Dulles](#), with the support of his brother, CIA director Allen Dulles, ably exploited the developments in Saigon. Arguing that Diem was the only means to "save [South Vietnam](#) and counteract revolution," that he must be supported "wholeheartedly," and that he could not be permitted to become "another Karen-sky [sic]," the Secretary persuaded the President to stick by a man whose political career had faced certain doom just days before.<sup>24</sup>

The American commitment to Diem provoked a final and from the American standpoint not unwelcome - crisis with [France](#). In a dramatic confrontation in Paris in mid-May, Prime Minister Edgar Faure argued heatedly that Diem was "not only incapable but mad" and that France could "no longer take risks with him": if the United States persisted in its support, France would have to withdraw from Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> Advised by the Joint Chiefs that a French [withdrawal](#), although desirable from the long-term standpoint, would leave the new nation highly vulnerable, Dulles subsequently persuaded the French to remain and to support

<sup>23</sup> Edward G. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars* (New York, 1972), p. 288.

<sup>24</sup> Dulles to State Department, May 8, 1955, USVN, Book 10, 962-963.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*



[Diem](#) until the Vietnamese themselves could settle the future of their country through elections. He also let it be known that the United States would frame its policies independently and would not feel bound to consult [France](#) before acting. In all, it was a bravura [Dulles](#) performance. The agreement ensured French support for the short run but left the United States complete freedom of action. Frustrated by Dulles and Diem and faced with rebellion in their North African colonies, the French abandoned whatever remained of their dreams of influence and began a phased [withdrawal](#) from what had been the most glittering jewel in the French Union.

Buoyed by his successes and by American support, Diem quickly consolidated his power. The army drove the [Binh Xuyen](#) deep into the swamps east of [Saigon](#), where it eventually surrendered, and routed [Hoa Hao](#) forces in the [Mekong Delta](#). Now isolated, the [Cao Dai](#) saw no choice but to come over to Diem's side. With American assistance, a "national" referendum was hastily arranged between Diem and [Bao Dai](#). U.S. advisers informed the Prime Minister that 60 percent would be a more than adequate majority, but Diem and his brother [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#) left nothing to chance, securing 98.2 percent of the vote and winning more than 605,000 votes from the 405,000 registered voters in Saigon. Facing near certain downfall in May 1955, Diem, largely as a result of American support, had established uncontested control over the government of [South Vietnam](#) by the end of the year.

With firm American backing, Diem also blocked the elections called for by the Geneva Accords. Such a position was awkward for the United States given its traditional advocacy of free elections and its policies in Germany and [Korea](#). Even Diem's most uncritical supporters realized, however, that [Ho Chi Minh](#)'s reputation as a nationalist leader made elections risky and that, in any event, the more populous north - operating under iron Communist discipline - was "mathematically certain" of winning. Washington and Saigon used alleged North Vietnamese truce violations to justify their stand. They also resorted to legalism, insisting that the Geneva articles calling for elections had no "juridical value" and merely expressed a "pious wish" that committed no one. For the sake of appearances, the United States and South Vietnam affirmed that they would participate in genuinely free elections. Such a position was "unassailable in intent," Dulles argued, and it held out

little danger since Communist nations never permitted a free and open political process.<sup>26</sup>

Diem's refusal to participate in elections ended, at least temporarily, any chance of the reunification of Vietnam, and the division of the country increasingly took on features of permanency. Diem refused to permit any traffic with the north, including even a postal arrangement, and the seventeenth parallel became one of the most restricted boundaries in the world.

Having ensured the survival of the Diem regime through its tumultuous first years, the United States supported it lavishly for the rest of the decade. The preservation of an independent [South Vietnam](#) as a bulwark against further Communist penetration of Southeast Asia remained the fundamental goal of U.S. policy. During the mid-1950s, the major battleground of the Cold War shifted from Europe to the newly emerging nations of Asia and Africa, where the United States and the [Soviet Union](#) vied for influence and sought to demonstrate the superior merits of their respective systems. In this context, South Vietnam assumed an even greater importance as a testing ground for the viability of American ideology and institutions in underdeveloped nations.

The experiment in nation-building launched by [Dulles](#) on a crash basis quickly assumed the form of a crusade. Private charitable agencies distributed to [refugees](#) food, soap, toothbrushes, and emergency medical supplies, and worked zealously to improve amenities in refugee camps. The International Rescue Committee went further. Originally established to assist refugees from Nazi Germany, the IRC had since shifted its efforts to the Cold War. In Vietnam, it professed to stand as a "lighthouse of inspiration" for those eager to preserve and broaden "concepts of democratic culture." The IRC staged anti-Communist plays in the villages and sponsored in the cities recitals and art exhibitions built around democratic themes. It also established Freedom Centers in [Saigon](#), [Hue](#), and Dalat to win over disaffected Vietnamese intellectuals and students through such diverse and apparently contradictory efforts as research into "pure Vietnamese culture" and English language

<sup>26</sup> [Tran Van Chuong](#), "Comment on the Viet Minh's Request for General Elections in Viet Nam," document #4051, Donovan Papers; [American Friends of Vietnam](#), "The Election Issue," n.d., copy in Hans Morgenthau Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Dulles news conference, August 30, 1955, Dulles Papers, Princeton, N.J., Box 95.

courses.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, in the United States, liberals and conservatives joined hands to form the [American Friends of Vietnam](#), a group headed by Donovan and created to enlighten American opinion to the "realities" in Vietnam and lobby the U.S. government to support the [Diem](#) government. "A free Vietnam means a greater guarantee of freedom in the world," the AFV affirmed in its statement of purpose. "There is a little bit of all of us in that faraway country," General O'Daniel, a charter member, would write in 1960.<sup>28</sup>

Already deeply committed to [South Vietnam](#), the [Eisenhower](#) administration needed no urging from private lobby groups. From 1955 to 1961, the United States poured more than \$1 billion in economic and military assistance into South Vietnam, and by 1961, Diem's government ranked fifth among all recipients of American foreign aid. By the late 1950s, there were more than 1,500 Americans in South Vietnam, assisting the government in various ways, and the U.S. mission in [Saigon](#) was the largest in the world.

The American aid program accorded top priority to building a South Vietnamese army. [Dulles](#) had insisted from the outset that the development of a strong, modern army was an essential first step in promoting a stable government. The [withdrawal](#) of the French Expeditionary Force, the presence of large, experienced armies in the north, and continued instability in the south all underscored the necessity of providing South Vietnam with a strong military force. Between 1955 and 1961, military assistance constituted more than 78 percent of the total American foreign aid program.

In early 1956, the United States assumed from [France](#) full responsibility for training the Vietnamese Army, and the [Military Assistance and Advisory Group](#) (MAAG) in Saigon undertook a crash program to build it into an effective force. Limited by the Geneva Accords to a strength of 342 men, the MAAG was augmented by various subterfuges to a strength of 692. From 1955 to 1960, it was headed by Lieutenant General [Samuel Williams](#), a spit-and-polish veteran of the two world wars and [Korea](#) whose insistence

<sup>27</sup> Robert MacAlister reports to International Rescue Committee, May-October 1955, document #4084, Donovan Papers.

<sup>28</sup> American Friends of Vietnam, "Statement of Purpose," n.d., copy in Morgenthau Papers; John W. O'Daniel, *The Nation That Refused to Starve* (New York, 1960), p. 11.

on rigid discipline and vicious tongue-lashings were legendary throughout the army.

The [MAAG](#) faced truly formidable obstacles. The United States inherited from [France](#) an army of more than 250,000 men, poorly organized, trained, and equipped, lacking in national spirit, suffering from low morale, and deficient in officers and trained specialists such as engineers and artillerymen. The army's supply problems were compounded by the French, who took most of the best equipment with them and dumped upon the Vietnamese tons of useless and antiquated material. The American advisers had to bridge profound language and cultural gaps. Despite good intentions, they often patronized the Vietnamese, sometimes even referring to them as "natives." "Probably the greatest single problem encountered by the MAAG," one of its officers wrote at the time, "is the continual task of assuring the Vietnamese that the United States is not a colonial power - an assurance that must be renewed on an individual basis by each new adviser."<sup>29</sup> From this weak foundation and in the face of serious practical difficulties, the MAAG was assigned the challenging mission of building an army capable of maintaining internal security and of holding the line against an invasion from the north until outside forces could be brought in.

Under the MAAG's direction, the United States reorganized, equipped, and trained the South Vietnamese Army. The United States provided roughly \$85 million per year in military equipment, including uniforms, small arms, vehicles, tanks, and helicopters. It paid the salaries of officers and men, financed the construction of military installations, and underwrote the cost of training programs. The MAAG scaled down the army to a strength of 150,000 men and organized it into mobile [divisions](#) capable of a dual mission. It launched an ambitious training program, based on American models, including a Command and General Staff College for senior officers, officer candidate schools, and specialized schools for noncoms. In 1960 alone, more than 1,600 Vietnamese soldiers participated in the Off-Shore Program, studying in the United States and other "free world" countries. Official spokesmen proclaimed by 1960 that the United States had achieved a "minor

<sup>29</sup> Judson J. Conner, "Teeth for the Free World Dragon," *Army Information Digest* (November 1960), 41; Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941-1960* (Washington, D.C., 1983), pp. 278-282.

miracle," transforming what had been "little more than a marginal collection of armed men" into an efficient, modern army.<sup>30</sup>

As would so often be the case in Vietnam, however, reality was far removed from official rhetoric. The army still lacked sufficient officers in 1960, and General [Williams](#) later conceded that many of the officers holding key positions were of "marginal quality." As one of Williams' top assistants put it, "No one can make good... commanders by sending uneducated, poorly trained, and poorly equipped and motivated boys to Benning or Knox or Leavenworth or Quantico."<sup>31</sup> [Diem's](#) determination to maintain tight control over the army frustrated the MAAG's efforts to establish a smoothly functioning command system. The President personally ordered units into action, bypassing the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff. He chose safe rather than competent officers for critical posts. He promoted officers on the basis of loyalty rather than merit and constantly shuffled the high command "generals and colonels, it was said jokingly in [Saigon](#), were the only first-class travelers in Vietnam."<sup>32</sup>

The basic problem, however, was that the army was trained for the wrong mission. The [MAAG](#) would be sharply criticized for failing to prepare the South Vietnamese Army for dealing with guerrilla operations, but from the perspective of the mid-1950s its emphasis appears quite logical. Confronting the near-impossible task of building from scratch an army capable of performing two quite diverse missions, the MAAG naturally leaned toward the conventional warfare with which it was most familiar. At least until 1958, moreover, the countryside was quiescent and Diem appeared firmly entrenched. Williams and most of his staff had served in [Korea](#), and the remarkable resemblance between the Korean and Vietnamese situations inclined them to focus on the threat of an invasion from the north. Also learning from experiences in Greece and the [Philippines](#), they doubted that [North Vietnam](#) could mount an insurgency capable of threatening the south. The army was therefore trained, organized, and equipped primarily to fight a conventional war, and its inadequacies were obvious only after South Vietnam was enveloped by a rural insurgency.

30 Conner, "Teeth for the Free World Dragon," 33.

31 Robert H. Whitlow, "The United States Military in South Vietnam, 1954-1960" (M.A. thesis, University of Kentucky, 1972), 87.

32 Jean Lacouture, *Vietnam Between Two Truces* (New York, 1966), p. 117.

A paramilitary force, the Civil Guard, was to assist the army in maintaining internal security, but it was hampered from the beginning by conflicts over organization and training. Advisers from [Michigan State University](#) assigned to help with the Civil Guard sought a small group trained and equipped for police duties at the province and village level, while [Diem](#), supported by [Lansdale](#) and the [MAAG](#), preferred an auxiliary military force equipped with helicopters, armored cars, and bazookas, and capable of small-scale military operations. Washington supported the Michigan State group and refused to furnish assistance for the Civil Guard until Diem acquiesced, but the guard never developed into an effective force. Diem used it as a dumping ground for inferior army officers and in general gave it little support. The training provided by the Michigan State police experts, in Lansdale's words, left the guard "pathetically unready for the realities of the Vietnamese countryside. A squad of Civil Guard policemen, armed with whistles, nightsticks and 38 caliber revolvers, could hardly be expected to arrest a squad of guerrillas armed with submachine guns, rifles, grenades and [mortars](#)."<sup>33</sup>

The United States also pumped millions of dollars in foreign aid into the South Vietnamese economy between 1955 and 1960, the great bulk of it through the commercial-import program. Described by one zealous U.S. official as "the greatest invention since the wheel," the commercial-import program was designed to make up South Vietnam's huge foreign exchange deficit while avoiding the runaway inflation that might have been set loose by a massive infusion of dollars into a vulnerable economy.<sup>34</sup> Vietnamese importers ordered from foreign export firms goods ranging from foodstuffs to automobiles, with Washington footing the bill. The importers paid for the goods in piasters, which then went into a "counterpart fund" held by the National Bank of Vietnam and were used by the Diem government to cover operating expenses and finance development projects. From 1955 to 1959, the commercial-import program generated almost \$1 billion in counterpart funds. In addition, the United States furnished South Vietnam more than \$127 million in direct economic assistance and more than \$16 million in technical aid.

The American aid program brought significant results. The

<sup>33</sup> Lansdale, *Midst of Wars*, p. 353.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Situation in Vietnam, Hearings*, 1959 (Washington, D.C., 1959), p. 203.

commercial-import program covered [South Vietnam](#)'s foreign exchange deficit and, by making available large quantities of consumer goods, held inflation in check. American money and technology helped to repair the vast damages resulting from more than a decade of war, rebuilding highways, railroads, and canals, and spurring a modest increase in agricultural productivity. Specialists from American land-grant colleges promoted the development of new crops and established credit facilities for small farmers. Educators supervised the rounding of schools and furnished textbooks. Public health experts provided drugs and medical supplies, and assisted in the training of [nurses](#) and paramedics. A group of public administration specialists from [Michigan State University](#) trained Vietnamese civil servants in skills ranging from typing to personnel management and even established a school of police administration to train what one brochure described as "Vietnam's finest."<sup>35</sup>

More than any other single factor, American aid enabled South Vietnam to survive the first few critical years after independence, and by the late 1950s the new nation appeared to be flourishing. In [Saigon](#), one visitor reported, "the stores and market places are filled with consumer goods; the streets are filled with new motor scooters and expensive automobiles; and in the upper-income residential areas new and pretentious housing is being built."<sup>36</sup> After conducting an investigation of the uses of American economic assistance, Democratic Senator [Gale McGee](#) of Wyoming proposed that South Vietnam be made a "showcase" for the foreign aid program, a place to which people from other countries could be brought to observe firsthand the "wholesome effects of our efforts to help other peoples help themselves."<sup>37</sup>

Appearances were again deceptive, however, for the American aid program had at best mixed results. The recipients were undoubtedly grateful for U.S. generosity, but they could not help but be suspicious as well. "After eighty years of ruthless exploitation by the French," one American observed, "many Vietnamese wonder why America is suddenly spending so much money in Vietnam."<sup>38</sup>

35 U.S. Operations Mission, *Building Economic Strength* (Washington, D.C., 1958), p. 75.

36 Milton C. Taylor, "South Vietnam: Lavish Aid, Limited Progress," *Pacific Affairs*, 34 (1961), 242.

37 Senate, *Hearings*, 1959, p. 369.

38 MacAlister report to International Rescue Committee, n.d. document #4084, Donovan Papers.

More important, although U.S. aid prevented an economic collapse and served to maintain a high standard of living in [Saigon](#), it did little to promote economic development or to improve living conditions in the villages where more than 90 percent of [South Vietnam](#)'s population resided. From 1955 to 1959, military aid was four times greater than economic and technical assistance, and of the nearly \$1 billion in counterpart funds, more than 78 percent went for military purposes. Such was the preoccupation with "security" among Vietnamese and American officials alike that those interested in other projects found it expedient to justify them in terms of defense. Saigon and Washington insisted that the continuing presence of serious external and internal threats allowed them no choice, but the heavy emphasis on military aid left little money for long-range economic development. As a Senate committee pointed out in 1960, the military program was the "tail that wags the dog."<sup>39</sup>

The commercial-import program also contained built-in weaknesses. It was enormously wasteful, with importers frequently ordering far more than could be consumed, and it created abundant opportunities for fast profits. The most serious weakness of the program, however, was that it financed an artificially high standard of living while contributing little to development. As late as 1957, about two-thirds of the imports consisted of consumer goods, and much of the wealth was drained off in conspicuous consumption rather than going into industry or agriculture. [Diem](#) stubbornly resisted American attempts to reduce the proportion of consumer goods, arguing that a lowering of living standards would create domestic unrest. The United States made some changes on its own, dropping from the list such obvious luxury items as hi-fis and water skis and reducing consumer goods to about one-third of the total, but with little effect. Robert Scigliano concluded in 1963 that the commercial-import program had been a "large-scale relief project" which had not "served to induce significant economic development in Vietnam."<sup>40</sup>

In spending the small percentage of funds allotted to development, Americans and Vietnamese frequently found themselves at

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Aid Program in Vietnam, Report, February 26, 1960 (Washington, D.C., 1960), p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Scigliano, *South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress* (Boston, 1964), p. 125.



odds. The United States insisted that industrial development must be based on private enterprise and until the early 1960s refused to provide funds for state-owned industries. [Diem](#) and his entourage shared the mandarin's contempt for businessmen and the nationalist's distrust of foreign capital. They denounced American attitudes as "medieval and retrograde," and insisted that they must have government ownership of major industries, at least at the start. The result was a bitter stalemate which inhibited any constructive program of industrial development.

The massive infusion of American aid thus kept [South Vietnam](#) alive, but it fostered dependency rather than laying the foundation for a genuinely independent nation. Rice production doubled between 1955 and 1960, but much of the increase was taken up in increased domestic consumption, while gains in industrial productivity were insignificant. South Vietnam relied on a high level of imports to maintain its standard of living and on American money to pay for them. Vietnamese and Americans alike agreed that a cutback or termination of American assistance would bring economic and political collapse. Vietnam was the "prototype of the dependent economy," Milton Taylor wrote in 1961, "its level of national income as dependent on outside forces as was the case when the country was a French colony . . . American aid has built a castle on sand."<sup>41</sup>

The basic problem of nation-building was political, however. There was much talk about assisting the Vietnamese to construct an American-style democracy, and U.S. advisers helped to draft a constitution which contained many of the trappings of Western democracies, including a President and legislature elected by popular vote and guarantees of basic political rights. In fact, the United States devoted very little attention to political matters and, despite its massive foreign aid program, exerted very little influence. Some Americans naively assumed that Diem shared their political values; others were preoccupied with the security problems which seemed most urgent. Most probably shared [Dulles](#)'s view that it was enough for Diem to be "competent, anti-Communist and vigorous," and that while representative government was a desirable long-range objective, it could not be accomplished overnight.<sup>42</sup> For

<sup>41</sup> Taylor, "South Vietnam," 256.

<sup>42</sup> Dulles news conference, May 7, 1955, Dulles Papers, Princeton, NJ., Box 99; Frederick Reinhardt oral history interview, *ibid.*

whatever reason, the U.S. government and the American mission in [Saigon](#) did little to promote democracy, or even political reform, until [South Vietnam](#) was swept by revolution.

In any event, it would have been lost on [Diem](#), for whom democracy was alien in terms of experience and temperament. Inasmuch as he had a political philosophy, it was the vague concept of "personalism," a fusion of Western and Eastern ideas which Diem and his brother [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#) used as a rationalization for absolute state power, distrust of popular rule, and the belief that a small elite was responsible for defining the general welfare. Diem's model was the Emperor Ming Mang, the nineteenth-century reformer who created an assembly of mandarins to approve his royal decrees. Diem's philosophy of government was succinctly expressed in a line he personally added to the constitution: "The President is vested with the leadership of the nation." He identified his principles with the general good and firmly believed that the people must be guided by the paternalistic hand of those who knew what was best for them. A deeply suspicious individual, Diem was convinced, as [Bernard Fall](#) has written, that "compromise has no place and opposition of any kind must of necessity be subversive and must be suppressed with all the vigor the system is capable of."<sup>43</sup>

To please his American advisers, Diem occasionally paid lip service to democracy, but in actual practice he assumed absolute powers. He personally dominated the executive branch of government, reserving to himself and his brothers, three of whom were appointed to a cabinet of six, all power of decision-making. Unable or unwilling to delegate authority, he oversaw the operations of the entire government down to the most minute detail. Cabinet members or upper-level civil servants who expressed opposition were quickly appointed to ambassadorships abroad - or worse. The executive branch completely dominated the legislature, which, in any case, was virtually handpicked through careful manipulation of the electoral process. In the first years of its existence, the National Assembly initiated nothing important on its own and pliantly approved everything which the President submitted to it.

The Diem government might have survived its authoritarianism had it pursued enlightened policies, but its inattention to the needs

43 Bernard Fall, *The Two Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis* (New York, 1967), p. 237.

of the people and its ruthless suppression of dissent stirred a rising discontent which eventually brought its downfall. [Diem](#)'s policies toward the villages - traditionally the backbone of Vietnamese society-demonstrated a singular lack of concern and near-callous irresponsibility. [Lansdale](#) persuaded the President to initiate a Civic Action Program to extend government services to the villages, but Diem took little interest in it, and, as Lansdale later lamented, "it flopped."<sup>44</sup> At American insistence, the government instituted a [land reform](#) program, but it too was implemented halfheartedly and did little to meet the rising appetite for land among [South Vietnam](#)'s rural population.

The only significant "reform" enacted by the government during the 1950s touched off massive resentment in the villages. In a misguided effort to centralize federal authority and curb [Vietminh](#) influence in the countryside, Diem abolished traditional local elections and began to appoint village and provincial officials. The villagers had enjoyed virtual autonomy for centuries and received the outsiders, Frances FitzGerald observes, "much as they might have received proconsuls from a conquering power."<sup>45</sup> The fears aroused by their mere presence were often heightened by their actions. Many of Diem's appointees were chosen on the basis of personal loyalty, and most of them were poorly trained for their tasks. Some used their positions for personal enrichment; province chiefs were known to have arrested wealthy villagers on trumped-up charges and then forced them to pay bribes for their release.

Diem's vigorous assault against political opponents spawned rising discontent in the cities as well as the countryside. Newspapers which criticized the government were promptly shut down, and [Nhu](#)'s Vietnam Bureau of Investigation rooted out suspected subversives in a manner that would have made J. Edgar Hoover blanch. Using authority handed down in various presidential ordinances, the government herded into "reeducation centers" thousands of Vietnamese - Communists and non-Communists alike who were alleged to be threats to public order. The reeducation program was originally aimed at the Vietminh "stay-behinds," but in time it was extended to anyone who dared speak out against the government. The regime admitted to the incarceration

<sup>44</sup> Lansdale, *Midst of Wars*, p. 212.

<sup>45</sup> FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake*, p. 154.

of 20,000 people by 1956, and the campaign was subsequently intensified. The government "has tended to treat the population with suspicion or coerce it," an American intelligence report concluded in 1960, "and has been rewarded with an attitude of apathy or resentment. 46

[Diem](#) retained a highly favorable image in the United States until [South Vietnam](#) was engulfed by revolution in the early 1960s. It is possible that even those Americans close to the government were unaware until the end of the decade of the extent to which he had alienated his people. In the eyes of most Americans, moreover, the President's vigorous anti-Communism more than compensated for his shortcomings. Apologists such as Professor Wesley Fishel of [Michigan State University](#) conceded that Diem had employed authoritarian methods, but argued that Vietnam's lack of experience with democracy and the internal threat posed by Communism left him no choice. The American media focused on the stability brought to South Vietnam by the "tough little miracle man," and when Diem visited the United States in 1957 he was widely feted and praised. The image persisted even after insurgency had spread throughout much of the country. "On his record," Newsweek's Ernest Lindley exclaimed in 1959, "he must be rated as one of the ablest free Asian leaders. We can take pride in our support."<sup>47</sup>

At the very time Americans were extolling the "miracles" wrought by Diem, the revolution that would eventually sweep him from power and provoke massive U.S. intervention was taking root. The U.S. government later went to great lengths to prove that the Second [Indochina](#) War was the result of "aggression from the north," the determination of [North Vietnam](#) to impose Communism on its southern neighbor. Critics of American policy insisted, on the other hand, that the revolution had sprung from indigenous roots largely in response to Diem's oppressiveness and that it had grown in strength without significant support from the north. Although much remains unclear about the origins of the war, the most persuasive assessment, that of William Duiker, concludes that the insurgency was a "genuine revolt based in the South" but that it was "organized and directed from the North."<sup>48</sup>

46 "Special Report on Internal Security Situation in [Saigon](#)," March 7, 1960, USVN, Book 10, 1267-1280.

47 Ernest K. Lindley, "An Ally Worth Having," Newsweek (June 29, 1959), 31.

48 William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colo., 1981), p. 198.

In the years after Geneva, [North Vietnam](#) approached the issue of unification with great caution. Neither the [Soviet Union](#) nor [China](#) appears to have offered support for an aggressive policy. In any event, like [Diem](#), [Ho Chi Minh](#) and his lieutenants faced massive problems of postwar reconstruction and nation-building. Reports of a "bloodbath" in which as many as 500,000 people were executed following implementation of a [land reform](#) program have been greatly exaggerated.<sup>49</sup> [Hanoi](#)'s heavy-handed measures did provoke widespread opposition, however. Between 3,000 and 15,000 dissidents may in fact have been executed, and resistance in Ho Chi Minh's own Nghe An province had to be suppressed by units of the regular army. Although it did not abandon its goal of unification, a preoccupied Hanoi ordered stay-behind units in the south to protect the party apparatus but to avoid violence and confine their activities to the political sphere.

The result, according to Communist party historians, was "the darkest period" for the revolution in the south. The elections were not held, and the amnesty promised by Geneva was not granted. More important, Diem turned out to be a greater menace than his adversaries had anticipated. His anti-Communist campaigns were devastatingly successful, and by 1957, party membership had fallen to precarious levels. Facing extinction, local leaders began to defend themselves, sometimes in violation of the party line.

Between 1957 and 1959, Hanoi gradually committed itself to the growing insurgency in the south. Its leaders appear to have been bitterly divided between those who wanted to focus on consolidation of the revolution in the north and those who wanted to liberate the south. In December 1956, the factions compromised, agreeing that the north should continue to take priority, but authorizing southern insurgents to use violence to defend themselves. In March 1957, Hanoi approved plans to modernize its own armed forces. More important decisions came in 1959. Recognizing that the revolutionaries in the south were in desperate straits and also that Diem's oppressiveness had created a favorable atmosphere for revolution, the party in the spring of 1959 authorized the resumption of armed struggle and took active measures to support it. With the watchword "absolute secrecy, absolute security," it established a special force, Group 559, to construct an [infiltration](#) route to

<sup>49</sup> The most detailed and convincing account is in Edwin E. Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1983), pp. 178-268.

move men and supplies into [South Vietnam](#) through [Laos](#) and began to send back to the south to assume leadership roles [Vietminh](#) who had come north after Geneva. The Third Party Congress of September 1960 formally approved the shift to armed struggle, assigning liberation of the south equal priority with consolidation of the north. In December 1960, at [Hanoi](#)'s direction, southern revolutionaries founded the National Liberation Front (NLF), a broad-based organization led by Communists but designed to rally all those disaffected with Diem by promising sweeping reforms and the establishment of genuine independence. In all of these steps, [North Vietnam](#) carefully concealed its own hand, hoping that Diem could be overthrown by what would appear an indigenous revolution without provoking U.S. intervention.

The result was a drastic intensification of revolutionary activity in the south. The level of violence increased dramatically: in 1958, an estimated 700 government officials were assassinated; in 1960, 2,500. In 1959, the insurgents shifted from hit-and-run operations to full-scale military operations against government-controlled villages and exposed units of the South Vietnamese Army. The intelligence and propaganda networks that had fallen into disuse after Geneva were reactivated, and vigorous campaigns of political agitation were launched in the villages. Largely as a result of Diem's misguided policies, the insurgents found a receptive audience the peasants were like a "mound of straw ready to be ignited," a captured guerrilla later told an interrogator.<sup>50</sup> By the time the NLF was formally organized, the [Vietcong](#) (a term applied to the NLF by the Diem regime meaning Vietnam Communist, with derogatory implications) had attracted thousands of adherents from among the rural population and had established a presence in countless villages.

Diem's response to the insurgency heightened popular antagonism toward his government. The President intensified the anti-Communist campaign in the villages and tightened controls in the cities, arresting scores of alleged dissidents. Once again demonstrating the degree to which he was out of touch with rural Vietnam, in the summer of 1959 he launched an ill-fated ["agroville" program](#) to combat the rising violence in the countryside. The purpose of the

<sup>50</sup> [U.S. Congress](#), Senate, Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds, The [Pentagon Papers](#) (The [Senator Gravel](#) Edition) (4 vols.; Boston, 1971), I, 329. Hereafter cited as Pentagon Papers (Gravel).

program was to relocate the peasantry in areas where the army could protect them from [Vietcong](#) terror and propaganda, and the government sought to make it attractive by providing the new communities with schools, medical facilities, and electricity. But the peasants deeply resented being forcibly removed from their homes and from the lands which contained the sacred tombs of their ancestors, and the government's provisions for their relocation added to their discontent. They were given only about \$5.50, which did not cover the cost of the land they were required to purchase, and they were forced to work on community projects without any compensation. The [agroville program](#) was eventually abandoned, but only after it had spawned enormous rural discontent with the government.

Throughout 1960, evidence of the government's fragility mounted. The insurgency grew unchecked in the countryside, and the level of violence increased sharply. In January 1960, at Trang Sup, a village northeast of [Saigon](#), four Vietcong companies destroyed a South Vietnamese Army headquarters and seized large stocks of weapons, leaving the army and its U.S. advisers in a state of shock. The regime's unpopularity in Saigon was made especially clear in April when a group of non-Communist politicians, many of whom had served in [Diem](#)'s cabinet, met at the Caravelle Hotel and issued a manifesto bitterly protesting the government's oppressiveness and calling for sweeping reforms. In November, Diem narrowly thwarted an attempted coup by three paratroop battalions presumed to be among those units of the army most loyal to him. American intelligence reports ominously warned that if present trends continued, the collapse of the regime was a near certainty.

Belatedly perceiving the strength of the insurgency and the inability of the South Vietnamese government and armed forces to cope with it, the United States in 1960 shifted the emphasis of its military programs from conventional warfare to [counterinsurgency](#). U.S. military officials in Washington and Saigon began work on a comprehensive plan to expand and reorganize the army and Civil Guard and to equip and train them for anti-guerrilla operations. While this plan was being formulated, the mission in Saigon took piecemeal steps to assist the South Vietnamese. Training programs already in operation were reoriented. Special American teams were sent to train South Vietnamese Ranger Battalions, and U.S. advisers were placed at the regimental level to give on-the-

spot advice and assess the capabilities and needs of individual units. Although the shift to [counterinsurgency](#) represented a tacit admission that the original advisory program had failed, it did not produce the sort of drastic changes that would have been required to defeat the guerrillas. It merely resulted in additional military aid and proposals for bureaucratic reorganization.<sup>51</sup>

In the meantime, civilian officials made gentle and largely unsuccessful attempts to persuade Diem to change his ways. Many U.S. officials, including Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow, feared that unless the President reformed his government and mobilized popular support, the insurgency would overwhelm [South Vietnam](#). In October, Durbrow secured Washington's permission to broach the question directly with Diem. He tactfully urged the President to broaden his government by appointing a new cabinet, to relax his controls on the press and civil liberties, and to try to win over the rural population by restoring village elections and making credit easily available to small farmers. Diem was noncommittal, responding that the proposals conformed with his own ideas but that it would be "most difficult" to implement them while the government heeded internal rebellion.<sup>52</sup> Over the next few weeks, he tightened the controls, clamping down on the army and arresting the politicians who had issued the Caravelle Manifesto.

By the end of the year, Americans in [Saigon](#) were thoroughly alarmed by the crisis and deeply divided over how to combat it. Durbrow warned Washington that the Saigon government was in "serious danger" and that "prompt and even drastic action" was required to save it. In return for additional military aid, he advised, the United States should require Diem to institute sweeping reforms.<sup>53</sup> The U.S. military mission in Saigon firmly resisted Durbrow's proposals. The MAAG's major concern was to develop an effective military response to the insurgency, and it felt that insistence upon "democratic" reform would distract attention from the war and undercut Diem during a critical period. The debate became increasingly bitter during 1960, and meetings at the Embassy, in the words of a participant, were "barely civil."<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Spector, *Advice and Support*, p. 372.

<sup>52</sup> Durbrow memorandum, October 15, 1960, USVN, Book 10, 1318.

<sup>53</sup> Durbrow to State Department, December 5, 1960, *ibid.*, 1334-1336.

<sup>54</sup> [William Colby](#), *Honorable Men* (New York, 1978), p. 160.



Although the experiment in nation-building was in obvious jeopardy by the end of the year, the [Eisenhower](#) administration did not resolve the debate in [Saigon](#) or take any major steps to salvage its huge investment. Throughout much of 1960, attention was focused elsewhere. A new flareup over Berlin sharpened Cold War tensions in Europe, and the U-2 incident and an abortive summit meeting in Paris produced enormous strains in Soviet-American relations. The emergence in Cuba of a revolutionary government headed by Fidel Castro and the establishment of close ties between Cuba and the [Soviet Union](#) aroused fears of Communist intrusion into the hemisphere. The deterioration in [South Vietnam](#) was gradual, and a sense of impending crisis did not develop until late in the year, by which time Eisenhower was already planning the transfer of power to the newly elected Democratic administration of [John F. Kennedy](#).

Even then, [Laos](#), rather than South Vietnam, was viewed as the most dangerous problem in [Indochina](#). A mildly pro-Western government had assumed power in Laos after Geneva and had been given lavish American support, but when it attempted to reach an accommodation with the [Pathet Lao](#) insurgents who had fought with the [Vietminh](#), the United States had instigated a right-wing coup. The American-sponsored government launched an ambitious military campaign against the Pathet Lao, but it achieved little success and in 1960 was overthrown by a group of so-called neutralists. Rejecting a compromise political settlement, the Eisenhower administration firmly supported its client government and forced the neutralists into an uneasy alliance with the Pathet Lao. By the end of the year, [North Vietnam](#) and the Soviet Union had begun to furnish substantial support to the anti-American forces, and intensification of the civil war seemed certain.

By the beginning of 1961, Eisenhower was seriously considering American military intervention in Laos. As early as September 1959, he had grimly warned that Laos might "develop into another [Korea](#)."<sup>55</sup> In a briefing for President-elect Kennedy on January 19, 1961, he advised that the fall of Laos would threaten [Thailand](#), [Cambodia](#), and South Vietnam, and that if the United States did not draw the line in Laos, it might have to "write off" the rest of Southeast Asia. Intervention should be multilateral, Eisenhower

<sup>55</sup> Gordon Gray memorandum, September 14, 1959, Eisenhower Papers, "Cleanup" File, Box 5.

observed, but the defense of [Laos](#) was sufficiently important that if the United States could not persuade its [SEATO](#) allies to participate, it might have to go in alone. Compared to Laos, [South Vietnam](#) seemed a "back-burner" problem and was not even mentioned during the January briefing on Southeast Asia.<sup>56</sup>

Between 1954 and 1961, the United States came full circle in Vietnam. Facing the likelihood of a French collapse, the [Eisenhower](#) administration had briefly considered military intervention to save [Indochina](#) from Communism. Confident that the United States, free of the taint of colonialism, could succeed where [France](#) had failed, Eisenhower and [Dulles](#) had eventually acquiesced in a French military defeat and assumed the burden of nation-building. Vietnam must have seemed comparable to Greece and [Korea](#), where the United States had shored up embattled allies. Lacking knowledge of Vietnamese history and culture, Americans seriously underestimated the difficulties of nation-building in an area with only the most fragile basis for nationhood. The ambitious programs developed in the 1950s merely papered over rather than corrected South Vietnam's problems. To have constructed a viable nation in southern Vietnam, moreover, would have required the most enlightened, imaginative, and determined Vietnamese leadership, an ingredient the United States could not provide. [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) may well have been the "best available man," as Dulles described him, and the United States pinned its hopes exclusively on him and helped him to survive the tumultuous years 1954-1955.<sup>57</sup> But Diem lacked the qualities necessary for the formidable challenge of nation-building and by 1960 he faced a potent internal opposition supported by [North Vietnam](#) which he, like the French before him, seemed increasingly incapable of handling. The quirks of the electoral calendar spared Eisenhower from facing the ultimate failure of his policies in Vietnam. Within a short time after taking office, however, [John F. Kennedy](#) would have to choose between abandoning what he had earlier called "our offspring" or significantly increasing the American commitment.

<sup>56</sup> [Clark Clifford](#) memorandum of conversation, January 19, 1961, [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), II, 635-637.

<sup>57</sup> Dulles news conference, March 1, 1955, Dulles Papers, Princeton, N.J., Box 99.



## CHAPTER 3

Limited Partnership:  
Kennedy and Diem,  
1961-1963

"Our problems are critical," [John F. Kennedy](#) warned the nation in January 1961. "The tide is unfavorable. The news will be worse before it is better."<sup>1</sup> It was a theme Kennedy had sounded throughout the 1960 campaign, and it set the tone for his administration. In 1961, the world did appear to be entering the most perilous stage in its history. The struggle of hundreds of new nations to break from their colonial past and establish modern institutions unleashed chaos across much of the globe. The rhetoric and actions of the erratic Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev suggested a new Communist boldness, even recklessness, and a determination to exploit the prevailing instability. Soviet-American confrontation broadened and intensified in the late 1950s, and the development of awesome new weapons systems added an especially frightful dimension. Over the long haul, nationalism proved a more powerful force than Communism or democratic-capitalism, and within two years the eruption of the Sino-Soviet split would starkly expose the myth of a monolithic Communist "bloc." In 1961, however, the fate of the world appeared to hang in the balance, and Kennedy took office certain that the survival of the United States depended upon its capacity to defend "free" institutions. Should America falter, he warned, "the whole world, in my opinion, would inevitably begin to move toward the Communist bloc."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John F. Kennedy, State of the Union Address, January 30, 1961, John F. Kennedy, Public Papers, 1961 (Washington, D.C., 1962), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Seyom Brown, *The Faces of Power* (New York, 1969), p. 217.

Calling upon his countrymen to become the "watchmen on the walls of freedom" and promising to assert firm, vigorous leadership, [Kennedy](#) committed his administration to meet the perils of the new era. He gathered about him a youthful, energetic, and intelligent corps of advisers from the top positions in academia and industry, self-confident, activist men who shared his determination to "get the country moving again." The New Frontiersmen accepted without question the basic assumptions of the [containment](#) policy, but they also believed, as Kennedy put it, that they must "move forward to meet Communism, rather than waiting for it to come to us and then reacting to it."<sup>3</sup> Coming to political maturity during World War II, they were alarmed by the danger of another global holocaust. However, they were also exhilarated by the prospect of leading the nation through perilous times and winning the ultimate victory, and they shared a Wilsonian view that destiny had singled out their nation to defend and spread the democratic ideal.<sup>4</sup>

Kennedy and his advisers also recognized that domestic politics demanded a firm and successful foreign policy. In ringing tones during the campaign of 1960, the Senator from Massachusetts had accused [Eisenhower](#) of indecisiveness and had promised to regain the initiative in the Cold War. Having won only the most narrow of electoral victories, the new President was keenly aware of his own vulnerability. Especially in his first two years, he always kept a wary eye on his domestic flank while making foreign policy decisions, and he was ever sensitive to Republican charges of weakness or appeasement.

The Kennedy administration set out at once to meet the challenges of the Cold War. The President ordered a massive buildup of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles to establish a credible deterrent to Soviet nuclear power. Persuaded that Eisenhower's heavy reliance on nuclear weapons had left the United States muscle-bound in many diplomatic situations, Kennedy also expanded and modernized the nation's conventional military forces to permit a "flexible response" to various types and levels of aggression. Certain that the emerging nations would be the "principal battleground in which the forces of freedom and Communism [would]

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Henry Fairlie, *The Kennedy Promise* (New York, 1973), p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, "Bearing the Burden: A Critical Look at JFK's Foreign Policy," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 54 (Spring 1978), p. 197.

compete," the administration devoted much attention to developing an effective response to guerrilla warfare - "an international disease" which the United States had to learn to "destroy."<sup>5</sup> Kennedy also felt that the United States must strike at the source of disease, however, and placed great emphasis on devising programs of economic and technical assistance which would eliminate the conditions in which Communism flourished and would channel revolutionary forces into democratic paths.

Vietnam stands as the most tragic legacy of the global activism of the Kennedy era. Kennedy had long taken a close personal interest in Vietnam, which he had once described as the "cornerstone of the free world in Southeast Asia." In his eyes and those of many of his advisers, moreover, [South Vietnam](#) would become a test case of America's determination to uphold its commitments in a menacing world and of its capacity to meet the new challenges posed by guerrilla warfare in the emerging nations. Kennedy had joined in the attacks on [Truman](#) for "losing" [China](#), and he was extremely sensitive to the political damage that could be done by the loss of additional Asian real estate. Thus he was even less willing than Truman and [Eisenhower](#) to permit the fall of Vietnam to Communism.

Inheriting from Eisenhower an increasingly dangerous if still limited commitment, he plunged deeper into the morass. Kennedy did not, as some critics have alleged, eagerly take up the burden in Vietnam, and his actions there contrast sharply with the administration's rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> In settling the major policy issues, he was cautious rather than bold, hesitant rather than decisive, and improvisational rather than carefully calculating. He delayed making a firm commitment for nearly a year, and then acted only because the shaky [Diem](#) government appeared on the verge of collapse. Wary of the domestic and international consequences of a negotiated settlement but unwilling to risk a full-scale involvement, he chose a cautious middle course, expanding the American role while trying to keep it limited. In the short run, such a course offered numerous advantages, but over the long run it was delusive

<sup>5</sup> John McCloy and [Walt W. Rostow](#) quoted in Fairlie, *Kennedy Promise*, pp. 132, 264.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Bruce Miroff, *Pragmatic Illusions* (New York, 1976), especially pp. 142-166.

and dangerous. It encouraged [Diem](#) to continue on his self-destructive path, while leading Americans to believe they could secure a favorable outcome without paying a heavy price. It significantly narrowed the choices, making extrication more difficult and creating a self-supporting argument for a larger and more dangerous commitment.

Throughout the presidential campaign, [Kennedy](#) had stressed the perils the nation confronted, but the new President himself appears to have been unprepared for the problems he inherited. Khrushchev's threat to resolve the status of divided Berlin on his own terms held out the possibility of a direct confrontation of the superpowers. In January 1961, the Soviet Premier delivered a militant speech avowing Soviet support for [wars of national liberation](#). The statement may have been designed as much for [Chinese](#) as for American ears, but the Kennedy administration interpreted it as a virtual declaration of war. Stepped-up Soviet aid to Castro's Cuba and to insurgents in the Congo and in [Laos](#) appeared to confirm the magnitude of the threat. Such was the siege mentality that gripped the White House in early 1961 that Kennedy on one occasion greeted his advisers by grimly asking, "What's gone against us today?"<sup>7</sup>

Vietnam was not regarded as a major trouble spot in the administration's first hundred days. [Eisenhower](#) had not even mentioned it in his briefings, and it was only in January, after reading a gloomy report by [Lansdale](#), that Kennedy learned of the steady growth of the insurgency and the increasing problems with Diem. Lansdale predicted a large-scale [Vietcong](#) offensive before the end of the year, but he concluded optimistically that a "major American effort" could frustrate the Communist drive for power. Persuaded as [Truman](#) and Eisenhower before him that Vietnam was vital to America's global interests, Kennedy routinely approved an additional \$42 million in aid to support an expansion of the South Vietnamese Army.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of April, Kennedy's staff was again closely watching

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in [Walt Whitman Rostow](#), *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York, 1972), p. 170.

<sup>8</sup> [McGeorge Bundy](#) to Rostow, January 30, 1961, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 192. For a detailed analysis of Kennedy's policies in the first year, see Stephen Pelz, "John F. Kennedy's 1961 Vietnam War Decisions," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 4 (December 1981), 356-385.

Vietnam. Acting upon Ambassador Durbrow's advice, the President had conditioned the assistance granted in January on the institution of military and political reforms. But Diem had balked, and after three months the aid program remained stalled and the war against the [Vietcong](#) languished.

At the same time, major foreign policy setbacks in Cuba and [Laos](#) appeared to increase the importance of Vietnam. Clandestine operations against Castro ended in disaster at the Bay of Pigs, leaving [Kennedy](#) in a state of acute shock and his administration profoundly embarrassed. After the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy was suspicious of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the intelligence community, and therefore rejected various proposals to put troops into Laos to stave off the impending defeat of the American-sponsored government. The military warned that protecting U.S. troops sent to Laos against possible [Chinese](#) or North Vietnamese countermoves might require extreme measures, even the use of nuclear weapons. The country was landlocked, a poor choice for intervention from the logistic standpoint, and many of Kennedy's advisers shared the view of Ambassador [John Kenneth Galbraith](#) that as a "military ally the entire Laos nation is clearly inferior to a [battalion](#) of conscientious objectors from World War I."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, as Kennedy himself repeatedly pointed out, it would be difficult to explain to the American public why he sent troops to remote Laos when he had refused to send them to nearby Cuba. In late April, the President concluded that a negotiated settlement was the best he could get in Laos, and the United States agreed to participate in a peace conference at Geneva.

More than anything else, the decision to negotiate in Laos led the administration to take a careful look at its policy in Vietnam. Along with the refusal to send troops to the Bay of Pigs, the unwillingness to intervene militarily in Laos appeared to increase the symbolic importance of taking firm stands elsewhere. The administration had captured the attention of the nation with its self-conscious activism, but in its first months it had little success. "At this point we are like the Harlem Globetrotters," [McGeorge Bundy](#) conceded, "passing forward, behind, sidewise, and underneath. But nobody has made a basket yet."<sup>10</sup> Kennedy informed New York

<sup>9</sup> Galbraith to Kennedy, May 10, 1961, Kennedy Papers, Office File, Box 29.

<sup>10</sup> Fairlie, Kennedy Promise, p. 180.



Times columnist Arthur Krock that he had to make certain that "Khrushchev doesn't misunderstand Cuba, [Laos](#), etc. to indicate that the United States is in a yielding mood on such matters as Berlin."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, with the outcome of the Laos negotiations uncertain, it seemed urgent to prepare a fallback position in Southeast Asia, and most administration officials agreed that Vietnam, in contrast to Laos, would be a suitable place to make a stand.

Despite its growing concern with Vietnam, the administration did not institute major policy changes or drastically expand American commitments in the spring of 1961. The President authorized a modest increase in the [MAAG](#) of 100 advisers and dispatched to Vietnam 400 [Special Forces](#) troops to train the Vietnamese in [counterinsurgency](#) techniques. Convinced in the light of the Laos negotiations that [Diem](#) had to be handled with special care, [Kennedy](#) recalled Ambassador Durbrow, the foremost advocate of hard bargaining tactics, and sent Vice President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) to [Saigon](#) to give personal assurances of American support. To support its diplomacy without provoking domestic or international concern, the administration waged covert warfare in [Indochina](#). The United States sent clandestine teams of South Vietnamese across the seventeenth parallel to attack enemy supply lines, sabotage military and civilian targets, and agitate against the [Hanoi](#) regime. At the same time, the CIA initiated its "secret war" in Laos, arming some 9,000 [Meo](#) tribesmen for operations against the [Ho Chi Minh trail](#) in what would become one of the largest paramilitary operations ever undertaken.

The reappraisal of the spring of 1961 was more important for the questions it raised than for the solutions it provided, however. The administration's decisions reflected, in the words of White House adviser [Walt W. Rostow](#), a calculated policy of "buying time with limited commitments of additional American resources."<sup>12</sup> But many officials feared that this might not be enough, and a task force appointed by Kennedy to review American options in Vietnam began to consider the more drastic measures that might be required if the Laos negotiations broke down or if the Communists launched a major offensive in Vietnam. Among other things, for the

<sup>11</sup> Krock memorandum of conversation with Kennedy, May 5, 1961, Arthur Krock Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton, N.J., Box 59.

<sup>12</sup> Rostow, *Diffusion of Power*, p. 270.

first time since 1954 the task force openly raised the possibility of sending American combat forces to Vietnam, and also discussed air and naval operations against [North Vietnam](#).

While the administration studied various choices, pressures mounted for expanded American involvement in Vietnam. After a whirlwind trip through the Far East with a major stopover in [Saigon](#), [Johnson](#) reported that the decision to negotiate in [Laos](#) had shaken [Diem](#)'s confidence in the United States and warned that if a further decline in morale was to be arrested, "deeds must follow words - soon."<sup>13</sup> In the aftermath of the Johnson visit, Diem himself requested additional aid. He displayed no interest in U.S. combat troops when the Vice President discreetly raised the issue. Fiercely independent and keenly aware of the rising opposition to his regime, Diem apparently feared that the introduction of large numbers of American troops would not only give the [Vietcong](#) a powerful rallying cry but would also give the non-Communist opposition critical leverage. Shortly after Johnson departed Saigon, however, Diem warned [Kennedy](#) that the situation in Vietnam had become "very much more perilous" and requested sufficient additional American aid and advisers to expand his army by 100,000 troops.<sup>14</sup>

The Cold War intensified in the summer of 1961, and some of Kennedy's advisers began to urge an all-out effort in Vietnam. During a stormy summit meeting in Vienna in June, Khrushchev again affirmed the Soviet commitment to wars of liberation, reinforcing the administration's fears. [Rostow](#) had long advocated the employment in Vietnam of such "unexploited counter guerrilla assets" as helicopters and the newly created Green Berets. "It is somehow wrong to be developing these capabilities but not applying them in a crucial theater," he advised Kennedy. "In Knute Rockne's old phrase, we are not saving them for the junior prom." The economist and former MIT professor compared the summer of 1961 to the year 1942 when the Allies were suffering defeats across the globe, and he warned Kennedy that "to turn the tide" the United States must "win" in Vietnam. If Vietnam could be held, [Thailand](#), Laos, and [Cambodia](#) could be saved, and "we shall have

<sup>13</sup> Johnson to Kennedy, May 23, 1961, Kennedy Papers, Office File, Box 30.

<sup>14</sup> [U.S. Congress](#), Senate, Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds, The [Pentagon Papers](#) (The [Senator Gravel](#) Edition) (4 vols.; Boston, 1971), II, 60. Hereafter cited as Pentagon Papers (Gravel).

demonstrated that the Communist technique of guerrilla warfare can be dealt with."<sup>15</sup>

Preoccupied with more urgent matters such as Berlin, [Kennedy](#) fended off his more belligerent advisers and approved only small additional increments of aid until a dramatic worsening of conditions in the fall of 1961 compelled him to act. [Infiltration](#) into [South Vietnam](#) doubled to nearly 4,000 men in 1961. The [Vietcong](#) drastically stepped up their operations in September and for a brief period even seized a provincial capital just fifty-five miles from [Saigon](#). Intelligence analysts reported a substantial increase in the size of Vietcong regular forces. The journalist Theodore H. White noted a "political breakdown of formidable proportions" in South Vietnam,<sup>16</sup> and in September, [Diem](#) urgently requested additional economic assistance. By early October, both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the [National Security Council](#) were considering the introduction of sizable American combat forces into Viet-ham.

Kennedy remained cautious. He expressed to Krock a profound reluctance to send American troops to the Asian mainland. He noted grave doubts that the United States should interfere in "civil disturbances caused by guerrillas," adding that "it was hard to prove that this wasn't largely the situation in Vietnam."<sup>17</sup> Increasingly concerned by the military and political deterioration in South Vietnam, but fearful of expanding the American commitment, he ordered [Rostow](#) and his personal military adviser General [Maxwell D. Taylor](#) to go to Vietnam to assess conditions firsthand and weigh the necessity of sending American forces.

Taylor and Rostow confirmed the pessimistic reports that had been coming out of Saigon for the past month. The South Vietnamese Army was suffering from what Taylor described as a "defensive outlook." The Diem government was disorganized, inefficient, and increasingly unpopular. The basic problem, they noted, was a "deep and pervasive crisis of confidence and a serious loss in national morale," stemming from developments in [Laos](#), the intensification of Vietcong activity, and a devastating flood in the [Mekong Delta](#). "No one felt the situation was hopeless," Taylor later re-

<sup>15</sup> Rostow to Kennedy, March 29, 1961, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 192, and June 17, 1961, Kennedy Papers, Office File, Box 65.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), II, 70.

<sup>17</sup> Krock memorandum of conversation with Kennedy, October 11, 1961, Krock Papers, Box 59.

called, but all agreed that it was "serious" and demanded "urgent measures."<sup>18</sup>

[Taylor](#) and [Rostow](#) recommended a significant expansion of American aid to arrest the deterioration in [South Vietnam](#). They emphasized that the Vietnamese themselves must win the war; the United States could not do it for them. They concluded, however, that the provision of American equipment and skilled American advisers working closely with the government at all levels could result in a "much better, aggressive, more confident performance from the Vietnamese military and civilian establishment."<sup>19</sup> Highly trained advisory groups, strategically placed throughout the South Vietnamese bureaucracy, could help to identify and correct major political, economic, and military problems. Improved training for the Civil Guard and the Village Self-Defense Corps would free the army for offensive operations, and equipment such as helicopters would give the army the mobility required to execute such operations effectively.

The most novel and ultimately most controversial of the [Taylor-Rostow](#) proposals was the dispatch of an 8,000-man "logistic task force," comprised of engineers, medical groups, and the infantry to support them. The ostensible purpose of the force would be to assist in repairing the massive flood damage in the [Mekong Delta](#), but Taylor had other, more important motives in mind. Diem continued to resist the introduction of U.S. combat troops, but many government officials and many Americans in [Saigon](#) believed that troops were desperately needed. Taylor himself felt a "pressing need to do something to restore Vietnamese morale and to shore up confidence in the United States." The task force would serve as a "visible symbol of the seriousness of American intentions," he advised Kennedy, and would constitute an invaluable military reserve should the situation in South Vietnam suddenly worsen.<sup>20</sup> The humanitarian purpose of the force would provide a convenient pretext for its introduction into Vietnam, and it could be removed without embarrassment when its job was completed. Taylor and Rostow emphasized that their proposals constituted minimum steps, and, if they were not enough to save South Vietnam, the United States might have to take more drastic measures

18\_Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares* (New York, 1972), p. 241.

19\_Rostow, *Diffusion of Power*, p. 275.

20\_Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares*, p. 239.

such as the dispatch of combat troops or the launching of offensive operations against [North Vietnam](#).

While the [Taylor-Rostow](#) report was circulating in Washington, Undersecretary of State [Chester Bowles](#) and the veteran diplomat [W. Averell Harriman](#), the chief American negotiator on [Laos](#), were promoting a very different course. Harriman expressed grave doubt that [Diem's](#) "repressive, dictatorial and unpopular regime" could survive under any circumstances, and warned that the United States should not "stake its prestige in Vietnam." Bowles admonished that the United States was "headed full blast up a dead end street." The two men thus proposed that [Kennedy](#) defer any major commitment to Diem. If the Laos negotiations proceeded smoothly, the United States could then expand the conference to include Vietnam and seek an overall settlement based on the [1954 Geneva Agreements](#).<sup>21</sup> The Taylor report and the Bowles-Harriman proposals for the first time posed a clear-cut choice in Vietnam.

Kennedy flatly rejected a negotiated settlement. The administration had vowed to wage the Cold War vigorously, but in its first months it suffered apparent setbacks in Cuba and Laos, and in August the Russians, without warning, had constructed a steel and concrete wall sealing off East Berlin from the Western zone. Throughout the year, Republicans and right-wing Democrats had charged the administration with weakness, and Kennedy seems to have feared that a decision to negotiate on Vietnam would unleash domestic political attacks on him as rancorous and destructive as those which had followed the fall of [China](#) in 1949.

The President was equally concerned with the international implications, however. Administration strategists felt that it was essential in a divided and dangerous world to establish the credibility of America's commitments. Should the nation appear weak, its allies would lose faith and its enemies would be emboldened to further aggression, a process which, if unchecked, could at some point leave it with the awesome choice of a complete erosion of its position in the world or nuclear war. By late 1961, Kennedy and many of his advisers were convinced that they must prove their toughness to Khrushchev. "That son of a bitch won't pay any attention to

<sup>21</sup> Harriman to Kennedy, November 11, 1961, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 195; [Chester Bowles](#), *Promises to Keep* (New York, 1971), p. 409; Pelz, "Kennedy's Decisions," 378.

words," the President remarked during the Berlin crisis. "He has to see you move."<sup>22</sup> The "gut issue," [Kennedy](#) told his staff on November 14, was not whether [Diem](#) was a good ruler but whether the United States could continue to accept with impunity Communist "aggression" in [South Vietnam](#). The moves the United States now made would be "examined on both sides of the Iron Curtain... as a measure of the administration's intentions and determination," and if it chose to negotiate it might "in fact be judged weaker than in [Laos](#)." Admitting the dangers of an expanded commitment in Vietnam, Kennedy nevertheless concluded that in cases where the United States had shown "strength and determination," it had "come home free."<sup>23</sup>

The President refused to go as far as [Taylor](#) advocated, however. Kennedy's advisers feared that the introduction of American combat troops into Vietnam might jeopardize the Laos negotiations or provoke an escalation of the conflict in Vietnam itself. They questioned whether the force proposed by Taylor would be large enough or, given its announced purpose of flood relief, whether it was capable of restoring morale. The force might come under attack, and the United States would then face the more difficult choice of backing it up with additional forces or withdrawing it altogether. "If we commit 6-8,000 troops and then pull them out when the going gets rough we will be finished in Vietnam and probably all of Southeast Asia," one [National Security Council](#) staff member warned.<sup>24</sup> Kennedy himself questioned the psychological value of the force and expressed fear that it would only lead to requests for more men. "The troops will march in; the bands will play; the crowds will cheer," he told [Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.](#), "and in four days everyone will have forgotten. Then we will be told we have to send in more troops. It's like taking a drink. The effect wears off, and you have to take another."<sup>25</sup>

Faced with the difficult choice of negotiating or sending combat troops, Kennedy opted for a middle-of-the-road approach. He

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Paterson, "Bearing the Burden," 206.

<sup>23</sup> Kennedy memorandum, November 14, 1961, Kennedy Papers, Office File, Box 128.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Johnson to Bundy, October 31, 1961, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 194.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days* (Boston, 1965), p. 547.

approved [Taylor](#)'s recommendations to increase significantly the volume of American assistance and the number of advisers in the hope that this would be enough to arrest the military and political deterioration in [South Vietnam](#). The administration took these steps in full recognition that it was violating the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#), and on December 15 it released a "white paper" detailing North Vietnamese breaches of the Geneva Agreements and charging that [Hanoi](#)'s renewal of aggression in South Vietnam justified the American response.<sup>26</sup>

In undertaking what Taylor described as a "limited partnership" with South Vietnam, the [Kennedy](#) administration at first took a hard line. American officials had long agreed that [Diem](#)'s repressive and inefficient government constituted a major obstacle to defeating the insurgency. Reluctant to commit American men, money, and prestige to a "losing horse," as [Secretary of State Dean Rusk](#) put it, the administration instructed the Embassy in [Saigon](#) to inform the President that approval of the new aid program would be contingent on specific promises to reorganize and reform the government and to permit the United States a share in the decision-making process.<sup>27</sup>

The American demands provoked an immediate crisis in Saigon, however, and the administration quickly retreated. Diem angrily protested the limited nature of the American commitments and lashed out at the proposals for a new relationship, bluntly informing Ambassador Frederick Nolting that South Vietnam "did not want to be a protectorate."<sup>28</sup> The administration at first responded firmly, holding up shipments of military equipment and instituting a quiet search for a possible replacement for Diem. Ambassador Nolting strongly questioned the new policy, however, advising that a "cool and unhurried approach is our best chance of success."<sup>29</sup> And the State Department could identify no South Vietnamese politician who appeared capable of filling Diem's shoes.

<sup>26</sup> Department of State, *A Threat to the Peace: North Viet Nam's Effort to Conquer South Viet Nam* (Washington, D.C., 1961).

<sup>27</sup> Rusk to State Department, November 1, 1961, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 194; [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), II, 120.

<sup>28</sup> Nolting to State Department, November 18, 1961, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 165.

<sup>29</sup> Nolting to State Department, November 29, 1961, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 195.

Convinced, as [Kennedy](#) put it, that "[Diem](#) is Diem and the best we've got," the administration backed down.<sup>30</sup> The new relationship was redefined to mean simply that one party would not take action without consulting the other, and the emphasis was shifted from reform to efficiency. The two governments agreed on an innocuous statement of principles affirming these points and the crisis passed.

The Kennedy decisions of 1961 mark yet another critical turning point in American involvement in Vietnam. Rejecting the extremes of negotiations on the one hand and the dispatch of combat troops on the other, Kennedy settled on a limited commitment of aid and advisers. He recognized from the start, however, that this might not be enough to save [South Vietnam](#), and events would demonstrate that the commitment, once made, could not easily be kept limited. By giving in to Diem, moreover, the administration seriously compromised its own criteria for a successful [counterinsurgency](#) program. American firmness at this point would probably not have compelled Diem to change his ways, but it would at least have forced the issue before American prestige became more deeply involved. By deferring to Diem, the United States encouraged his intransigence and opened the way for conflicts that would make a mockery of the word "partnership" and would have tragic consequences for all concerned.<sup>31</sup>

Their differences resolved, at least for the moment, the United States and South Vietnam in early 1962 launched a two-pronged plan to contain the [Vietcong](#) insurgency. Supported by a vast increase in American equipment and advisers, the South Vietnamese Army took the offensive against the Vietcong. At the same time, the Diem government adopted the so-called [strategic hamlet](#) program, developed by [the British](#) counterinsurgency expert Sir Robert Thompson on the basis of experiences in Malaya and the [Philippines](#), and designed to isolate the Vietcong from its principal source of support, the people of South Vietnam. According to Thompson's plan, peasants from scattered villages would be

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Benjamin Bradlee, *Conversations with Kennedy* (New York, 1976), p. 59.

<sup>31</sup> Kennedy sought to solidify the middle course in Vietnam and in other areas through what became known as the "Thanksgiving Day Massacre" in which the "dovish" [Bowles](#) was removed as Undersecretary of State and the "hawkish" Rostow was sent to the State Department.



brought together into hamlets surrounded by moats and bamboo stake fences and protected by military forces. The hamlets were regarded not only as a means of protecting the people against [Vietcong](#) terror but also as the instrument of a social and economic revolution that would bind the people closely to the government. The reinstatement of village elections, the establishment of [land reform](#) programs, and the creation of schools and medical services would persuade the people that life under the government offered more than under the [Vietcong](#). The ultimate objective, as [Kennedy](#) adviser [Roger Hilsman](#) put it, was to reduce the Vietcong to "hungry, marauding bands of outlaws devoting all their energies to remaining alive," and to force them out of their hideouts where they would have to fight the [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN) on its terms.<sup>32</sup>

To support the [counterinsurgency](#) program, the United States, in what was called "Project Beefup," drastically expanded its role in Vietnam. The [Military Assistance and Advisory Group](#) was replaced by an enlarged and reorganized [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#), located in [Saigon](#) and headed by General [Paul Harkins](#). American military assistance more than doubled between 1961 and 1962, and included such major items as [armored personnel carriers](#) and more than 300 military aircraft. Kennedy authorized the use of defoliants to deny the Vietcong cover and to secure major roads, and on a limited basis the use of herbicides to destroy Vietcong food supplies.

The number of American "advisers" was increased from 3,205 in December 1961 to more than 9,000 by the end of 1962. Highly trained professionals, in many cases veterans of World War II and [Korea](#), the American advisers epitomized the global commitment and "can-do" spirit of the Kennedy era. Their casual dress - brightly colored caps, shoulder holsters, and bandoleers - reflected their unusual mission. They stoically endured the harsh climate and the dysentery (promptly dubbed "[Ho Chi Minh](#)'s revenge"), confident that they were not only defending Vietnam against a Communist takeover but were also preparing themselves for the wars of the future. "It's as important for us to train as the Vietnamese," a helicopter pilot informed an American journalist.<sup>33</sup> The advisers performed varied, ever-widening tasks. [Special Forces](#) units conducted

<sup>32</sup> Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation* (New York, 1967), p. 432.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Richard Tregaskis, *Vietnam Diary* (New York, 1963), p. 149.

Civic Action programs among the primitive [Montagnards](#) of the [Central Highlands](#). [Marine](#) and Air Force helicopter pilots dropped detachments of [ARVN](#) troops into battle zones deep in the swamp-lands, and picked up the dead and wounded after engagements. Americans went with Vietnamese trainees on bombing and strafing missions, and when the Vietnamese ran short of pilots, they flew the planes themselves. Army officers and enlisted men conducted expanded training programs for the ARVN and the Civil Guard, and advisers down to the [battalion](#) level accompanied ARVN units on combat missions.

The massive infusion of American men and weapons provided an immediate boost to South Vietnamese morale. The helicopters proved a particularly formidable weapon and seemed almost by themselves to turn the war around. They gave the ARVN a "fantastic mobility," [Hilsman](#) later recalled. "Roaring in over the treetops, they were a terrifying sight to the superstitious Viet Cong peasant. In those first few months, the Viet Cong simply turned and ran and, flushed from their foxholes and hiding places, and running in the open, they were easy targets."<sup>34</sup> Buoyed by the new weapons and by a new aggressive spirit, the ARVN conducted extensive operations against [Vietcong](#) strongholds in the spring and summer of 1962, and for the first time appeared to seize the initiative from the insurgents.

The advantage proved to be of short duration, however. Even with aircraft and sophisticated electronic equipment, it proved nearly impossible to locate Vietcong bases amidst the dense forests and swampy paddylands of South Vietnam. The very nature of the "air-phantom" operations - an air strike followed by the landing of troops - gave advance warning of an impending attack and permitted the insurgents to slip away. "You have to land right on top of them or they disappear," a frustrated American adviser complained, and one senior U.S. officer contemptuously dismissed the helicopter operations as "rattle-assing around the country."<sup>35</sup> Government forces would often bomb and strafe large areas and land sizable detachments of troops with little result, and when they withdrew, the Vietcong would reoccupy the region. The insurgents

<sup>34</sup> Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 444.

<sup>35</sup> Tregaskis, *Vietnam Diary*, p. 155; Malcolm W. Browne, *The New Face of War* (Indianapolis, 1968), p. 76.

quickly adapted to the helicopters, moreover. Sometimes they would stand and fight, and they learned to bring down the slow, clumsy aircraft with small arms. On other occasions, they would lie in hiding until the helicopters had departed and would then ambush the landing force.

By late 1962, the [Vietcong](#) had regained the initiative. While the [ARVN](#) and its U.S. advisers were chasing enemy main force units, the front concentrated on the villages. Combining superior organization and great skill in political indoctrination with the highly effective use of selective violence, the Vietcong enjoyed marked success mobilizing the peasants. By late 1962, it had gained an estimated 300,000 members and a passive following of more than one million. In some areas, the Vietcong even initiated [land reform](#) programs. Militarily, the NLF units became increasingly bold and began to inflict heavy losses on ARVN forces. As operations became more costly, ARVN commanders, apparently under orders from [Diem](#), reverted to their old caution, relying more and more on airpower and refusing to risk their troops in battle. The shift in the fortunes of war was dramatically revealed in January 1963 when an ARVN force with vast superiority in numbers and firepower was ambushed near the village of [Ap Bac](#), losing five helicopters and suffering heavy [casualties](#).

The political implications of techniques employed in military operations increasingly disturbed some Americans in the field and civilians in Washington. It was difficult to distinguish between Vietcong and innocent civilians, and ARVN soldiers, their lives constantly under threat, were not inclined to make fine distinctions. Civilians, even women and children, were gunned down, giving the Vietcong a powerful propaganda weapon. The bombing and strafing of villages suspected of harboring Vietcong and the use of [napalm](#) and defoliants turned villagers against the government, and critics argued that they did more harm than good. American and South Vietnamese military officials insisted that air cover was essential to ground operations, however, and Diem and General [Harkins](#) vigorously promoted the use of napalm. It "really puts the fear of God into the Vietcong," Harkins exclaimed. "And that is what counts."<sup>36</sup>

The much ballyhooed [strategic hamlet](#) program also produced

36 Quoted in Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 442.

meager results. "In its very conception," Frances FitzGerald has observed, "the program was a study in misplaced analogy."<sup>37</sup> A similar plan had worked well in Malaya, where Malay villages were fortified against [Chinese](#) insurgents, but in Vietnam the hamlets were to be erected against Vietnamese, many of whom had lived among the villagers for years, and the issuance of more than seven million laminated identification cards proved a less than adequate safeguard against [infiltration](#). In theory, the program was to avoid the massive relocation of peasants from sacred ancestral lands, the flaw of the ill-fated agrovillage plan, but in the delta region where villagers lived in scattered settlements, the hamlets could not be established without displacement. The large-scale uprooting of the peasantry added to the discontent that had pervaded the rural population since [Diem](#)'s ascent to power.

In addition, the plan was poorly implemented. By the end of 1962, the government claimed to have established 3,500 hamlets with 2,000 more under construction. In many cases, however, Diem and Nhu moved too far too fast, establishing hamlets in areas where no real security existed, and the vulnerable settlements were quickly overrun or infiltrated by the [Vietcong](#). Many of the hamlets lacked adequate defenses. In a visit to Vietnam in 1963, Hilsman encountered several hamlets spread over such large areas that a full [division](#) would have been required to defend them. "But the defenders," he recalled, "were only a few old men, armed with swords, a flintlock, and half a dozen American carbines."<sup>38</sup>

In the hands of Diem and [Nhu](#), moreover, the program did nothing to bind the people to the government. [Land reform](#) was not incorporated into the plan, and many peasants were left landless. The United States allocated substantial funds for the institution of services in the hamlets, but as a result of inefficiency or corruption much of the money never reached its destination. The government lacked qualified people to staff the program, and many incompetent and corrupt officials represented it at the village level. In any event, Diem and Nhu regarded the program primarily as a means of extending their control over the rural population, and the heavy-handed tactics of their lieutenants further alienated the people.

<sup>37</sup> Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (Boston, 1972), p. 123.

<sup>38</sup> Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 456.

The [strategic hamlet](#) program did not accomplish its goal of winning the war at the "rice roots." As a means of protecting the villagers from direct [Vietcong](#) attack, the program enjoyed some limited, short-term success, and among the [Montagnards](#) in the [Central Highlands](#), where the United States assumed a major role in "pacification," it played a constructive role. By early 1963, however, it was clear even to many of the program's most ardent supporters that it had basic flaws which if not corrected could be the source of great problems. In addition, fearing that even limited success on the part of the government would deprive it of its base among the rural population and leave its members as "fish on the chopping block," the NLF launched a systematic and effective campaign against key hamlets, creating specially trained units to destroy them by direct attack or [infiltration](#).<sup>39</sup>

Some [Kennedy](#) advisers continued to insist that an effective [counterinsurgency](#) program required sweeping political reforms, but [Diem](#) stubbornly resisted such advice. To appease his American "partners," he instituted some token reforms, such as the creation of a council of economic advisers. Instead of broadening his government, as the Americans urged, he retreated more and more into isolation, relying almost exclusively on [Nhu](#), a frail and sinister man who at least tended toward paranoia and delusions of grandeur. The two men personally controlled military operations in the field and directed the [strategic hamlet program](#), and they brooked no interference from their American advisers. Nhu's wife, the beautiful, ambitious, and acid-tongued "[Dragon Lady](#)" (so called after a popular cartoon character to whom she bore at least a faint resemblance), increasingly assumed the role of spokesperson for what by 1962 had become a narrow family oligarchy.

The suspicious and beleaguered Ngos tightened rather than relaxed the controls. The National Assembly pliantly approved laws prohibiting all types of public gatherings, weddings and funerals included, unless approved by the government in advance. The regime imposed on Americans as well as Vietnamese the most rigorous

<sup>39</sup> William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colo., 1981), p. 214. "Second Informal Appreciation of the Status of the Strategic Hamlet Program," September 1, 1963, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 202. For a full and balanced discussion of the program, see Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrines and Performance* (New York, 1977), pp. 89-127.

editorial censorship of all written material. [Diem](#) angrily terminated the contract of the [Michigan State University](#) advisory group when several of its members, upon returning to the United States, wrote articles which he branded "untrue, unfair, and tendentious."<sup>40</sup> The veteran Newsweek correspondent Francois Sully was expelled from [Saigon](#) for critical remarks about [Madame Nhu](#).

Throughout 1962, Vietnam remained an operational, rather than a policy, problem. Preoccupied with more pressing matters such as the Soviet military buildup in Cuba, top American officials devoted little attention to Vietnam. Having decided the hard questions of policy in 1961, they were content to leave the implementation of that policy to the men in the field and did not consider any fundamental changes in approach. Kennedy flatly rejected Rostow's proposal to put pressure on the Russians to stop the [infiltration](#) of men and supplies from [North Vietnam](#). He ignored [Galbraith](#)'s warnings that the United States was becoming entrapped in a "long drawn out indecisive involvement" and might "bleed as the French did," as well as [Bowles](#)'s proposal for an "agonizing reappraisal" of America's Vietnam policy.<sup>41</sup>

As late as the end of 1962, a reappraisal appeared unnecessary, for the Embassy and military command in Saigon exuded great optimism about the progress of the [counterinsurgency](#) program. Their confidence was clearly misplaced, and in time they appeared at best fools, at worst dissemblers. But the flaws in the program were more apparent later than at the time. Strangers in an unfamiliar country, the Americans were to a large extent dependent for their information on the South Vietnamese government, which produced impressive statistics to back its claims of progress. Nolting and [Harkins](#) erred badly in accepting these figures at face value, but the conflict did not lend itself to easy analysis; they, like other observers, were impressed by the change of climate since 1961, when the Diem government had appeared on the verge of collapse. American policy was working, they argued, and with time and patience victory was attainable.

In late 1962, the American press corps in Saigon began to challenge

<sup>40</sup> Wesley Fishel to John Hannah, February 17, 1962, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 196.

<sup>41</sup> Galbraith to Kennedy, April 4, 1962, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 196.

the official optimism. Correspondents such as [David Halberstam](#) of the New York Times and Neil Sheehan of United Press International did not question the importance of containing Communism in Vietnam, but they argued, with increasing bitterness, that the war was being lost. They denounced the [Diem](#) government as corrupt, repressive, and unpopular, and the [strategic hamlet](#) program as a sham. They questioned official reports of military progress, arguing that the government's statistics were grossly inflated and that the [ARVN](#) was conducting "office-hours warfare," launching perfunctory operations during the day and returning to its bases in the evening. Blaming most of the problems on Diem, they suggested that the war could not be won as long as the United States persisted in its policy of "sink or swim with [Ngo Dinh Diem](#)." The angry, defensive response of the Embassy and the military command ("Get on the team!" a top military official demanded of one dissident journalist) only enraged the newsmen and provoked charges that the government was deliberately deceiving the American people about the war.<sup>42</sup>

Other observers raised even more troublesome questions. [Kennedy](#)'s old friend and former Senate colleague [Mike Mansfield](#) visited Vietnam at the President's request and returned in December 1962 with a highly pessimistic appraisal. In a formal, published statement, Mansfield noted that he could find little progress since he had last visited Vietnam in 1955, and in a private report to the President he was even more blunt, comparing the role being assumed by the United States with that of [France](#) during the First [Indochina](#) War and warning that the nation might be sucked into a large-scale and futile conflict. "It wasn't a pleasant picture I depicted for him," Mansfield later recalled.<sup>43</sup>

Mounting criticism of American policy in Vietnam aroused grave concern in Washington. The administration had attempted to keep its involvement under wraps, but the rising toll of American deaths in combat and the critical newspaper reports raised troublesome questions. State and Defense Department officials spent hours investigating the journalists' reports and answering their allegations, and Kennedy himself attempted unsuccessfully to

<sup>42</sup> The attitudes of the dissident journalists and their experiences are chronicled in [David Halberstam](#), *The Making of a Quagmire* (New York, 1964).

<sup>43</sup> Mike Mansfield oral history interview, Kennedy Papers.

get the New York Times to recall [Halberstam](#). Highly sensitive to criticism, the President was apparently enraged by [Mansfield](#)'s report. But he could not ignore the warnings of an old and valued friend, and he immediately dispatched [Hilsman](#) and [Michael Forrestal](#), a member of the White House staff, on a fact-finding mission to Vietnam.

Delivered to the President in early 1963, the [Hilsman-Forrestal report](#) struck a middle ground between the harsh criticism of the journalists and the rosy optimism of the Embassy. The two men expressed serious reservations about the effectiveness of [ARVN](#) military operations, found flaws in the implementation of the [strategic hamlet](#) program, and advised that [Diem](#) had become increasingly isolated from the people. They concluded that the United States and [South Vietnam](#) were "probably winning," but quickly added that the war would "probably last longer than we would like" and "cost more in terms of both lives and money than we had anticipated."<sup>44</sup> Despite a generally pessimistic appraisal and cautiously optimistic conclusions, Hilsman and Forrestal found American policy to be sound in its conception and recommended only tactical changes to ensure more effective implementation. Their report reinforced doubts about the reliability of official estimates of progress, but it kept alive hopes that the United States might yet achieve what it had set out to do in Vietnam.

Throughout the spring of 1963, optimism and uncertainty coexisted uneasily in both [Saigon](#) and Washington. The Embassy and the military command persisted in their optimism, and General [Harkins](#) even informed a gathering of top officials in Honolulu in April that the war might be over by Christmas. Intelligence analyses were much more cautious, warning that the military situation remained fragile and unpredictable. In the White House, in the lower echelons of the Washington bureaucracy, and among some Americans in Vietnam, there was a gnawing uncertainty as to how the war was really going and severe doubt, if it were not going well, about which way to turn.

Growing evidence of Vietnamese-American tension compounded the uncertainty. The tension existed at all levels, and it was probably inevitable given the rapid American buildup in Vietnam and the vastly different approaches of the two peoples. Restless

44 Quoted in Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 464.



and impatient by nature, the Americans were eager to get on with the job and were frustrated by the inertia that pervaded the government and army of [South Vietnam](#). Their arrogance was frequently manifested, one U.S. adviser conceded, by an attitude of "Get out of my way, I'd rather do it myself!"<sup>45</sup> Proud and sensitive, having only recently emerged from Western rule, the Vietnamese bristled at the presumptuousness of the newcomers who sought to tell them how to run their country.

By the spring of 1963, relations at the top levels had become particularly tense. The Americans urged "democratic" reforms, in order, they said, to bring the government popular support, but [Diem](#) feared that such reforms might undermine, rather than strengthen, his position. Trapped in the dilemma he had feared from the start, he recognized that the American presence, although necessary to hold the line against the [Vietcong](#), had introduced another - perhaps pivotal - element into the already unstable Vietnamese political situation, and he became more and more sensitive to American criticism. His growing uneasiness was clearly revealed in May 1963 when Nhu publicly questioned whether the United States knew what it was doing in Vietnam and opposed the further expansion of American advisers. Sometime in the early summer of 1963, Diem and [Nhu](#) began to explore the possibility of a settlement with [Hanoi](#) which would result in an American [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam.<sup>46</sup>

[Kennedy](#) appears to have been thinking along the same lines. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had initiated long-range planning on [troop](#) levels in 1962 to ensure a balance between the Vietnam commitment and America's other global requirements, and in 1963 had produced a plan calling for a phased withdrawal of American advisers to begin later in the year and to end in 1965. The plan seems to have reflected the Pentagon's persisting optimism about progress in containing the insurgency. Some members of Kennedy's staff have since argued, however, that the President's approval of it indicated his determination to avoid an open-ended commitment. Indeed, Hilsman and White House staff member Kenneth O'Donnell

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in [Chester Cooper](#), *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam* (New York, 1970), p. 207.

<sup>46</sup> For a discussion of the north-south contacts of 1963, see King C. Chen, "Hanoi's Three Decisions and the Escalation of the Vietnam War," *Political Science Quarterly*, 90 (Summer 1975), 254-255.

claim that by the summer of 1963 [Kennedy](#) had recognized the futility of American involvement and was prepared to liquidate it as soon as he had been reelected. "If I tried to pull out completely now from Vietnam," he reportedly explained to [Mansfield](#), "we would have another [Joe McCarthy](#) red scare on our hands."<sup>47</sup> The extent to which Kennedy had committed himself remains unclear, but the plan for a phased [withdrawal](#) does seem to reflect his growing concern about Vietnam and the increasingly strained relationship with [Diem](#).

At the very time Kennedy and Diem were having sober second thoughts about their fateful partnership, an upheaval among [Buddhists](#) in the major cities of [South Vietnam](#) suddenly introduced a dramatic new threat to the Diem regime and new complications for an already faltering American policy. The affair began on May 8, seemingly inadvertently, when government troops fired into crowds gathered in [Hue](#) to protest orders forbidding the display of flags on the anniversary of Buddha's birth. The May 8 incident stirred new and vigorous protest. Buddhist leaders accused the government of religious persecution and demanded complete religious freedom. Unable or unwilling to conciliate his new opponents, Diem heatedly denied the existence of persecution and blamed the disorders on the [Vietcong](#). Diem's response stimulated additional protest. Buddhist priests conducted well-publicized hunger strikes, and meetings in Hue and [Saigon](#) drew large crowds. The uprising attained new proportions on June 11 when a monk immolated himself in front of large, shrieking crowds at a major intersection in downtown Saigon. Sensitive to the potential value of drawing international attention to their cause, the Buddhist leadership had tipped foreign newsmen to the event, and an American photographer's candid and poignant picture of the monk engulfed in flames soon appeared in newspapers and on [television](#) screens across the world.

From that fiery moment in June 1963, the Buddhist protest emerged into a powerful, apparently deeply rooted political movement that threatened the very survival of the Diem government. Quiescent in periods of stability, the Buddhists throughout Vietnamese history had assumed a role of political and moral leadership in times of crisis. The immolation of the elderly monk was a "call to

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Kenneth P. O'Donnell and David F. Powers, "Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye": Memories of John Fitzgerald Kennedy (New York, 1973), p. 16.

rebellion," Frances FitzGerald has written, and the disaffected urban population of [South Vietnam](#) responded.<sup>48</sup> Students in the universities and high schools, including some Catholics, joined in mass protests, and discontent quickly spread to the army. The government's response spurred additional anger. While [Diem](#) did nothing, [Madame Nhu](#) publicly and with seeming glee dismissed the immolations as "barbecues" and offered to furnish the gasoline and matches for more. By midsummer, South Vietnamese society appeared on the verge of disruption.

The crisis brought consternation to a Washington already uneasy over its Vietnam policy. The administration was caught off guard by the protest, surprised by the response it touched off and shocked by the immolation of the monk. Fearing that these ominous new developments might undercut American support for the war and further endanger a [counterinsurgency](#) program which many suspected was already failing, the administration frantically attempted to reconcile the two sides, sending numerous emissaries to talk with [Buddhist](#) leaders and pressing Diem to take conciliatory measures. The Americans could never really determine what the [Buddhists](#) wanted, however, and in any event Diem would agree only to token concessions. The demonstrations and immolations continued; in all, seven monks met fiery deaths. While Madame Nhu and the government-controlled [Saigon](#) press issued shrill tirades against the Buddhists and the United States, Nhu's police carted off hundreds of protesters to South Vietnam's already bulging jails.

By the late summer, the [Kennedy](#) administration was increasingly troubled and deeply divided. The Buddhist mind remained "terra incognita," one Kennedy adviser later conceded, but most Americans agreed that Diem's response had been provocative.<sup>49</sup> The fear persisted that there was no real alternative to Diem and that a change in government might bring even greater chaos to South Vietnam. Some administration officials retained confidence in the President himself, blaming the problems on Nhu and his wife and arguing that the damage might yet be repaired if they could be removed. But others began to view the Buddhist crisis as symbolic of basic, incorrigible defects in the regime and concluded that the United States must face up to the possibility of a change.

<sup>48</sup> FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake*, p. 134.

<sup>49</sup> Cooper, *Lost Crusade*, p. 210.

An incident in late August clinched the issue as far as [Diem](#)'s opponents in Washington were concerned. Nolting's appointment as Ambassador expired in the summer of 1963, and during his farewell visit, Diem had assured him, as a personal favor, that no further repressive action would be taken against the [Buddhists](#). But on August 21, [Nhu](#)'s American-trained [Special Forces](#) carried out massive raids in [Hue](#), [Saigon](#), and other cities, ransacking the pagodas and arresting more than 1,400 Buddhists. Whether Diem approved the raid in advance remains unclear, but in the eyes of most Americans, his subsequent refusal to disavow Nhu's actions placed the onus of responsibility squarely upon him. This latest repressive action, just days after the solemn pledges to Nolting, appeared to the anti-Diemists a "deliberate affront" which demanded a firm response. "We could not sit still and be the puppets of Diem's anti-Buddhist policies," [Roger Hilsman](#) later recalled.<sup>50</sup>

Within several days after the raid on the pagodas, moreover, a group of South Vietnamese Army generals opened secret contacts with the United States. The most recent incident made clear, they warned, that Nhu would stop at nothing. Reporting evidence that he was not only planning their execution but was also discussing with [Hanoi](#) a deal that would sell out the independence of South Vietnam, the generals inquired how the United States might respond should they move against the government. The anti-Diem group in Washington was undoubtedly alarmed by the reports that Nhu was making overtures to Hanoi, reinforcing their conviction that something must be done. More important, perhaps, the generals' inquiries suggested that there was, after all, an alternative to Diem.

The generals' overtures arrived in Washington on a Saturday, when many top officials were out of town, and Hilsman, [Forrestal](#), and [Harriman](#) seized the opportunity to execute what [Taylor](#) later described as an "egregious end run."<sup>51</sup> They prepared a tough, if somewhat ambiguous, cable, instructing the newly appointed Ambassador, [Henry Cabot Lodge](#), to give Diem an opportunity to rid himself of Nhu but adding that if he refused, the United States must "face the possibility that Diem himself cannot be preserved." They

<sup>50</sup> Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 482; Hilsman oral history interview, Kennedy Papers. The best account of the abortive August coup is Geoffrey Warner, "The United States and the Fall of Diem," Part I: "The Coup That Never Was," *Australian Outlook*, 28 (December 1974), 245-258. <sup>51</sup> Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares*, p. 292.

also instructed [Lodge](#) to make clear to the generals that the United States would not continue to support [Diem](#) if he refused to cooperate and that it would provide them "direct support in any interim period of breakdown of central government mechanism."<sup>52</sup> These last words left deliberately vague what the United States might do and under what circumstances, but the thrust of the message was unmistakable: if Diem remained obdurate, the United States was prepared to abandon him. The cable was cleared with [Kennedy](#), who was then vacationing on Cape Cod, and the President's endorsement was apparently used to secure the acquiescence of responsible officials in the Defense Department.

Lodge wasted no time implementing his instructions. The Ambassador shared [Hilsman](#)'s outrage at the August 21 incident. There was no doubt in his mind, he later recalled, that the raid on the pagodas "marked the beginning of the end of the Diem regime."<sup>53</sup> His convictions were reinforced by his first meeting with Diem. When he warned that the regime's handling of the [Buddhists](#) was endangering American support for [South Vietnam](#), Diem gave him a long lecture on the difficulties of governing a nation with a "dearth of educated people."<sup>54</sup> The Embassy subsequently contacted the generals through a CIA agent - "so the official American hand would not show" - offering them assurances of American support should they succeed in overthrowing the government but warning that the United States would not assist them in undertaking a coup or "bail them out" if they got into trouble.<sup>55</sup>

By the time Kennedy met with his advisers on Monday, August 26, the United States was deeply committed to a coup. The meeting was tense and marked by sometimes bitter exchanges. Taylor and [Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara](#) protested that instructions for a basic change in policy had been sent to Lodge behind their backs, and the President himself was apparently unhappy

<sup>52</sup> Telegram, August 24, 1963, [U.S. Congress](#), House, Committee on Armed Services, United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: A Study Prepared by the Department of Defense (Washington, D.C., 1971), Book 12, 536-537.

<sup>53</sup> Lodge oral history interview, Kennedy Papers.

<sup>54</sup> Forrestal to Kennedy, August 26, 1963, Kennedy Papers, Office File, Box 128.

<sup>55</sup> Neil Sheehan et al. The [Pentagon Papers](#) as Published by the New York Times (New York, 1971), pp. 195-196. Hereafter cited as Pentagon Papers (NYT). See also memorandum, "Contacts with Vietnamese Generals," October 23, 1963, [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) Papers, Lyndon B. Johnson Library, DSDUF, Box 2.

feeling, as one of his advisers later put it, "that he had been painted into a corner and... would have preferred to give an even more ambivalent answer to the generals."<sup>56</sup> Significantly, however, [Kennedy](#) did not retreat from the policy that had been established. In subsequent messages, he advised [Lodge](#) to proceed cautiously, but he reaffirmed the instructions of August 24 and gave the Ambassador unusually broad discretion in their implementation. Lodge was authorized to repeat to the generals assurances that the United States would not assist a coup but that it would support a new government that appeared to have a good chance of success. And he was authorized, at his own discretion, to announce publicly a reduction in American aid to [Diem](#), the signal the generals had requested as an indication of U.S. support.

While American officials in Washington and [Saigon](#) nervously awaited the generals' response, the plans for a coup gradually came unraveled. The leaders of the plot were unable to secure the support of key army units in the Saigon area and, despite the assurances given by the CIA go-between, they remained uncertain of American support. On August 31, they informed [Harkins](#) that the coup had been called off. "There is neither the will nor the organization among the generals to accomplish anything," Lodge cabled Washington with obvious disappointment.<sup>57</sup> Although the plot of August 1963 came to nothing, it nevertheless marked another major turning point in American policy in Vietnam. Many officials had grave reservations about the desirability, feasibility, and possible consequences of a coup, but the anti-Diemists were able to commit the administration to their point of view. By making such a commitment, the administration encouraged opponents of the regime and made difficult, if not impossible, any real reconciliation with Diem. As Lodge put it, the United States was "launched on a course from which there is no respectable turning back."<sup>58</sup>

Over the next four weeks, the Kennedy administration heatedly debated the choices open to it. [Nhu](#) sent his wife out of the country, perhaps as much out of concern for her personal safety as to appease the United States, but he stubbornly refused to resign, and the regime made no real effort to conciliate the [Buddhists](#). Hilsman

<sup>56</sup> Cooper, *Lost Crusade*, p. 212.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), II, 240.

<sup>58</sup> Lodge to Rusk, August 29, 1963, *ibid.*, 738.

and others argued that there was no chance of stabilizing [South Vietnam](#) as long as [Nhu](#) remained, and warned that Nhu might already be committed to a deal with [Hanoi](#) that would force the United States out of Vietnam. They concluded that the administration must therefore apply firm pressure on [Diem](#), including aid cuts, to compel him to remove Nhu and adopt the changes in policy necessary to defeat the [Vietcong](#). Others, such as Nolting, advocated a final attempt at reconciliation. The failure of the August coup made clear, they argued, that there was no real alternative to Diem. The President was unlikely to remove Nhu, even under the most severe American pressure, and cuts in aid would only hurt the war against the Vietcong, antagonize the South Vietnamese people, and further destabilize the country. There was still a chance, they concluded, that if the United States repaired its relations with the government, the war might be won.

A "fact-finding" mission to South Vietnam only added to the uncertainty. General [Victor Krulak](#) of the Defense Department played down the possibilities of a coup and advised that the war could be won if the United States firmly supported Diem. In contrast, [Joseph Mendenhall](#) of the State Department reported a "virtual breakdown of the civil government in [Saigon](#)," warned of a possible religious war between Catholics and [Buddhists](#), and concluded that there was no chance of defeating the Vietcong unless, "as a minimum, Nhu withdrew or was removed from the government." "You two did visit the same country, didn't you?" [Kennedy](#) remarked with obvious exasperation.<sup>59</sup>

The administration by this time was more divided on Vietnam than it had been on any other issue. Such was the confusion that at one point Attorney General [Robert Kennedy](#) raised the ultimate question, wondering aloud whether any South Vietnamese government was capable of winning the war and whether the United States should not begin to extricate itself from an impossible tangle.

The Attorney General's question was both appropriate and timely. The disarray in South Vietnam had reached a point that both factions in the administration may have been right the country could not have been stabilized with or without Diem. Moreover, important new developments for the first time raised a glimmer of hope for a negotiated settlement. In the aftermath of

<sup>59</sup> Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 502.

the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, the long-simmering feud between the [Soviet Union](#) and [China](#) burst out into the open, and the United States and Russia took the first halting steps toward a relaxation of Cold War tensions. The new and more complex international environment of 1963 may have provided the last real opportunity for a negotiated settlement in Vietnam. Much remains unknown about the north-south overtures of 1963. President Charles de Gaulle of [France](#) seems to have taken the initiative, proposing the removal of U.S. troops, the neutralization of [South Vietnam](#), and economic and cultural exchanges between north and south preliminary to a political settlement. When [Diem](#) and [Nhu](#) seemed receptive, de Gaulle used a Polish diplomat to explore the prospects with [Hanoi](#). Whether the de Gaulle initiative offered any possibility of a settlement remains unclear. Given the past record of hostility between Diem and Hanoi and the conflicting ambitions of each, it seems unlikely. Still, each had good reason to avoid the full-scale war that seemed increasingly possible if not likely, and de Gaulle's scheme, with great power support, might have produced a temporary settlement, giving the United States a graceful means to extricate itself from a situation that was fast becoming untenable. One of [Kennedy's](#) advisers was thinking along just such lines in proposing an imaginative, if highly complex, "triple diplomatic play" by which the United States would pull out of South Vietnam in return for a complete Soviet withdrawal from Cuba and would encourage France to work for a Vietnam free of all foreign influence. The United States and Russia could thereby liquidate unprofitable and potentially dangerous ventures without losing face, the more conciliatory Soviets would get the edge over the more aggressive [Chinese](#), and de Gaulle would get the "glory of a solution in Viet Nam along with the headaches."<sup>60</sup>

Hindsight makes clear that such an approach had much to commend it, but the administration gave it no consideration. Kennedy was increasingly frustrated by a situation which was rapidly becoming unmanageable, but he was not yet ready to abandon a policy that had been set for more than a decade. The President and his advisers seem to have been so preoccupied with day-to-day events that they found it difficult to think in terms of a long-range solution. Perhaps they were captives of their own rhetoric and

60 "Observations on Viet Nam and Cuba," n.d., Kennedy Papers, Office File, Box 128.



could not seriously consider a settlement which required an American [withdrawal](#). Some American experts on Vietnam minimized the possibility of a reconciliation between north and south, arguing that Nhu was merely raising the specter to gain "some maneuverability in the face of US pressures."<sup>61</sup> Others took the possibility seriously but saw it as a good reason to get rid of [Nhu](#) and possibly [Diem](#). For whatever reason, [Robert Kennedy](#)'s question was not raised again. The administration drifted along, divided against itself, with no clear idea where it was going.

After more than a month of debate, [Kennedy](#) in early October settled on a short-run policy that, characteristically, split the difference between the two extremes promoted by his advisers. Still quite uncertain what was going on in [South Vietnam](#), he dispatched [Taylor](#) and [McNamara](#) to [Saigon](#) to get the "best possible on the spot appraisal" of the military and political situation.<sup>62</sup> Probably on the basis of discussions with Lodge, the two men quickly rejected any notion of conciliating Diem, arguing that it would merely reinforce his belief that he could bend the United States to his will. To assess the prospects of a coup, a tennis match was arranged between Taylor and General [Duong Van Minh](#), one of the leaders of the August plot, at the Saigon Officers Club. Minh's "sole interest that afternoon seemed to be tennis," Taylor later recalled, and the Americans surmised that the generals had "little stomach" for another attempt to overthrow the government.<sup>63</sup> Taylor and McNamara therefore concluded that the only practicable course was to apply "selective pressures," including cuts in foreign aid, to the regime. Such an approach would probably not force Diem to remove Nhu, but it might at least persuade him to stop oppressing political dissenters. Generally optimistic about the progress of the [counterinsurgency](#) program, McNamara and Taylor concluded that if Diem could be brought around, the insurgency might be reduced to "something little more than organized banditry" by the end of 1965.<sup>64</sup>

61 [Chester Cooper](#) to Director, [CIA](#), September 19, 1963, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 200.

62 Kennedy to McNamara, September 19, 1963, Kennedy Papers, National Security File, Box 200.

63 Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares*, p. 297.

64 Taylor-McNamara Report, October 2, 1963, [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), II, 751-766.

Although it badly misjudged the actual conditions in [South Vietnam](#), the Taylor-McNamara report formed the basis of subsequent U.S. policy. The relative quiet in the countryside in late 1963 resulted from a deliberate North Vietnamese-Vietcong attempt to encourage negotiations rather than from the effectiveness of the [counterinsurgency](#) program. [Taylor](#) and [McNamara](#) underestimated the prospects of a coup and overestimated the efficacy of applying pressure to [Diem](#). Apparently seeing no other route to take, Kennedy approved their recommendations on October 5, and over the next few weeks, the administration gradually implemented the policy of "selective pressures." [Lodge](#) remained away from the presidential palace, insisting that Diem must come to him. In the meantime, the administration recalled the [CIA](#) station chief in [Saigon](#), John Richardson, known among Vietnamese and Americans as a close friend of Nhu, cut off funds to [Nhu's Special Forces](#), and suspended shipments of tobacco, rice, and milk, under the commodity import program.

A number of [Kennedy](#) advisers later emphatically denied that these measures were designed to stimulate a coup, and in the most literal sense they were correct. The McNamara-Taylor report had explicitly rejected encouragement of a coup, and the aid cuts were designed to pressure Diem. The administration was not as innocent as some of its defenders have maintained, however. [Hilsman](#) later conceded that "some of the things that we did encouraged the coup, some we intended as pressure on Diem, although we knew it [sic] would encourage a coup."<sup>65</sup> Kennedy and his advisers would have been naive indeed if they did not recognize that the recall of Richardson, whom the generals had feared would tip off the August plot, and the cuts in aid, the very signal of support the generals had requested earlier, would influence Diem's opponents. And the timing is significant. The aid cuts were instituted after the generals had once again inquired how the United States would respond to a coup. Whatever their intent, the measures taken during October probably encouraged the generals to step up their planning and seek further assurances from the United States.

Once aware that the generals were again planning a coup, the administration did nothing to discourage them. The response to their inquiry was sufficiently vague to salve the consciences of those

<sup>65</sup> Hilsman oral history interview, Kennedy Papers.

who preferred a coup but hesitated to accept direct responsibility for it and to satisfy the reservations of those who remained wary of dumping [Diem](#). But the instructions offered the assurances the generals sought. [Lodge](#) was authorized to inform the plotters that although the United States did not "wish to stimulate a coup," it would not "thwart a change of government or deny economic and military assistance to a new regime if it appeared capable of increasing [the] effectiveness of the military effort, ensuring popular support to win [the] war and improving working relations with the U.S."<sup>66</sup>

With his administration sharply divided to the very end, Kennedy stuck by his compromise policy. [Harriman](#), [Hilsman](#), and others felt that Diem should go. Vice President [Johnson](#), top [CIA](#) and Pentagon officials, and [Harkins](#) continued to insist that there was no real alternative and that Diem's removal would bring chaos to [South Vietnam](#). They also felt, as Harkins put it, that it was "incongruous" after nine years of supporting Diem "to get him down, kick him around and get rid of him."<sup>67</sup> Kennedy himself vacillated, adhering to the policy of not overtly supporting a coup but not discouraging one either. In this case, however, not to decide was to decide, and by leaving matters in the hands of Lodge, whose views were well known, the President virtually assured the outcome. The major fear among Kennedy and some of his advisers in the anxious days of late October seems to have been that the coup might fail, leaving the United States in an untenable and embarrassing position. Yet, even here the President was content to leave in Lodge's hands a final judgment as to the likelihood of success and a decision whether to try to call off or delay the coup.

Throughout the last week of October, [Saigon](#) was gripped with tension and deluged with rumors as the various actors played out their complicated and ultimately tragic-drama. Determined to avoid the mistakes of 1960 and August 1963, the generals lined up their forces with the closest attention to every detail. In the meantime, [Nhu](#) had concocted an elaborate scheme to keep himself and his brother in power by staging a fake coup and using it as an excuse for eliminating suspected opponents. To complicate matters

<sup>66</sup> CIA to Lodge, October 6, 1963, [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), II, 769. See also Geoffrey Warner, "The United States and the Fall of Diem," Part II: "The Death of Diem," *Australian Outlook*, 29 (March 1975), 3-17.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in *Pentagon Papers* (Gravel), II, 785.

still further, in the last hours before the real coup, [Diem](#) suddenly turned conciliatory toward the United States, inquiring of [Lodge](#) at their last meeting what the United States wanted of him. Whether he was merely trying to buy time or had concluded that he must place himself in the hands of the United States is unclear. In any event, Diem's apparent concession came too late.

While Diem was talking with Lodge in the early afternoon of November 1, the generals seized key military installations and communications systems in [Saigon](#), secured the surrender of [Nhu's](#) Special Forces, and demanded the resignation of Diem and Nhu. Stubbornly resistant to the end, the brothers requested that the generals come to the palace for consultation, the ploy that had worked in 1960, and Diem phoned Lodge to determine the official American attitude toward the coup. Finding support nowhere, they escaped through a secret underground passage to a Catholic church in the [Chinese](#) district, where they went to confession and received communion. They were subsequently captured and, despite promises of safe conduct, were brutally murdered in the back of an armored personnel carrier.

Throughout the coup, the United States followed to the letter its promises "not to thwart a change of government." American officials later insisted that they knew nothing of the timing or exact plans for a coup. In fact, CIA agent [Lucien Conein](#) maintained close touch with the generals in the planning stages through clandestine meetings at a dentist's office, and he had telephone contact with them while the coup was actually taking place. The United States refused even to intervene to ensure the personal safety of Diem and Nhu. [Kennedy](#) did send an old crony to try to persuade Diem to get rid of Nhu and seek refuge in the Embassy. When Diem refused, however, the administration all but abandoned him. Lodge was considerably less than candid in the telephone conversation with Diem when he pretended ignorance of Washington's attitudes. During the last pathetic phone call, he offered to help, but he then went off to bed, leaving matters entirely in the hands of the coup forces. Perhaps he accepted at face value the generals' pledges to spare Diem and Nhu, or he may have feared that any action taken on behalf of the brothers would be interpreted as a violation of the earlier U.S. assurances not to interfere.

The news of the coup and the bloody deaths of the Ngos evoked mixed reactions. In Saigon, jubilant crowds smashed statues of

[Diem](#), danced in the streets, and covered [ARVN](#) soldiers with garlands of flowers. In the ancient Vietnamese tradition, the mandate of heaven had passed. In Washington, some of [Kennedy's](#) advisers accepted the news as a matter of course. "Revolutions are rough. People get hurt," [Roger Hilsman](#) told a reporter.<sup>68</sup> Nolting, Richardson, and others held what one of the participants described as the "only Washington wake" for the Ngo brothers. By all accounts, Kennedy himself was deeply troubled. When he learned of the slaying of Diem and [Nhu](#), [Taylor](#) later recalled, "he leaped to his feet and rushed from the room with a look of shock and dismay on his face which I had never seen before."<sup>69</sup> Others noted that the President was more depressed than at any time since the Bay of Pigs, and they speculated that he realized that Vietnam had been his greatest failure in foreign policy.<sup>70</sup>

Just three weeks later, Kennedy himself was assassinated in Dallas. His defenders, many of whom would become outspoken opponents of the war, would later argue that at the time of his death he was planning to extricate the United States from what he had perceived to be a quagmire. The record suggests otherwise. In a speech to have been given on the day of his death, he conceded that commitments in third-world nations could be "painful, risky and costly," but warned that "we dare not weary of the test."<sup>71</sup> In any event, what Kennedy might have done can never be known, and his administration must be judged on what it actually did during its brief tenure. Kennedy and most of his advisers accepted, without critical analysis, the assumption that a non-Communist Vietnam was vital to America's global interests, and their rhetoric in fact strengthened the hold of that assumption. That the President himself never devoted his full attention to Vietnam, as his defenders claim, seems clear. He reacted to crises and improvised responses on a day-to-day basis, seldom examining the implications of his actions. Nevertheless, his cautious middle course significantly enlarged the American role and commitment in Vietnam, and with the coup, the United States assumed direct responsibility for the

68 Quoted in Marguerite Higgins, *Our Vietnam Nightmare* (New York, 1965), p. 225.

69 Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares*, p. 301.

70 Sehlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pp. 997-998.

71 Quoted in Herbert S. Parmet, *JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (New York, 1984), p. 336.

South Vietnamese government. Although apparently troubled by growing doubts, [Kennedy](#) refused, even after the problems with [Diem](#) had reached the crisis point, to face the hard questions. Perhaps in concealing from the nation the dangers of the growing American involvement, he deluded himself. Whatever his fears or his ultimate intentions, he bequeathed to his successor a problem eminently more dangerous than the one he had inherited from [Eisenhower](#).



## CHAPTER 4

Enough, But Not Too Much:  
Johnson's Decisions for War,  
1963-1965

Between November 1963 and July 1965, [Lyndon Baines Johnson](#) transformed a limited commitment to assist the South Vietnamese government into an open-ended commitment to preserve an independent, non-Communist [South Vietnam](#). Johnson inherited from [Kennedy](#) a rapidly deteriorating situation in South Vietnam. Fearing that large-scale American involvement might jeopardize his chances of election in 1964 and threaten his beloved [Great Society](#) domestic programs, he temporized for over a year, expanding American assistance and increasing the number of advisers in hopes that a beefed-up version of his predecessor's policy might somehow stave off disaster. South Vietnam's survival appeared more in doubt than ever in early 1965, however, and over the next six months Johnson made his fateful decisions, authorizing a sustained air offensive against [North Vietnam](#) and dispatching American ground forces to stem the tide in the south. By July 1965, the United States was engaged in a major war on the Asian mainland.

In late 1963, [North Vietnam](#) significantly escalated the war. The overthrow of [Diem](#) had been at best a mixed blessing for [Hanoi](#). It eliminated a potentially dangerous anti-Communist leader, but it also removed the rallying point of the opposition in South Vietnam, and for a time the revolutionary spirit ebbed in the south. Desertions from the NLF increased and recruitment stalled, and even where the government lost ground the [Vietcong](#) did not always gain. North Vietnam attempted to negotiate with the junta the sort of deal discussed with Diem, but it seems to have gotten



[North](#) and [South Vietnam](#)

nowhere and it saw no weakening of U.S. resolve. Determined to attain the goal that had eluded them in 1954, the North Vietnamese leaders increasingly recognized that they could not succeed without a major commitment of their own resources. At the Central Committee's Ninth Plenum in December 1963, the party leadership decided to instruct the [Vietcong](#) to step up its political agitation and military operations against the South Vietnamese government. More important, [Hanoi](#) decided to expand [infiltration](#) into the south and even to send its own regular units into the war. The North Vietnamese at this point seem to have been unsure of Soviet support and they recognized the possibility of war with the United States. In what turned out to be a colossal miscalculation, they gambled that rapid escalation might force the disintegration of [South Vietnam](#), leaving the United States no choice but to disengage.

For [Johnson](#) and the United States, the road to war was longer and more torturous. After listening to Ambassador [Lodge](#)'s gloomy assessment of the post-coup prospects of the [Saigon](#) government on November 24, 1963, Johnson claimed to feel like a catfish that had just "grabbed a big juicy worm with a right sharp hook in the middle of it." The new President expressed his determination to meet the Communist challenge, however, and he vowed not to let Vietnam go the way of [China](#). He instructed Lodge to "go back and tell those generals in Saigon that [Lyndon Johnson](#) intends to stand by our word .... "Two days later, [National Security Council](#) Action Memorandum (NSAM) 273 incorporated his pledge into policy, affirming that it was "the central objective of the United States" to assist the "people and Government" of South Vietnam "to win their contest against the externally directed and supported communist conspiracy."<sup>1</sup>

During the first three months of Johnson's presidency, the situation in South Vietnam got steadily worse. Some Americans had assumed that the removal of [Diem](#) and [Nhu](#) would restore domestic harmony and promote political unity, but the effect was quite the opposite. Diem had systematically destroyed the opposition, and his death left a gaping political vacuum. [Buddhists](#) and Catholics

<sup>1</sup> Bill Moyers, "Flashbacks," Newsweek (February 10, 1975), 76; [U.S. Congress](#) Senate, Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds, The [Pentagon Papers](#) (The [Senator Gravel](#) Edition) (4 vols.; Boston, 1971), III, 17-20. Hereafter cited as Pentagon Papers (Gravel).

comprised the most coherent groups in the cities, but their hatred of each other was implacable and neither represented a viable political force. The [Buddhists](#) were splintered into a bewildering array of factions. Although tightly disciplined, the Catholics had no political program or mass appeal. The coup released long pent-up forces, and in the months that followed new groups proliferated, but they were leaderless and hopelessly fragmented. In the countryside, decay was also the norm. The removal of Diemist controls over information made clear that the statistics compiled by the government to demonstrate progress had been grossly in error. U.S. officials were alarmed to discover that the insurgents controlled more people and territory than had been assumed. The [strategic hamlet](#) program was in shambles, many of the key hamlets in the critical [Mekong Delta](#) having been torn down either by the Viet-cong or their own occupants. The situation was "very disturbing," [McNamara](#) warned [Johnson](#) in late December, and unless the trend could be reversed within the next few months, [South Vietnam](#) might be lost.<sup>2</sup>

The junta that assumed power after the coup did little to arrest the decline. The twelve army officers who formed the Military Revolutionary Council had been educated in [France](#) and had spent most of their careers in French service. They lacked experience, had no program, and found little support among the various groups that had opposed Diem. Suspicious of each other and of competing groups within the army, uncertain which way to move, they isolated themselves in their headquarters near [Saigon](#)'s Tan Son Nhut Airport and did little. The few actions they took merely added to the confusion. The removal of Diem's province chiefs brought paralysis to local administration, and [Harkins](#) was alarmed by the junta's efforts to limit the role of U.S. advisers.

On January 29, 1964, a group of younger officers headed by General [Nguyen Khanh](#) overthrew the divided, ineffectual junta. Khanh appears to have doubted, with good reason, the capacity of the junta to govern, and he justified the coup on the grounds that several members of the Council had secretly endorsed de Gaulle's proposals for a neutral South Vietnam. It seems clear, however, that the general resented being shunted aside by the junta and that he acted primarily out of personal ambition. The U.S. role in the

<sup>2</sup> McNamara to Johnson, December 21, 1963, Declassified Documents Reference System (R)88E. Hereafter cited as DDRS.

coup remains unclear. [Harkins](#) and his aides were disturbed by the junta's lack of aggressiveness and its independence, and they may have encouraged and even helped to implement Khanh's schemes. At the very least, the United States knew of the coup plot and did nothing to stop it.<sup>3</sup>

The coup reinforced Washington's growing doubts about its client state. [Khanh](#) was known as a militant anti-Communist and an able military commander. In his checkered career, however, he had supported the [Vietminh](#) and the French and had worked for and against [Diem](#), and he could not have been judged reliable. Putting the best face on a bad situation, [Lodge](#) speculated that one-man rule might be preferable to a divided junta, and he was encouraged by Khanh's pledges to take bold and decisive action. Nothing would please the United States more, he informed the general, than "the sight of an oriental chief of state who wanted to go fast and did not hesitate to kick people in the rear end." Khanh's response - he hoped he would "pick the right rear ends to kick" - could not have offered much reassurance, however, and Lodge conceded that it would be premature to predict a long life for the new government.<sup>4</sup> The United States quickly recognized Khanh, but with little enthusiasm and even less confidence.

The Khanh government faced truly staggering problems. Military operations and the [strategic hamlet](#) program had come to a complete standstill. The government's authority was nonexistent throughout much of the countryside, and near anarchy prevailed in the cities. In [Saigon](#) the "atmosphere fairly smelled of discontent," General [William Westmoreland](#) later observed, with "workers on strike, students demonstrating, the local press pursuing a persistent campaign of criticism of the new government."<sup>5</sup> As [Vietcong](#) incidents increased in number and in boldness, the capital took on all the appearances of an armed camp. Government buildings, stores, even cafes, were surrounded by barbed wire, while soldiers stood guard in concrete sentry boxes reinforced with sandbags. Khanh himself took up residence in a house on the Saigon River where he could flee by boat if necessary. American intelligence warned that

<sup>3</sup> George McT. Kahin, "Political Polarization in [South Vietnam](#): U.S. Policy in the Post-Diem Period," *Pacific Affairs*, 52 (Winter 1979-1980), 647-673; Paul Harkins Oral History Interview, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

<sup>4</sup> Lodge to [Secretary of State](#), February 5, 1964, DDRS(75)215A.

<sup>5</sup> William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, N.Y., 1976), p. 63.

unless the new government took charge immediately and dealt with its problems effectively, [South Vietnam](#) had, "at best, an even chance of withstanding the insurgency menace during the next few weeks or months."<sup>6</sup>

To [Johnson](#) and the men around him, the crisis of early 1964 could not have been more unwelcome. The new President had assumed office in a moment of great national tragedy and had set as his foremost task conducting an orderly transition and restoring calm. He attached great importance to passage of [Kennedy's](#) legislative program, long stalemated in Congress, both as a memorial to the fallen leader and as a springboard from which he could launch a campaign for election in his own right. From this standpoint, the emergence of a crisis in Vietnam could only be regarded as an intrusion.

But it was an intrusion that had to be handled effectively. Johnson viewed the American commitment in Vietnam as part of the Kennedy program he was sworn to uphold. From the moment he took office, moreover, questions had been raised about his capacity to handle complex problems of foreign policy, and he saw that Vietnam might be a test case for him in an election year. Recognizing his inexperience in foreign policy, Johnson retained Kennedy's top advisers and relied heavily on them. [Secretary of State Rusk](#), [Secretary of Defense McNamara](#), and [National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy](#) had all played prominent roles in shaping Kennedy's Vietnam policy, and they had a deep personal stake in upholding that policy. Indeed, they felt very strongly that expansion of the American commitment since 1961 had itself significantly increased the importance of holding the line there.

By 1964, policymakers perceived the extent to which changes in world politics had challenged old assumptions. Americans differed in their assessment of the Sino-Soviet conflict. Some argued that it was only superficial, a question of tactics, and that in any contest with the West the two rivals would be drawn back together. Many felt by 1964 that the split was irreparable and that in time the two Communist giants might be at war with each other. Johnson's advisers also recognized that the Sino-Soviet conflict had significantly affected the struggle in Vietnam. [Hanoi](#) had sided with Peking, and Soviet influence in Vietnam was negligible. Some American policymakers further calculated that, although [China](#)

6 Quoted in [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), III, 42.

had provided [North Vietnam](#) verbal and material support, its assistance was not yet decisive, and in view of traditional Vietnamese fears of [Chinese](#) domination, [Hanoi](#) probably preferred it that way. These important developments thus undermined the old idea that, in Vietnam, as elsewhere, the United States confronted a monolithic Communism united in its drive for world domination.

In the eyes of administration foreign policy experts, however, the Vietnam conflict still had vital international implications. The [Soviet Union](#) appeared to be in a conciliatory phase, and some Americans entertained long-range hopes of detente. Nonetheless, no one could be absolutely certain that the Russians had abandoned their expansionist goals, and there was always the chance, as [McNamara](#) warned, that the "very keenness" of the competition with [China](#) might increase Soviet "aggressiveness."<sup>7</sup> Whatever the Soviet intent, many Americans agreed, as Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai E. Stevenson put it, that henceforth an "arrogant, aggressive, resourceful and resolute" China might assume leadership of the forces of world revolution.<sup>8</sup>

Southeast Asia appeared to offer abundant opportunities for Chinese troublemaking. While Vietnam teetered on the brink of disaster, the [Laos](#) agreement of 1962 was under fire from both right and left, and [Cambodia](#)'s Prince Sihanouk had renounced American aid and called for an international conference to guarantee his nation's [neutrality](#). In the meantime, Indonesia's flamboyant and mercurial Sukarno had initiated an intense flirtation with China and launched open warfare against the pro-Western government of Malaysia. American policymakers perceived that historic ethnic and national conflicts were as much the source of instability in Southeast Asia as Communism. But they feared that any sudden change in the status quo could have a far-reaching effect on that troubled region. China had suffered from chronic agricultural shortages and might, "as an act of desperation, attempt to overrun Southeast Asia" to get the food it needed. At the very least, the Chinese could be counted upon to exploit the political turmoil in the countries around their periphery.<sup>9</sup>

An outburst of "polycentrism" across the world aroused even

<sup>7</sup> McNamara statement to House Subcommittee on Appropriations, February 6, 1963, DDRS(75)150D.

<sup>8</sup> Stevenson to Johnson, November 18, 1964, DDRS(75)212B.

<sup>9</sup> McNamara statement to Senate Armed Services Committee, February 8, 1964, DDRS(75) 151B.

greater concern in Washington. De Gaulle's [France](#) was directly challenging American leadership in Southeast Asia as well as in Europe. Rioting in Panama underscored the explosiveness of anti-Americanism in the Western Hemisphere, creating opportunities which Cuba's Fidel Castro might exploit. Long-range intelligence estimates warned that "revolution and disorder" had become "epidemic" throughout the emerging nations and posed a serious threat to a stable world order. The Communist powers, acting together or separately, might attempt to exploit the rising unrest in the under-developed countries, or they might be drawn into local conflicts against their will. The "disorderly character of so much of the world," the [CIA](#) warned, posed great obstacles to any real detente with the [Soviet Union](#) and increased the danger of confrontations which might lead to nuclear war.<sup>10</sup>

[Johnson](#) and his advisers thus found compelling reasons to hold the line in Vietnam. The immediate objective, the President explained, was to deter [Chinese](#) aggression in Southeast Asia and "give the people on the periphery of Asian Communism in time, the confidence, and the help they needed to marshal their own resources in order eventually to live in peace and stability with their powerful neighbors." Johnson and his advisers felt very strongly, however, that the way they responded to "Communist provocations" in Vietnam would have "profound consequences everywhere." They flatly rejected the notion advanced by many Europeans and some Americans that Asia was an area of secondary importance. When a French diplomat observed that the "stakes in Europe were enormous" but that if [South Vietnam](#) fell "we would not be losing much," [Secretary of State Rusk](#) hotly retorted that if the United States did not protect Vietnam, "our guarantees with regard to Berlin would lose their credibility." It was all "part of the same struggle." A firm stand in Vietnam would discourage any Soviet tendencies toward adventurism and encourage the trend toward detente. More important, it would ensure order and stability in a strife-torn world by demonstrating that violent challenges to the status quo would be resisted. "Our strength imposes on us an obligation to assure that this type of aggression does not succeed," Johnson affirmed.<sup>11</sup> The President and his advisers thus dismissed out of hand any thought of an American [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam

<sup>10</sup> CIA, "Trends in the World Situation," June 9, 1964, DDRS(75)251A.

<sup>11</sup> Johnson to Charles Bohlen, February 28, 1964, DDRS(75)97C; memorandum of conversation, Rusk and French Ambassador, July 1, 1964, DDRS(75)105A.

and rejected without serious consideration the neutralization scheme proposed by de Gaulle and endorsed by Senator [Mike Mansfield](#) and the columnist [Walter Lippmann](#).

Despite his concern for Vietnam, the President was not prepared to employ American military power on a large scale in early 1964. Like [Kennedy](#) and [Eisenhower](#) before him, he had no enthusiasm for a massive engagement of American forces on the Asian mainland. Moreover, he and his advisers feared that Americanization of the war would further undercut the self-reliance of the Vietnamese. The introduction of large-scale American forces in Vietnam would provoke much hostile propaganda throughout the world. It might cause major disruptions at home, threatening Johnson's legislative program and his campaign for the presidency. Johnson therefore flatly rejected proposals developed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to undertake major air and ground operations against [North Vietnam](#).

After a major policy review in mid-March, the President concluded that the "only realistic alternative" was "to do more of the same and do it more efficiently."<sup>12</sup> NSAM 288, approved March 17, did state U.S. objectives in more sweeping terms than before, emphasizing as the essential U.S. goal the preservation of an independent, non-Communist [South Vietnam](#). The administration still hoped that its program of military and economic assistance would be workable, however, and at this point merely attempted to provide the means to make it more effective. Aware that the most urgent problem was the weakness of the South Vietnamese government, Washington publicly made clear its support for [Khanh](#) and privately advised the U.S. mission to do everything possible to avert further coups. NSAM 288 also called for a national mobilization plan to put South Vietnam on a war footing and for significant increases in the size of the South Vietnamese armed forces. The President appointed General [William Westmoreland](#), a capable paratrooper and veteran of World War II and [Korea](#), to replace the ineffectual and perennially optimistic [Harkins](#). Over the next nine months, the United States increased the number of its "advisers" from 16,300 to 23,300 and expanded its economic assistance by \$50 million. "As far as I am concerned," Johnson advised

<sup>12</sup> Doris Kearns, [Lyndon Johnson](#) and the American Dream (New York, 1976), p. 196.



[Lodge](#) in April, "you must have whatever you need to help the Vietnamese do the job, and I assure you that I will act at once to eliminate obstacles or restraints wherever they may appear."<sup>13</sup>

Although the administration did little more than reaffirm existing policy in the spring of 1964, the attention of Washington planners was shifting increasingly toward [North Vietnam](#). The change reflected a growing American concern over the [infiltration](#) of men and supplies from the north and mounting frustration with ground rules that permitted [Hanoi](#) to support the insurgency with impunity. Some U.S. officials seem also to have concluded that action against the north might somehow compensate for the lack of progress in the south. Others wished to signal Hanoi that it would have to pay a heavy price for its continued intervention. Although covert operations in North Vietnam had been notably unsuccessful, they were expanded in early 1964 to include intelligence over-flights, the dropping of propaganda leaflets, and OPLAN 34A commando raids along the North Vietnamese coast. The administration also intensified its planning to prepare U.S. forces for possible "border control" operations into [Cambodia](#) and [Laos](#), "tit-for-tat" retaliatory bombing raids into North Vietnam, and a series of "graduated overt pressures" against North Vietnam, including air attacks against military and industrial targets. Firm warnings were delivered to Hanoi through Canadian intermediaries that continued support for the insurgency could bring great devastation to North Vietnam itself. At an NSC meeting on March 17, top administration officials expressed confidence that increased military and economic aid would be enough to stem the tide in [South Vietnam](#). They also agreed, however, that failure of the program outlined in NSAM 288 might leave them no choice but to take the war to North Vietnam.<sup>14</sup>

The spring of 1964 program, like the programs before it, produced meager results. Under American supervision, [Khanh](#) developed ambitious plans for bringing the government down to the village level, but there remained a vast gap between planning and implementation. By U.S. estimates, the [Vietcong](#) controlled more than 40 percent of the territory and more than 50 percent of the

13 Johnson to Lodge, April 4, 1964, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 3.

14 Summary record of NSC meeting, March 17, 1964, Johnson Papers, National Security File, NSC Meetings File, Box 1.

population of [South Vietnam](#), and in many areas it was so firmly entrenched that it could not be dislodged without the application of massive force. Where it could function freely, the government was hampered by a shortage of skilled officials and by what one American described as "outmoded concepts, directives and practices, bureaucratic constipation, [and] insufficient on-the-spot resources."<sup>15</sup> As a result of spiraling [desertion](#) rates, the [ARVN](#)'s strength remained well below the figure authorized before the projected increase. The army won a few minor engagements in the early summer, but it was never able to gain the initiative. American officials publicly lavished praise on Khanh's "able and energetic leadership," and [Khanh](#) dutifully followed American suggestions for gaining popular support, visiting numerous villages and cities and even making a series of "fireside chats." But while a word from well-placed Americans could topple governments in Vietnam, it could not induce stability, and mere speeches were inadequate to bring together South Vietnam's disparate political forces. Catholics and [Buddhists](#) mobilized against each other and agitated against a government neither trusted. After a period of quiescence, the students began to stir again. The government itself was rent by internal dissension, and a coup plot in July failed only because the United States made known its opposition. [Maxwell Taylor](#), who replaced [Lodge](#) as Ambassador in midsummer, advised Washington in August that "the best thing that can be said about Khanh's government is that it has lasted six months and has about a 50-50 chance of lasting out the year."<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime, [Hanoi](#) had responded defiantly to American warnings. There is no reason to suppose that the North Vietnamese leaders wanted war with the United States. Rather, they seem to have remained hopeful that intensification of aid to the [Vietcong](#) would force the collapse of the South Vietnamese government, leaving the United States no choice but to abandon its ally. They may have dismissed the various U.S. "signals" as mere bluff. In any event, they were not prepared to abandon their goal in the face of American threats. In the spring and summer of 1964, North Vietnam mobilized its own forces for war, speeded up the transformation

<sup>15</sup> [William Colby](#) memorandum, May 11, 1964, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 3. <sup>16</sup> Quoted in [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), III, 82.

of the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) into a modern logistical network capable of handling large trucks, and began to prepare units of its own regular army for [infiltration](#) into [South Vietnam](#) intact. Premier [Pham Van Dong](#) bluntly informed Canadian Blair Seaborn in June that the stakes were high for [North Vietnam](#) as well as for the United States and that the NLF and its supporters were prepared to endure regardless of the cost. If the United States forced war upon North Vietnam, he concluded with a ringing declaration, "We shall win!"<sup>17</sup>

Under these circumstances, Americans increasingly looked north for a solution they could not find in the south. Alarmed by the persistent lack of progress in South Vietnam, annoyed by [Hanoi's](#) defiant response, and fearful that the North Vietnamese might seek to exploit the administration's presumed immobility in an election year, some of [Johnson's](#) advisers by the midsummer of 1964 had developed a full "scenario" of graduated overt pressures against the north, according to which the President, after securing a Congressional resolution, would authorize air strikes against selected North Vietnamese targets. Secretaries [Rusk](#) and [McNamara](#) finally rejected the program for fear that it would "raise a whole series of disagreeable questions" which might jeopardize passage of the administration's civil rights legislation, but the proposals clearly indicate the drift of official attitudes during this period.<sup>18</sup>

The administration implemented much of the proposed "scenario" in response to a series of incidents in the Gulf of [Tonkin](#) in early August. While engaged in electronic espionage off the coast of North Vietnam on the morning of August 1, the destroyer [Maddox](#) encountered a group of North Vietnamese torpedo boats. South Vietnamese gunboats involved in OPLAN 34A operations had bombarded the nearby island of Hon Me the preceding evening, and the North Vietnamese, apparently assuming that the Maddox had been supporting the covert attacks, closed in on the destroyer. In a brief and frenzied engagement, the Maddox opened fire, the patrol boats launched torpedoes, and aircraft from the [USS Ticonderoga](#) joined the fighting. The torpedo boats were driven away, and one was badly damaged.

<sup>17</sup> George C. Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the [Pentagon Papers](#)* (Austin, Tex., 1983), p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> McNamara-Rusk memorandum, June 11, 1964, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 4.

[Johnson](#) was reportedly enraged when he learned of the encounter, but no retaliation was ordered. "The other side got a sting out of this," [Secretary of State Rusk](#) remarked. "If they do it again, they'll get another sting."<sup>19</sup> To avoid any appearance of weakness and to assert traditional claims to freedom of the seas, the [Navy](#) ordered the [Maddox](#) to resume operations in the Gulf of [Tonkin](#) and sent the [destroyer C. Turner Joy](#) to support it. The United States was not seeking to provoke another attack, but it did not go out of its way to avoid one either. The administration kept the destroyers close to North Vietnamese shores, where they were vulnerable to attack. Eager for "open season" on the North Vietnamese, responsible military officials in the area were choosing targets for retaliatory raids before reports of a second attack began to come in.

On the night of August 4, while operating in heavy seas some sixty miles off the North Vietnamese coast, the Maddox and Turner Joy suddenly reported that they were under attack. The initial reports were based on sonar and radar contacts, both of which were admittedly unreliable under the adverse weather conditions, and on visual sightings of torpedoes and enemy searchlights on a night which one seaman described as "darker than the hubs of Hell." The captain of the Maddox later conceded that evidence of an attack was less than conclusive. North Vietnamese gunboats were probably operating in the area, but no evidence has ever been produced to demonstrate that they committed hostile acts.

This time, Washington was poised to strike back. Reports of an impending attack began to arrive in the capital early on the morning of August 4, and the Joint Chiefs immediately insisted that the United States must "clobber" the attackers. Throughout the morning, while the destroyers reported being under continuous attack, the Joint Chiefs worked out a series of retaliatory options ranging from limited air strikes against North Vietnamese naval installations to mining of parts of the coastline. When the President met with his advisers in the early afternoon, there was no doubt that an attack had taken place. The CIA pointed out quite logically that the North Vietnamese might be responding defensively to the commando raids on their territory, but the administration concluded that [Hanoi](#) was trying to make the United States appear a

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in John Galloway, [The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) (Rutherford, N.J., 1970), p. 52. For a good short account, see "The 'Phantom Battle' That Led to War," *U.S. News & World Report* (July 23, 1984), pp. 56-67.

"paper tiger." [Johnson](#) and his advisers agreed, as [McNamara](#) put it, that "we cannot sit still as a nation and let them attack us on the high seas and get away with it." They quickly decided on a "firm, swift retaliatory [air] strike" against North Vietnamese torpedo boat bases.<sup>20</sup>

Although serious questions were subsequently raised about the nature and even existence of the alleged attacks, the administration stuck by its decision. "FLASH" messages from the [Maddox](#) arriving in Washington early in the afternoon indicated that "freak weather effects" on the radar and sonar, as well as "overeager" sonarmen, may have accounted for many of the reported torpedo attacks and enemy contacts. Contradicting earlier messages, the commander of the Maddox also reported that there had been no "visual sightings" and that a "complete evaluation" of all the evidence should be made before retaliation was ordered. McNamara postponed implementation of the air strikes temporarily to make "damned sure that the attacks had taken place." By late afternoon, however, he was convinced, on the basis of evidence which appears suspect. Ignoring the belated uncertainty of the men on the scene, the [Secretary of Defense](#) accepted at face value the judgment of the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet, Admiral [U.S. Grant Sharp](#), in Honolulu, whose certainty was based on the first reports from the Maddox and intercepts of North Vietnamese messages indicating that two patrol boats had been "sacrificed." McNamara and his military advisers did not knowingly lie about the alleged attacks, but they were obviously in a mood to retaliate and they seem to have selected from the evidence available to them those parts that confirmed what they wanted to believe. Accepting McNamara's conclusions without question, Johnson in the late afternoon authorized retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnamese torpedo boat bases and nearby oil storage dumps. Described by the Joint Chiefs as a "pretty good effort," the strikes destroyed or damaged twenty-five patrol boats and 90 percent of the oil storage facilities at Vinh.<sup>21</sup>

The President also seized the opportunity to secure passage of

<sup>20</sup> "Chronology of Events, Tuesday, August 4 and Wednesday, August 5, 1964, Tonkin Gulf Strike," Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Viet-ham, Box 18; summary notes of 538th NSC meeting, August 4, 1964, Johnson Papers, National Security File, NSC Meetings File, Box 1; Rusk to Taylor, August 8, 1964, DDRS(75)845-H.

<sup>21</sup> "Chronology of Events," Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 18; "Transcripts of Telephone Conversations, 4-5 August," Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 228.

a Congressional resolution authorizing him to take "all necessary measures to repel any armed attacks against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." [Johnson](#) did not seek the resolution as a blank check for a later expansion of the war to which he was already committed. At this point, he still hoped that American objectives in Vietnam could be achieved by limited means. His main purpose rather was to indicate to [North Vietnam](#) that the nation was united in its determination to stand firm in Vietnam. The resolution also served immediate domestic political needs. The show of force and the appeal for national support permitted him to disarm his Republican challenger, Senator [Barry Goldwater](#), who had vigorously urged escalation of the war, and to demonstrate that he could be firm in defending American interests without recklessly expanding the war. In presenting its case, however, the administration deliberately misled Congress and the American people. Nothing was said about the covert raids. Official reports indicated that the [Maddox](#) was engaged in routine patrols in international waters. The incidents were portrayed as "deliberate attacks" and "open aggression on the high seas."

Congress responded quickly and pliantly. Senator [Wayne Morse](#) of Oregon raised some embarrassing questions about the covert raids and the mission of the American destroyers. Senator [Ernest Gruening](#) of Alaska attacked the resolution as a "predated declaration of war," and Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin attempted to limit the grant of authority to the executive. During a period when America's national interests seemed constantly in peril, however, Congress had grown accustomed to approving executive initiatives without serious question, and the crisis atmosphere seemed to leave no time for debate. "The American flag has been fired upon," Representative Ross Adair of Indiana exclaimed. "We will not and cannot tolerate such things."<sup>22</sup> The Senate debated the resolution less than ten hours, during much of which time the chamber was less than one-third full. By his own admission more concerned with the challenge posed by Goldwater than with giving a blank check to Johnson, Senator [J. William Fulbright](#) carefully shepherded the resolution through, choking off debate and amendments. The vote in the Senate was an overwhelming 88 to 2, with only Morse and Gruening dissenting. Consideration

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Anthony Austin, *The President's War* (Philadelphia, 1971), p. 98.

in the House was even more perfunctory, passage taking a mere forty minutes and the vote unanimous.

From a domestic political standpoint, [Johnson](#)'s handling of the [Tonkin Gulf incident](#) was masterly. His firm but restrained response to the alleged North Vietnamese attacks won broad popular support, his rating in the Louis Harris poll skyrocketing from 42 to 72 percent overnight. He effectively neutralized [Goldwater](#) on Vietnam, a fact which contributed to his overwhelming electoral victory in November. Moreover, this first formal Congressional debate on Vietnam brought a near-unanimous endorsement of the President's policies and provided him an apparently solid foundation on which to construct future policy.

In time, Johnson would pay a heavy price for his easy victory. U.S. prestige was now publicly and more firmly committed not merely to defending [South Vietnam](#) but also to responding to North Vietnamese provocations. By attacking North Vietnamese targets, the President temporarily silenced his hawkish critics inside and outside of government, but in doing so he had broken a long-standing barrier against taking the war to the north. The first steps having been taken, the next ones would be easier. Johnson's victory in Congress probably encouraged him to take the legislators lightly in making future policy decisions on Vietnam. And when the administration's case for reprisals later turned out to be less than overwhelming, many members of Congress correctly concluded that they had been deceived. The President's resounding triumph in the Tonkin Gulf affair brought with it enormous, if still unforeseen, costs.

The Johnson administration did not follow up the Tonkin Gulf reprisals with additional attacks against North Vietnam. The President preferred not to jeopardize his political fortunes by escalating the war. Having established his determination to defend American interests with force if necessary, in the final months of the campaign he emphasized his wish to limit American involvement if possible. "We seek no wider war," he stated in numerous speeches.

At the same time, political turmoil in South Vietnam made caution essential. Attempting to exploit the Tonkin Gulf affair to save his political skin, [Khanh](#) on August 6 assumed near-dictatorial powers and imposed severe restrictions on civil liberties. Thousands of Saigonese immediately took to the streets, and when an angry mob forced Khanh to stand atop a tank and shout "Down

with dictatorships," the humiliated General resigned. For days, near anarchy reigned in [Saigon](#), mobs rampaging through the streets, [Buddhists](#) and Catholics waging open warfare, and gangs of thugs fighting and pillaging with hatchets and machetes. Behind the scenes, politicians and generals, [Khanh](#) included, jockeyed for power.

Under these circumstances, the administration concluded that it would be unwise to escalate the war. By early September, the Air Force and [Marine Corps](#) were vigorously pressing for extended air attacks against [North Vietnam](#). Ambassador [Taylor](#) and others conceded that such steps would have to be taken in time, but they argued that it would be too risky to "overstrain the currently weakened GVN [Government of Vietnam] by drastic action in the immediate future." [Johnson](#) concurred, stating that he did not wish to "enter the patient in a 10-round bout, when he was in no shape to hold out for one round. We should get him ready to face 3 or 4 rounds at least," the President concluded. While holding other options in reserve, the administration decided merely to continue its covert operations against North Vietnam and to be ready to respond to North Vietnamese provocations on a "tit for tat basis."<sup>23</sup> Johnson remained sufficiently concerned about the internal situation in [South Vietnam](#) that he refused to retaliate when the Viet-cong on November 1 attacked the U.S. air base at [Bien Hoa](#), killing four Americans and destroying five aircraft.

By the end of November, however, a firm consensus had emerged that the United States must soon undertake what Taylor described as a "carefully orchestrated bombing attack" against North Vietnam.<sup>24</sup> American officials disagreed among themselves as to the reasons for the bombing, some viewing it as a way of boosting morale in South Vietnam, others as a means of cutting down on [infiltration](#) from the north, and still others as a weapon to force [Hanoi](#) to stop its support of the insurgency. They also disagreed on the type of bombing campaign that should be mounted. The Joint Chiefs pressed for a "fast and full squeeze" - massive attacks against major industries and military targets. Civilians in the Pentagon and State Department advocated a "slow squeeze," a graduated series of attacks beginning with infiltration routes in [Laos](#)

<sup>23</sup> [McGeorge Bundy](#) memorandum for the record, September 14, 1964, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 6.

<sup>24</sup> Taylor to State Department, August 18, 1964, [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), III, 547.



and slowly extending to targets in [North Vietnam](#). Despite warnings from the intelligence community that bombing would probably not have a decisive impact on the war in the south, the great majority of [Johnson's](#) advisers endorsed the use of [air power](#) in some form.

Only Undersecretary of State [George Ball](#) vigorously dissented. An experienced diplomat who as Counsel to the French Embassy had observed firsthand the French defeat in [Indochina](#), Ball forcefully argued that an air offensive would not solve the American dilemma in Vietnam. The contention that bombing North Vietnam would improve morale in the south was at best unproven, he warned. There was good reason to doubt, moreover, whether air power would compel [Hanoi](#) to stop its support of the insurgency, and if it did whether the south would be able to defeat the Vietcong. In Ball's view, the risks of escalation outweighed the possible gains. Hanoi might retaliate by pouring its virtually unlimited manpower into the south, forcing the United States to respond in kind and raising the possibility of a drawn-out and bloody conflict. American escalation might provoke [Chinese](#) intervention or even force the [Soviet Union](#) and China to put aside their differences. Most important, the United States could not be certain of controlling events after the process of escalation had been initiated. "Once on the tiger's back," Ball concluded, "we cannot be sure of picking the place to dismount."<sup>25</sup>

Ball's argument had little impact in Washington. Johnson's advisers conceded that the bombing might not achieve its objectives, but they were prepared to take the chance. At the very least, they argued, it would give the government of Vietnam a "breathing spell and opportunity to improve." They were confident, moreover, that they could control the risks of escalation. Moscow's role in Vietnam was "likely to remain a relatively minor one." A limited bombing campaign that did not threaten the survival of North Vietnam would give China no pretext for intervention, and Vietnam's historic fears of Chinese domination would lead Hanoi to discourage large-scale Chinese involvement. Most important, the consequences of a possible defeat in Vietnam made the risks acceptable. China had just exploded a nuclear weapon, increasing its prestige and its potential for troublemaking in the Far East, and

<sup>25</sup> George W. Ball, "Top Secret: The Prophecy the President Rejected," *The Atlantic*, 230 (July 1972), 35-49. See also George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern* (New York, 1982), especially pp. 380-385.

American officials concluded that it was more urgent than ever to hold the line in Vietnam. "We should delay [China's](#) swallowing up Southeast Asia until (a) she develops better table manners and (b) the food is somewhat more indigestible," [Michael Forrestal](#) observed.<sup>26</sup> Convinced that something must be done to avert a total collapse in [South Vietnam](#) and that bombing was less risky than the introduction of ground forces, the administration turned to [air power](#) as the only acceptable solution to an urgent problem.

By the end of November, [Johnson's](#) senior advisers had formulated concrete proposals for the use of American air power in Vietnam. Rejecting the more extreme program of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, they advocated a two-phase plan of gradually intensifying air attacks. The first phase, to last roughly a month, consisted of limited bombing raids against [infiltration](#) routes in [Laos](#), along with reprisal strikes against North Vietnamese targets in response to any provocative acts. In the meantime, [Taylor](#) would use the promise of direct strikes against [North Vietnam](#) to persuade the South Vietnamese leadership to put its house in order. Once the [Saigon](#) government had reached an acceptable level of stability, the United States would move into phase two, a large-scale air offensive, lasting from two to six months, to be followed, if necessary, by a naval blockade of North Vietnam.

Persisting instability in Saigon delayed implementation of the program for more than two months. On December 1, Johnson approved immediate initiation of phase one bombing operations in Laos, but he would go no further. Insisting that it was "easy to get in or out" but "hard to be patient," he ordered Taylor to do what was necessary to get the South Vietnamese to pull together. He would not send American boys "out to die" while the South Vietnamese were "acting as they are." Moreover, if the United States was going to "slap" North Vietnam, the South Vietnamese and Americans must be prepared to "take a slap back." "We don't want to send a widow woman to slap Jack Dempsey." The President and his advisers agreed that there would be reprisals, but they deferred a decision on the timing and the form these should take.<sup>27</sup> Johnson would not even retaliate when the [Vietcong](#) on Christmas Eve

<sup>26</sup> Forrestal to [William Bundy](#), November 23, 1964, [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), III, 644.

<sup>27</sup> Meeting on Vietnam, December 1, 1964, Johnson Papers, Meeting Notes File, Box 1.

bombed an American officers' billet in [Saigon](#), killing two Americans and injuring thirty-eight. The President later justified his inaction on the grounds that reprisals might have provoked further [Vietcong](#) attacks at a time when "the political base in the South... was probably too shaky to withstand a major assault by the Communists. " 28

By the end of January 1965, however, the major argument against escalation had become the most compelling argument for it. After Khanh's resignation, a civilian government had been formed, but it was never able to consolidate its position. Upon his return to Saigon, Taylor called together the top political and military leaders and informed them that the United States would consider escalating the war if they could work together and stabilize the government. The answer came within several days when a group of younger military officers headed by Vice Air Marshal [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) and General [Nguyen Chanh Thi](#) executed a "purge" that amounted to a coup. Outraged, Taylor called the officers together and lectured them as a drill instructor might talk to a group of recruits. Perhaps something was wrong with his French, he asked sarcastically, for the officers had obviously not understood his injunction for stability. "Now you have made a real mess," he added angrily. "We cannot carry you forever if you do things like this."29

The harsh reprimand produced some "shame-faced grins," Taylor later recalled, but no results.<sup>30</sup> The military finally agreed to cooperate with civilian politicians in forming a new government, but [Buddhist](#) leaders refused to participate and launched a new round of demonstrations, hunger strikes, and immolations which took on increasingly anti-American tones. Protesters publicly demanded the resignation of Taylor, and in late January 5,000 students sacked the United States Information Service library in [Hue](#). Rumors of coup plots abounded throughout the month, and American officials began to fear that there might emerge out of the chaos a new government willing to negotiate with the Vietcong and [North Vietnam](#) on the basis of a U.S. [withdrawal](#). In the meantime,

28 [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), *The Vantage Point* (New York, 1971), p. 121.

29 Quoted in Nell Sheehan et al., *The Pentagon Papers* as Published by the New York Times (New York, 1971), pp. 371-381.

30 Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares* (New York, 1972), p. 330.

the [Vietcong](#) had decimated two elite South Vietnamese units in major battles. Combined with reports that North Vietnamese regular units were now entering the south, the defeats aroused growing fears that the enemy had decided to launch an all-out attack which the [ARVN](#) could not withstand. "To take no positive action now," [Taylor](#) ominously warned, "is to accept defeat in the fairly near future."<sup>31</sup>

By the end of January, most of [Johnson](#)'s advisers agreed that persisting instability in the south required the United States to bomb the north. The bombing might not have a decisive impact on the war, [William Bundy](#) advised, but it offered "at least a faint hope of really improving the Vietnamese situation." More important, the impending collapse in South Vietnam made clear that a continuation of existing policies could "only lead to a disastrous defeat." Even if the United States could not hold South Vietnam, Assistant [Secretary of Defense John McNaughton](#) argued, it would appear stronger to allies and adversaries alike if it "kept slugging away" rather than meekly accepting defeat. No formal policy decision was made, but by the end of January most administration officials agreed that the United States should seize the first opportunity to launch air strikes and should then "feel its way" into a sustained bombing campaign against [North Vietnam](#).<sup>32</sup>

The opportunity was not long in coming. On February 6, Vietcong units attacked a U.S. Army barracks in [Pleiku](#) and a nearby helicopter base, killing nine Americans and destroying five aircraft. That evening, after a meeting of less than two hours, the administration decided to strike back. Only Senator [Mansfield](#) dissented, arguing that the United States might provoke [Chinese](#) intervention, but Johnson brusquely dismissed Mansfield's argument. "We have kept our guns over the mantel and our shells in the cupboard for a long time now," he exclaimed with obvious impatience. "I can't ask our American soldiers out there to continue to fight with one hand behind their backs."<sup>33</sup> The President ordered the immediate implementation of FLAMING DART, a plan of reprisal strikes already drawn up by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Later that day and again the following day American aircraft struck North Vietnamese military installations just across the seventeenth parallel. When the

31 Johnson, *Vantage Point*, p. 122.

32 Bundy to Rusk, January 6, 1965, [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), III, 685.

33 Johnson, *Vantage Point*, p. 125.

[Vietcong](#) on February 10 attacked an American enlisted men's quarters at [Qui Nhon](#), the President ordered another, even heavier series of air strikes.

Within less than forty-eight hours, the administration had moved from reprisals to a continuing, graduated program of air attacks against [North Vietnam](#). [McGeorge Bundy](#) returned from a visit to [South Vietnam](#) the day after the [Pleiku](#) raids and warned that "without new U.S. action defeat appears inevitable - probably not in a matter of weeks or perhaps even months, but within the next year or so." Bundy and [McNaughton](#), who had accompanied him to Vietnam, urged the immediate implementation of a policy of "sustained reprisal" against the north. McNaughton conceded the risks but argued that "measured against the cost of defeat" the program would be "cheap," and even if it failed to turn the tide "the value of the effort" would "exceed the costs."<sup>34</sup> The next day, apparently without extended debate, the administration initiated [ROLLING THUNDER](#), the policy of gradually intensified air attacks which Bundy and McNaughton had advocated.

The administration was considerably less than candid in explaining to the American public the reasons for and significance of its decision to bomb North Vietnam. Spokesmen from the President down justified the air strikes as a response to the Pleiku attack and emphatically denied implementing any basic change of policy. It is abundantly clear, however, that Pleiku was the pretext rather than the cause of the February decision. The possibility of a South Vietnamese collapse appeared to make essential the adoption of a policy American officials had been advocating for more than two months. It was, therefore, simply a matter of finding the right opportunity to justify measures to which the administration was already committed. Pleiku provided such an opportunity, although it could as easily have been something else. "Pleikus are like streetcars," McGeorge Bundy later remarked.<sup>35</sup> And despite the administration's disclaimers, the February decisions marked an important watershed in the war. The initiation of regular bombing attacks advanced well beyond the limited "tit-for-tat" reprisal strikes of Tonkin Gulf and provided a built-in argument for further escalation should that become necessary.

Indeed, almost as soon as ROLLING THUNDER got under

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 127-128.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Anthony Lake, ed., *The Vietnam Legacy* (New York, 1976), p. 183.

way, there were pressures to expand it. The initial attacks achieved meager results, provoking [Taylor](#) to complain that [ROLLING THUNDER](#) had constituted but a "few isolated thunder claps" and to call for a "mounting crescendo" of air strikes against [North Vietnam](#).<sup>36</sup> Intelligence reports ominously warned that the military situation in [South Vietnam](#) was steadily deteriorating and that at the present rate the government within six months might be reduced to a series of islands surrounding the provincial capitals. From the outset, [Johnson](#) had insisted on maintaining tight personal control over the air war; "they can't even bomb an outhouse without my approval," he is said to have boasted.<sup>37</sup> But in response to these urgent warnings, the President permitted a gradual expansion of the bombing and a relaxation of the restrictions under which it was carried out. The use of [napalm](#) was authorized to ensure greater destructiveness, and pilots were given the authority to strike alternative targets without prior authorization if the original targets were inaccessible. In April, American and South Vietnamese pilots flew a total of 3,600 [sorties](#) against North Vietnamese targets. The air war quickly grew from a sporadic, halting effort into a regular, determined program.

The expanded air war also provided the pretext for the introduction of the first U.S. ground forces into Vietnam. Anticipating [Vietcong](#) attacks against U.S. air bases in retaliation for ROLLING THUNDER, General [Westmoreland](#) in late February urgently requested two [Marine](#) landing teams to protect the air base at Danang. Although he conceded the importance of protecting the base, Taylor expressed grave concern about the long-range implications of Westmoreland's request. He questioned whether American combat forces were adequately trained for guerrilla warfare in the Asian jungles, and he warned that the introduction of such forces would encourage the [ARVN](#) to pass military responsibility to the United States. Most important, the introduction of even small numbers of combat troops with a specific and limited mission would violate a ground rule the United States had rigorously adhered to since the beginning of the [Indochina](#) wars, and once the first step had been taken it would be "very difficult to hold [the] line."<sup>38</sup>

Taylor's objections were in many ways prophetic, but they

36 [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), III, 335.

37 [Westmoreland](#), *Soldier Reports*, p. 119.

38 [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), III, 418.

were ignored. The need appears to have been so pressing and immediate, the commitment so small, that the decision was made routinely, with little discussion of its long-range consequences. After less than a week of apparently perfunctory debate, the President approved [Westmoreland's](#) request, and on March 8, two battalions of Marines, fitted out in full battle regalia, with tanks and 8-inch howitzers, splashed ashore near [Danang](#) where they were welcomed by South Vietnamese officials and by pretty Vietnamese girls passing out leis of flowers. It was an ironically happy beginning for what would be a wrenching experience for the two nations.

As [Taylor](#) had predicted, once the first step had been taken it was very difficult to hold the line. Alarmed by the slow pace of the [ARVN](#) buildup and fearful of a major [Vietcong](#) offensive in the [Central Highlands](#), Westmoreland concluded by mid-March that if the United States was to avert disaster in Vietnam there was "no solution ... other than to put our own finger in the dike."<sup>39</sup> He therefore advocated the immediate commitment of two U.S Army [divisions](#), one to the highlands and the other to the [Saigon](#) area. The Joint Chiefs forcefully endorsed Westmoreland's request. Long impatient with the administration's caution and eager to assume full responsibility for the war, they even went beyond Westmoreland, pressing for the deployment of as many as three divisions to be used in offensive operations against the enemy.

The administration now found itself on what [McNaughton](#) called "the horns of a trilemma." The options of [withdrawal](#) and a massive air war against [North Vietnam](#) had been firmly rejected. It was apparent by mid-March, however, that the limited bombing campaign undertaken in February would not produce immediate results, and Westmoreland's urgent warnings raised fears that further inaction might lead to a South Vietnamese collapse. Many administration officials therefore reluctantly concluded that there was no alternative but to introduce American ground forces into Vietnam. They fully appreciated, on the other hand, the possible domestic political consequences of the sort of commitment Westmoreland proposed. And Taylor ominously warned that to place major increments of American forces in the highlands would invite heavy losses, even the possibility of an American [Dienbienphu](#).

The administration resolved its "trilemma" with a compromise,

<sup>39</sup> Westmoreland, Soldier Reports, p. 126.

rejecting the proposals of [Westmoreland](#) and the Joint Chiefs but still approving a significant commitment of ground forces and an enlargement of their mission. At a conference in Honolulu in late April, [McNamara](#), [Taylor](#), and the Joint Chiefs put aside their differences and agreed upon a hastily improvised strategy, the object of which was to "break the will of the DRV/VC by depriving them of victory." The bombing would be maintained at its "present tempo" for six months to a year. But the conferees agreed, as McNamara put it, that bombing "would not do the job alone."<sup>40</sup> They therefore decided that some 40,000 additional U.S. ground combat forces should be sent to Vietnam. These forces were not to be used in the highlands or given an unrestricted mission, as Westmoreland and the Joint Chiefs had advocated, but would be used in the more cautious "[enclave strategy](#)" devised by Taylor. Deployed in enclaves around the major U.S. bases, their backs to the sea, they would be authorized to undertake operations within fifty miles of their base areas. The administration hoped that this limited commitment of forces would be adequate to deny the enemy a knockout blow, thus allowing time for the South Vietnamese buildup and for the bombing to take its toll on [Hanoi](#). Although the April decisions stopped short of the commitment urged by the military, they advanced well beyond the original objective of base security and marked a major step toward a large-scale involvement in the ground war. The new strategy shifted emphasis from the air war against [North Vietnam](#) to the war in the south, and by adopting it, the administration at least tacitly committed itself to expand its forces as the military situation required.

By this time Johnson recognized that achievement of American objectives in Vietnam would require a sustained and costly commitment, but he refused to submit his policies to public or Congressional debate. Many administration officials shared a view widely accepted at the height of the Cold War that foreign policy issues were too complex and too important to be left to an indifferent and ignorant public and a divided and unwieldy Congress. Johnson seems to have feared that a declaration of war might trigger a [Chinese](#) or Soviet response or increase domestic pressures for an unlimited conflict in Vietnam. He particularly feared, as he later

<sup>40</sup> McNamara to Johnson, April 21, 1965, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 13.



put it, that a Congressional debate on "that bitch of a war" would destroy "the woman I really loved - the [Great Society](#)."<sup>41</sup> The President's unparalleled knowledge of Congress and his confidence in his renowned powers of persuasion encouraged him to believe that he could expand the war without provoking a backlash, and the repeated deference of the Congress to executive initiatives gave him no reason to anticipate a major challenge.

[Johnson](#) thus took the nation into war in Vietnam by indirection and dissimulation. The bombing was publicly justified as a response to the [Pleiku](#) attack and the broader pattern of North Vietnamese "aggression," rather than as a desperate attempt to halt the military and political deterioration in [South Vietnam](#). The administration never publicly acknowledged the shift from reprisals to "sustained pressures." The dispatch of ground troops was explained solely in terms of the need to protect U.S. military installations, and not until June, when it crept out by accident in a press release, did administration spokesmen concede that American troops were authorized to undertake offensive operations.

Although the administration effectively concealed the direction of its policy, the obvious expansion of the war, particularly the bombing, attracted growing criticism. White House mail ran heavily against the bombing. A few newspapers joined the New York Times in warning of the cost of "lives lost, blood spilt and treasure wasted, of fighting a war on a jungle front 7,000 miles from the coast of California." Prominent Democratic Senators such as [Frank Church](#), [Mike Mansfield](#), and [George McGovern](#) called upon the President to search for a negotiated settlement. Professors at the University of Michigan, Harvard, and Syracuse conducted all-night "[teach-ins](#)," students on various campuses held small protest meetings and distributed petitions against the bombing, and in April 12,000 students gathered in Washington to march in protest against the war.

Escalation also aroused widespread criticism abroad and brought forth, even from some of America's staunchest allies, appeals for restraint. United Nations Secretary General [U Thant](#) of Burma had been trying for months to arrange private talks between the United States and [North Vietnam](#), and when the administration responded coolly to his overtures and initiated the bombing he

41 Quoted in Kearns, Johnson, p. 251.

publicly charged that Washington was withholding the truth from the American people. In early April, seventeen nonaligned nations issued an "urgent appeal" for negotiations without precondition. [Great Britain](#) as co-chairman of the Geneva Conference called upon the parties to the conflict to state their terms for a settlement. And in a move that particularly galled [Johnson](#), Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson, speaking on American soil, appealed to Washington to stop the bombing and work for a peaceful settlement.

The administration moved quickly to counter its critics. White House aides organized "Target: College Campuses," sending their "best young troops," to speak at universities and bringing professors and student leaders to Washington for "seminars."<sup>42</sup> The President invited dissident Congressmen and newspaper editors and representatives of foreign governments in for sessions that sometimes lasted for three hours, vigorously defending his policies and reminding his visitors of past favors. Administration spokesmen publicly replied to their critics, revealing from the start an abrasiveness and arrogance that would steadily widen the gap between Washington and opponents of the war. Addressing the American Society for International Law, [Secretary of State Rusk](#) expressed incredulity at the "stubborn disregard of plain facts by men who are supposed to be helping our young to learn... how to think."<sup>43</sup>

The administration also sought to disarm its critics by several dramatic peace initiatives. In a speech at Johns Hopkins University on April 7, Johnson affirmed that the United States was prepared to enter into "unconditional discussions" and even held out the offer of a billion-dollar economic development program for the [Mekong](#) River Valley region, a program "on a scale even to dwarf our TVA."<sup>44</sup> In early May, the President, with considerable reluctance, approved a five-day bombing pause, accompanied by private messages to [Hanoi](#) indicating that a diminution of North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) military activity could lead to a scaling down of U.S. air attacks.

The President was unquestionably sincere in his desire for peace, but the spring 1965 initiatives were designed primarily to

42 Jack Valenti to [McGeorge Bundy](#), April 23, 1965, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 13.

43 Quoted in Time (April 30, 1965), 29.

44 Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), 1965 (Washington, D.C., 1966), I, 394-399.

silence domestic and international critics rather than to set in motion determined efforts to find a peace settlement. Despite [Johnson's](#) offer to participate in "unconditional discussions," the United States had no real desire to begin serious negotiations at a time when its bargaining position was so weak. Indeed, it had not even begun internal discussions to formulate a program for negotiations. The President made clear in his [Johns Hopkins speech](#), moreover, that the United States would not compromise its fundamental objective of an independent [South Vietnam](#), which, by implication, meant a non-Communist South Vietnam. And administration officials were certain that the North Vietnamese would not negotiate on this basis.

As expected, the peace moves brought the two nations no closer to negotiations. No more inclined than the United States to make concessions under duress, [Hanoi](#) denounced the bombing pause as a "worn-out trick of deceit and threat," and refused to curb its military activities. The extent to which [North Vietnam](#) was willing to negotiate at this point is unclear, but in any event the United States offered little inducement for negotiations. On April 8, [Pham Van Dong](#) did release a four-point program for negotiations. In theory at least, much of the program did not conflict with basic U.S. objectives, and some American officials urged further contacts to explore Hanoi's position in greater depth. But the President and his top advisers interpreted the statement that a settlement must be in "accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front" as only a thinly disguised cover for Communist domination of South Vietnam and saw no reason to discuss it further.

The peace moves did help still domestic and foreign criticism, at least temporarily, and the administration used the respite to solidify Congressional support. On May 4, Johnson presented Congress with a request for \$700 million to support military operations in Vietnam and made clear that he would regard a vote for the appropriation as an endorsement of his policies. The basic decisions had already been made, of course, and the President did nothing to clarify the policy he was actually pursuing. It was very difficult for the legislators to vote against funds for troops already in the field, and Congress approved the request quickly and without dissent. Johnson would later cite this vote, along with that on the [Tonkin Gulf Resolution](#), to refute those critics who said he had not given Congress an opportunity to pass on his policy in Vietnam.

In the three months after the May bombing pause, the Johnson

administration edged inexorably toward its decision for war in Vietnam. Despite the bombing, continued increases in U.S. aid, and the small infusion of American ground forces, the military situation deteriorated drastically. At this most critical phase of the war, the [ARVN](#) was on the verge of disintegration. The [desertion](#) rate among draftees in training centers ran as high as 50 percent. Discouraged by the failure of the bombing to turn the war around and displaying a growing tendency to "let the Americans do it," the officer corps grew more cautious than usual. The high command was "close to anarchy" from internal squabbling and intrigue.<sup>45</sup> Bolstered by as many as four regiments of North Vietnamese regulars, the [Vietcong](#) took the offensive in May, and in major engagements in the highlands and just north of [Saigon](#) mauled ARVN forces and inflicted huge [casualties](#). The defeats increased [Westmoreland](#)'s already pronounced doubts about the ARVN's capabilities, and the heavy losses completely upset his plans for building up the South Vietnamese Army. By the end of May, he had concluded that major increments of U.S. forces would be required to avert defeat in Vietnam.

The political situation showed no signs of improvement. [Khanh](#) had continued to play a dominant political role after his resignation in August 1964, resuming the premiership for a brief period and then taking command of the armed forces. After more than a year at or near the center of power, during which time he had sharply exacerbated the divisions in South Vietnam, the embattled general finally withdrew from politics in February 1965 and to the relief of the Americans accepted an appointment as "roving ambassador." Following an impossibly confusing series of coups and countercoups, a civilian government was formed headed by [Phan Huy Quat](#), and relative quiet prevailed for a time. When Quat attempted to shake up his cabinet in May, however, another crisis developed and the so-called Young Turks, Air Marshal [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) and General [Nguyen Van Thieu](#), finally emerged from the shadows, dissolving the Quat government and assuming power. The new government, the fifth since the death of [Diem](#), would survive far longer than any of its predecessors, but at the outset its future seemed uncertain. Thieu, who assumed the position

<sup>45</sup> William Depuy memorandum for the record, March 9, 1965, and memorandum to Westmoreland, April 13, 1965, William Depuy Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., Folder D(65).

of Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, was respected by the Americans as a capable military leader, and [Taylor](#) regarded him as a man of "considerable poise and judgment."<sup>46</sup> The Prime Minister, [Ky](#), was another matter entirely. Customarily attired in a flashy flying suit with a bright purple scarf and an ivory-handled pistol hanging ostentatiously on his hip, the flamboyant, mustachioed Air Marshal had a well-earned reputation for "drinking, gambling and chasing women," as well as for speaking out of turn and using the air force for personal political intrigue.<sup>47</sup> The Americans found it hard to take Ky seriously and saw little cause for optimism in his accession to power. The Ky-Thieu directorate "seemed to all of us the bottom of the barrel, absolutely the bottom of the barrel," [William Bundy](#) later recalled.<sup>48</sup>

Under these circumstances, Johnson's advisers again began pressing for Vigorous action to stave off what appeared to be certain defeat. Long frustrated by the restrictions on the bombing, [Westmoreland](#), the Joint Chiefs, and [Walt Rostow](#) of the State Department urged intensification of the air war. The present level of bombing, they contended, was merely inconveniencing [Hanoi](#), and the restraints had given [North Vietnam](#) the freedom to strengthen both its offensive and defensive capabilities. Rostow, in particular, argued that military victory was within grasp if the United States would strike directly against North Vietnam's industrial base.

At the same time, Westmoreland and the Joint Chiefs advocated a drastic expansion of American ground forces and the adoption of an offensive strategy in the south. More certain than ever that [South Vietnam](#) lacked sufficient manpower to hold the line on its own, Westmoreland, with the support of the Joint Chiefs, requested an additional 150,000 U.S. troops in early June. Traditionalists in their attitude toward the use of military power, Westmoreland and the Joint Chiefs had opposed the [enclave strategy](#) from the start and now insisted that it be abandoned in favor of an aggressive, offensive strategy. "You must take the fight to the enemy," General [Earle Wheeler](#), the [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs](#) affirmed. "No one ever won a battle sitting on his ass."<sup>49</sup> Indeed, by

<sup>46</sup> Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares*, p. 345.

<sup>47</sup> [CIA](#) memorandum, October 8, 1964, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 7.

<sup>48</sup> William Bundy oral history interview, Johnson Papers.

<sup>49</sup> Graft, *Tuesday Cabinet*, p. 138.

the summer of 1965, even Ambassador [Taylor](#) conceded, as he later put it, that "the strength of the enemy offensive had completely overcome my former reluctance to use American ground troops in general combat."<sup>50</sup>

Only [George Ball](#) and Washington attorney [Clark Clifford](#), a frequent personal adviser to [Johnson](#), vigorously opposed a major commitment of American ground forces. Ball expressed profound doubt that the United States could defeat the [Vietcong](#) "or even force them to the conference table on our terms, no matter how many hundred thousand white, foreign (U.S.) troops we deploy." He expressed grave concern that approval of [Westmoreland](#)'s proposals would lead to a "protracted war involving an open-ended commitment of U.S. forces, mounting U.S. [casualties](#), no assurances of a satisfactory solution, and a serious danger of escalation at the end of the road." Once committed, he warned, there could be no turning back. "Our involvement will be so great that we cannot - without national humiliation - stop short of achieving our complete objectives." Clifford concurred, urging the President to keep U.S. forces to a minimum and to probe "every serious avenue leading to a possible settlement." "It won't be what we want," he concluded, "but we can learn to live with it."<sup>51</sup>

The clinching argument was provided by [McNamara](#) after another of his whirlwind visits to [Saigon](#) in early July. The [Secretary of Defense](#) underscored the pessimistic reports from Westmoreland and Taylor, and warned that to continue "holding on and playing for the breaks" would only defer the choice between escalation and [withdrawal](#), perhaps until it was "too late to do any good." McNamara conceded that the expansion of American involvement would make a later decision to withdraw "even more difficult and costly than would be the case today." On the other hand, it might "stave off defeat in the short run and offer a good chance of producing a favorable settlement in the longer run." The Secretary recommended the gradual deployment of an additional 100,000 American combat forces.<sup>52</sup>

In late July, Johnson made his fateful decisions, setting the

<sup>50</sup> Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares*, p. 347.

<sup>51</sup> Ball to Johnson, July 1, 1965, in Sheehan, [Pentagon Papers](#) (NYT), pp. 449-454; Clifford to Johnson, May 17, 1965, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 16.

<sup>52</sup> Johnson, *Vantage Point*, pp. 145-146.

United States on a course from which it would not deviate for nearly three years and opening the way for seven years of bloody warfare in Vietnam. The President did not approve the all-out bombing campaign urged by [Westmoreland](#) and the Joint Chiefs. He and his civilian advisers continued to fear that a direct, full-scale attack on [North Vietnam](#) might provoke [Chinese](#) intervention. They also felt that the industrial base around [Hanoi](#) was a major trump card held by the United States and that the threat of its destruction might be more useful than destruction itself. The administration approved Westmoreland's request to use [B-52s](#) for saturation bombing in [South Vietnam](#) and permitted a gradual intensification of the bombing of North Vietnam; [sorties](#) increased from 3,600 in April to 4,800 in June and would continue to increase thereafter. [Johnson](#) kept tight control over the bombing, personally approving the targets in advance of each strike and restricting air attacks to the area south of the twentieth parallel.

At the same time, the President approved a major new commitment of ground forces and a new strategy to govern their deployment. Determined to prevail in Vietnam and increasingly alarmed by the reports of steady military and political decline, in July he approved the immediate deployment of 50,000 troops to South Vietnam. Recognizing that this would not be enough, however, he privately agreed to commit another 50,000 before the end of the year, and implicitly, at least, he committed himself to furnish whatever additional forces might be needed later. Johnson also authorized Westmoreland to "commit U.S. troops to combat independent of or in conjunction with GVN forces in any situation... when... their use is necessary to strengthen the relative position of GVN forces."<sup>53</sup> These decisions rank among the most important in the history of American involvement in Vietnam. In July 1965, Johnson made an open-ended commitment to employ American military forces as the situation demanded. And by giving Westmoreland a free hand, he cleared the way for the United States to assume the burden of fighting in South Vietnam.

Some of Johnson's advisers strongly recommended that he place the July decisions squarely before the nation. The Joint Chiefs pressed for mobilization of the reserves and calling up the National Guard to make clear, as Wheeler later put it, that the United States

<sup>53</sup> Sheehan, [Pentagon Papers](#) (NYT), p. 412.

was not becoming engaged in "some two-penny military adventure."<sup>54</sup> [McNamara](#) was sufficiently concerned with the domestic political implications of the decisions to urge [Johnson](#) to declare a state of national emergency and to ask Congress for an increase in taxes - in short, without seeking a declaration of war, to put the nation on a war footing. The President himself apparently toyed with the idea of securing another Congressional resolution explicitly endorsing his policies.

After extensive deliberation, Johnson decided against any such steps. He continued to fear that anything resembling a declaration of war might provoke the [Soviet Union](#) and [China](#). His attorney general assured him that he had the power to commit large-scale forces without going to Congress.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps most important, the civil rights and Medicare bills were then at crucial stages in the legislative process, and Congressional approval was pending on numerous other administration proposals. The President was determined to establish his place in history through the achievement of sweeping domestic reforms, and he feared that going to Congress for authority to wage war in Vietnam would destroy his dream of creating the [Great Society](#) at home. Johnson thus rejected the advice of the Joint Chiefs and McNamara, informing his staff that he wished the decisions implemented in a "low-keyed manner in order (a) to avoid an abrupt challenge to the Communists, and (b) to avoid undue concern and excitement in the Congress and in domestic public opinion."<sup>56</sup> To avoid "undue excitement," the President continued to mislead Congress and the public as to the significance of the steps he was taking. To make his decisions more palatable to potential waverers, he and his aides issued dire warnings that a failure to act decisively would play into the hands of those who wanted to take drastic measures, the "Goldwater crowd," who were "more numerous, more powerful and more dangerous than the fleabite professors"<sup>57</sup>

To appease skeptics such as Senate Majority Leader

<sup>54</sup> [Earle Wheeler](#) oral history interview, Johnson Papers.

<sup>55</sup> Nicholas [Katzenbach](#) to Johnson, June 10, 1965, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 17.

<sup>56</sup> Benjamin Read memorandum, July 23, 1965, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 16.

<sup>57</sup> [McGeorge Bundy](#) to Johnson, July 14, 1965, Johnson Papers, Diary Backup File, Box 19.



[Mike Mansfield](#), [Johnson](#) implied that he would give equal priority to seeking a diplomatic settlement of the conflict, without divulging his certainty that such efforts were doomed to failure. In meetings with Congressional leaders and in a televised speech on July 28, he indicated that he was sending 50,000 troops to Vietnam and that more would be required later. But he emphatically denied that he had authorized any change in policy and he did not give a clear indication - even in the sense that he understood it at the time - of what lay ahead. His tactics reflected his continuing determination to achieve his goals in Vietnam without sacrificing the [Great Society](#) and his certainty that he could accomplish both things at once.

The July decisions - the closest thing to a formal decision for war in Vietnam - represented the culmination of a year and a half of agonizing on America's Vietnam policy and stemmed logically from the administration's refusal to accept the consequences of [withdrawal](#). [Johnson](#) and [Rusk](#) had been at the center of the political upheaval that had followed the fall of [China](#) in 1949, and they were certain that the "loss" of Vietnam would produce an even more explosive debate, "a mean and destructive debate," Johnson once commented, "that would shatter my Presidency, kill my administration, and damage our democracy."<sup>58</sup> They also deeply feared the international consequences of withdrawal. The decision-makers of 1965 felt that they were upholding policies the United States had pursued since the late 1940s, policies that still had validity despite the enormous changes that had taken place in the world. They were frequently vague as to what they were containing; sometimes they stressed China, other times Communism, and still other times wars of liberation in general. In any case, they believed that to withdraw from Vietnam would encourage disorder throughout the world and drastically weaken American influence. Men of action and achievement, leaders of a nation with an unbroken record of success, they were unwilling to face the prospect of failure. If the United States pulled out of Vietnam, Johnson warned on one occasion, "it might as well give up everywhere else - pull out of Berlin, [Japan](#), South America."<sup>59</sup>

In making the July commitments, the administration saw itself

<sup>58</sup> Kearns, Johnson, p. 252.

<sup>59</sup> John D. Pomfret memorandum of conversation with Johnson, June 24, 1965, Krock Papers, Box 59.

moving cautiously between the two extremes of [withdrawal](#) and total war; it sought, in [Johnson's](#) words, to do "what will be enough, but not too much." The President and his advisers did not seek the defeat of [North Vietnam](#). They did not "speak of conquest on the battlefield ... as men from time immemorial had talked of victory," the historian Henry Graft recorded. Their objective rather was to inflict sufficient pain on the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) to force them to negotiate on terms acceptable to the United States - in Johnson's Texas metaphor, to apply sufficient force until the enemy "sobers up and unloads his pistol."<sup>60</sup>

Displaying the consummate political skill that had become his trademark, Johnson in the last week of July shaped a consensus for his Vietnam policy in his administration, in Congress, and in the country. He appears to have been committed from the outset to a policy that would give the United States "the maximum protection at the least cost."<sup>61</sup> During the week of July 21-28, however, he gave the Joint Chiefs and [George Ball](#) their days in court, listening carefully to their arguments and raising numerous probing questions before rejecting their proposals for large-scale escalation and withdrawal.<sup>62</sup> In meetings with the Congressional leadership, he emphasized to conservatives his determination to hold the line in Vietnam, while reassuring liberals that he would not permit the war to get out of hand. "I'm going up old [Ho Chi Minh's](#) leg an inch at a time," he told Senator [George McGovern](#).<sup>63</sup> Johnson's middle course probably reflected the aspirations of the American public and Congress, and the President went to war with support that appeared to be solid.

Getting into war would turn out to be much easier for Johnson than getting out. The administration's decisions of July 1965 proved to be based on two crucial miscalculations. In seeking to do what would be "enough, but not too much," the President and his advisers never explored with any real precision how much would be enough. They had no illusions that success could be achieved painlessly, but they grossly underestimated the determination of

<sup>60</sup> Graft, Tuesday Cabinet, pp..54, 59.

<sup>61</sup> Summary notes of [National Security Council](#) meeting, June 11, 1965, Johnson Papers, National Security File, NSC Meetings, Box 1.

<sup>62</sup> Larry Berman, Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam (New York, 1982).

<sup>63</sup> George McGovern, Grassroots (New York, 1977), pp. 104-105.

the enemy to resist and they did not foresee the cost the war would bring the United States. When [Ball](#) warned that it might take as many as a half million troops, [McNamara](#) dismissed the argument as "dirty pool" and called the figure "outrageous."<sup>64</sup> Leaders of the most powerful nation in the history of the world, U.S. officials simply could not conceive that a small, backward country could stand up against them. It would be like a filibuster, [Johnson](#) speculated, "enormous resistance at first, then a steady whittling away, then Ho hurrying to get it over with."<sup>65</sup>

Miscalculating the costs that the United States would incur in Vietnam, the administration could not help but overestimate the willingness of the nation to pay. On July 27, 1965, Senator [Mike Mansfield](#) penned a long, eloquent, and prophetic warning to his old friend and political mentor. He advised Johnson that Congress and the nation supported him because he was President, not because they understood or were deeply committed to his policy in Vietnam, and that there lingered beneath the surface a confusion and uncertainty that could in time explode into outright opposition.<sup>66</sup> Mansfield correctly perceived the flimsiness of Johnson's backing. As long as U.S. objectives could be obtained at minimal cost, Americans were willing to stay in Vietnam. When the war turned out to last much longer and cost much more than had been anticipated, however, the President's support began to wither away and the advocates of escalation and [withdrawal](#) whom he had parried so skillfully in July 1965 became less manageable.

Johnson disregarded Mansfield's admonitions. After months of uncertainty, he had finally set his course, and in July 1965, quietly and without fanfare, he launched the United States on what would become its longest, most frustrating, and most divisive war.

<sup>64</sup> Benjamin Read oral history interview, Johnson Papers.

<sup>65</sup> Kearns, Johnson, p. 266.

<sup>66</sup> Mansfield to Johnson, July 27, 1965, Johnson Papers, National Security File, [National Security Council](#) Histories: Deployment of Major U.S. Forces to Vietnam, July 1965, Box 40.



## CHAPTER 5

On the Tiger's Back:

The United States at War,  
1965-1967

While visiting the aircraft carrier Ranger off the coast of Vietnam in 1965, Robert Shaplen overheard a fellow journalist remark: "They just ought to show this ship to the [Vietcong](#) - that would make them give up."<sup>1</sup> From [Lyndon Johnson](#) in the White House to the GI in the field, the United States went to war in 1965 in much this frame of mind. The President had staked everything on the casual assumption that the enemy could be quickly brought to bay by the application of American military might. The first combat troops to enter Vietnam shared similar views. When "we marched into the rice paddies on that damp March afternoon," [Marine](#) Lieutenant Philip Caputo later wrote, "we carried, along with our packs and rifles, the implicit conviction that the Viet Cong would be quickly beaten."<sup>2</sup> Although by no means unique to the Vietnam War, this optimism does much to explain the form taken by American participation in that struggle. The United States never developed a strategy appropriate for the war it was fighting, in part because it was assumed that the mere application of its vast military power would be sufficient. The failure of one level of force led quickly to the next and then the next, until the war attained a degree of destructiveness no one would have thought possible in 1965. Most important, the optimism with which the nation went to war more than anything else accounts for the great frustration that subsequently

<sup>1</sup> Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution: The U.S. in Vietnam, 1946-1966* (New York, 1966), p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War* (New York, 1977), p. xii.

developed in and out of government. Failure never comes easily, but it comes especially hard when success is anticipated at little cost.

Within two years, the optimism of 1965 had given way to deep and painful frustration. By 1967, the United States had nearly a half million combat troops in Vietnam. It had dropped more bombs than in all theaters in World War II and was spending more than \$2 billion per month on the war. Some American officials persuaded themselves that progress had been made, but the undeniable fact was that the war continued. [Lyndon Johnson](#) thus faced an agonizing dilemma. Unable to end the war by military means and unwilling to make the concessions necessary to secure a negotiated settlement, he discovered belatedly what [George Ball](#) had warned in 1964: "once on the tiger's back we cannot be sure of picking the place to dismount."

American strategy in Vietnam was improvised rather than carefully designed and contained numerous inconsistencies. The United States went to war in 1965 to prevent the collapse of [South Vietnam](#), but it was never able to relate its tremendous military power to the fundamental task of establishing a viable government in [Saigon](#). The administration insisted that the war must be kept limited the [Soviet Union](#) and [China](#) must not be provoked to intervene - but the President counted on a quick and relatively painless victory to avert unrest at home. That these goals might not be compatible apparently never occurred to Johnson and his civilian advisers. The United States injected its military power directly into the struggle to cripple the [Vietcong](#) and persuade [North Vietnam](#) to stop its "aggression." The administration vastly underestimated the enemy's capacity to resist, however, and did not confront the crucial question of what would be required to achieve its goals until it was bogged down in a bloody stalemate.

While the President and his civilian advisers set limits on the conduct of the war, they did not provide firm strategic guidelines for the use of American power. Left on its own to frame a strategy, the military fought the conventional war for which it was prepared without reference to the peculiar conditions in Vietnam. [Westmoreland](#) and the Joint Chiefs chafed under the restraints imposed by the civilians. Sensitive to [MacArthur](#)'s fate in [Korea](#), however, they would not challenge the President directly or air their case in public. On the other hand, they refused to develop a strategy that

accommodated to the restrictions imposed by the White House, but rather attempted to break them down one by one until they got what they wanted. The result was considerable ambiguity in purpose and method, growing civil-military tension, and a steady escalation that brought increasing costs and uncertain gain.

The United States relied heavily on airpower. Military doctrine taught that bombing could destroy an enemy's war-making capacity, thereby forcing him to come to terms. The limited success of airpower as applied on a large scale in World War II and on a more restricted scale in [Korea](#) raised serious questions about the validity of this assumption, and the conditions prevailing in Vietnam, a primitive country with few crucial targets, might have suggested even more. The Air Force and [Navy](#) advanced unrealistic expectations about what airpower might accomplish, however, and clung to them long after experience had proven them unjustified. The civilian leadership accepted the military's arguments, at least to a point, because the bombing was cheaper in lives lost and therefore more palatable at home, and because it seemed to offer a quick and comparatively easy solution to a complex problem.<sup>3</sup> Initiated in early 1965 as much from the lack of alternatives as anything else, the bombing of [North Vietnam](#) was expanded over the next two years in the vain hope that it would check [infiltration](#) into the south and force North Vietnam to the conference table.

The air war gradually assumed massive proportions. The President firmly resisted the Joint Chiefs' proposal for a knockout blow, but as each phase of the bombing failed to produce results, he expanded the list of targets and the number of strikes. [Sorties](#) against North Vietnam increased from 25,000 in 1965 to 79,000 in 1966 and 108,000 in 1967; the tonnage of bombs dropped increased from 63,000 to 136,000 to 226,000. Throughout 1965, [ROLLING THUNDER](#) concentrated on military bases, supply depots, and infiltration routes in the southern part of the country. From early 1966 on, air strikes were increasingly directed against the North Vietnamese industrial and transportation system and moved steadily northward. In the summer of 1966, [Johnson](#) authorized massive strikes against petroleum storage facilities and transportation networks. A year later, he permitted attacks on steel factories, power plants,

<sup>3</sup> Robert L. Gallucci, *Neither Peace Nor Honor: The Politics of American Military Policy in Vietnam* (Baltimore, 1975), pp. 74-80.

and other approved targets around [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong, as well as on previously restricted areas along the [Chinese](#) border.

The bombing inflicted an estimated \$600 million damage on a nation still struggling to develop a viable, modern economy. The air attacks crippled [North Vietnam](#)'s industrial productivity and disrupted its agriculture. Some cities were virtually leveled, others severely damaged. Giant [B-52s](#), carrying payloads of 58,000 pounds, relentlessly attacked the areas leading to the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#), leaving the countryside scarred with huge craters and littered with debris. The bombing was not directed against the civilian population, and the administration publicly maintained that civilian [casualties](#) were minimal. But the [CIA](#) estimated that in 1967 total casualties ran as high as 2,800 per month and admitted that these figures were heavily weighted with civilians; [McNamara](#) privately conceded that civilian casualties were as high as 1,000 per month during periods of intensive bombing. A British diplomat later recalled that by the fall of 1967 there were signs among the civilian population of the major cities of widespread malnutrition and declining morale.<sup>4</sup>

The manner in which airpower was used in Vietnam virtually ensured that it would not achieve its objectives, however. Whether, as the Joint Chiefs argued, a massive, unrestricted air war would have worked remains much in doubt. In fact, the United States had destroyed many major targets by 1967 with no demonstrable effect on the war. Nevertheless, the administration's gradualist approach gave Hanoi time to construct an air defense system, protect its vital resources, and develop alternative modes of transportation. Gradualism probably encouraged the North Vietnamese to persist despite the damage inflicted upon them.

North Vietnam demonstrated great ingenuity and dogged perseverance in coping with the bombing. Civilians were evacuated from the cities and dispersed across the countryside; industries and storage facilities were scattered and in many cases concealed in caves and under the ground. The government claimed to have dug over 30,000 miles of tunnels, and in heavily bombed areas the people spent much of their lives underground. An estimated 90,000 North Vietnamese, many of them women and children, worked

<sup>4</sup> Raphael Littauer and Norman Uphoff, eds., *The Air War in [Indochina](#)* (Boston, 1972), pp. 39-43. For a firsthand account of the impact of the bombing, see John Colvin, "Hanoi in My Time," *Washington Quarterly* (Spring 1981), 138-154.



full-time keeping transportation routes open, and piles of gravel were kept along the major roadways, enabling "Youth Shock Brigades" to fill craters within hours after the bombs fell. Concrete and steel bridges were replaced by ferries and pontoon bridges made of bamboo stalks which were sunk during the day to avoid detection. Truck drivers covered their vehicles with palm fronds, and banana leaves and traveled at night, without headlights, guided only by white markers along the roads. [B-52s](#) devastated the narrow roads through the [Mu Gia](#) Pass leading to the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#), but, to the amazement of the Americans, trucks moved back through the pass within several days. "Caucasians cannot really imagine what ant labor can do," one American remarked with a mixture of frustration and, admiration. 5

Losses in military equipment, raw materials, and vehicles were more than offset by increased aid from the [Soviet Union](#) and [China](#). Until 1965, Russia had remained detached from the conflict, but the new leaders who succeeded Khrushchev in October 1964 took much greater interest in the Vietnam conflict, and U.S. escalation presented opportunities and challenges they could not pass up. The bombing created a need for sophisticated military equipment that only the Soviet Union could provide, giving Moscow a chance to wean [North Vietnam](#) away from China. At a time when the [Chinese](#) were loudly proclaiming Soviet indifference to the fate of revolutions across the world, the direct threat to a Communist state posed by the air strikes required the Russians to prove their credibility. American escalation did not force the two Communist rivals back together, as [George Ball](#) had predicted. Fearful of Soviet intrusion in Vietnam, the Chinese angrily rejected Moscow's call for "united action" (a phrase borrowed, perhaps consciously, from Dulles) and even obstructed Russian aid to North Vietnam. The increasingly heated Sino-Soviet rivalry over Vietnam did, however, enable [Hanoi](#) to play off one power against the other to get increased aid and prevent either from securing predominant influence. The Chinese continued to supply large quantities of rice, small arms and ammunition, and vehicles. Soviet aid increased dramatically after 1965, and included such modern weaponry as fighter planes, surface-to-air missiles, and tanks. Total assistance

5 Quoted in [Townsend Hoopes](#), *The Limits of Intervention* (New York, 1970), p.79. For North Vietnam's response to the air war, see Jon M. Van Dyke, *North Vietnam's Strategy for Survival* (Palo Alto, Calif., 1972).

from Russia and [China](#) has been estimated in excess of \$2 billion between 1965 and 1968.

Various other factors reduced the effectiveness of the bombing. Heavy rains and impenetrable fog forced sharp curtailment of missions during the long monsoon season from September to May. Airmen claimed to be able to bomb with "surgical" precision, but the weather and techniques which had not advanced much beyond World War II made for considerable inaccuracy, and many targets had to be bombed repeatedly before they were finally destroyed. As they approached closer to [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong, moreover, American aircraft ran up against a highly effective air defense system. Anti-aircraft missiles and MiG [fighters](#) provided by the [Soviet Union](#) did not score a high kill rate, but they threw off bombing patterns and forced the pilots down to altitudes where they confronted heavy flak and deadly small-arms fire.

Despite the extensive damage inflicted on [North Vietnam](#), the bombing did not achieve its goals. It absorbed a great deal of manpower and resources that might have been diverted to other military uses. It hampered the movement of men and supplies to the south, and its proponents argued that [infiltration](#) would have been much greater without it. Official American estimates nevertheless conceded that infiltration increased from about 35,000 men in 1965 to as many as 90,000 in 1967 even as the bombing grew heavier and more destructive. It is impossible to gauge with any accuracy the psychological impact of the bombing on North Vietnam, but it did not affect Hanoi's determination to prevail and it may have enabled the leadership to mobilize the civilian population more effectively in support of the war.

By 1967, the United States was paying a heavy price for no more than marginal gains. The cost of a [B-52](#) mission ran to \$30,000 per sortie in bombs. The direct cost of the air war, including operation of the aircraft, munitions, and replacement of planes lost, was estimated at more than \$1.7 billion during 1965 and 1966, a period when aircraft losses exceeded 500. Overall, the United States between 1965 and 1968 lost 950 aircraft costing roughly \$6 billion. According to one estimate, for each \$1 of damage inflicted on North Vietnam, the United States spent \$9.60. The costs cannot be measured in dollars alone, however. Captured American airmen gave Hanoi a hostage which would assume increasing importance in the stalemated war. The continued pounding of a small, back-

ward country by the world's wealthiest and most advanced nation gave the North Vietnamese a propaganda advantage they exploited quite effectively. Opposition to the war at home increasingly focused on the bombing, which, in the eyes of many critics was at best inefficient, at worst immoral.

American ground operations in the south also escalated dramatically between 1965 and 1967. Even before he had significant numbers of combat forces at his disposal, [Westmoreland](#) had formulated the strategy he would employ until early 1968. It was a strategy of [attrition](#), the major objective of which was to locate and eliminate the [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese regular units. Westmoreland has vigorously denied that he was motivated by any "Napoleonic impulse to maneuver units and hark to the sound of cannon," but "search and destroy," as it came to be called, did reflect traditional U.S. Army doctrines of warfare. In Westmoreland's view, North Vietnam's decision to commit large units to the war left him no choice but to proceed along these lines. He did not have sufficient forces to police the entire country, nor was it enough simply to contain the enemy's main units. "They had to be pounded with [artillery](#) and bombs and eventually brought to battle on the ground if they were not forever to remain a threat." Once the enemy's regulars had been destroyed, Westmoreland reasoned, the South Vietnamese government would be able to stabilize its position and pacify the countryside, and the adversary would have no choice but to negotiate on terms acceptable to the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Westmoreland's aggressive strategy required steadily increasing commitments of American manpower. Even before the 1965 buildup had been completed, the General requested sufficient additional forces to bring the total to 450,000 by the end of 1966. In contrast to the air war, over which it retained tight control, the administration gave Westmoreland broad discretion in developing and executing the ground strategy, and it saw no choice but to give him most of the troops he asked for. In June 1966, the President approved a force level of 431,000 to be reached by mid-1967. While these deployments were being approved, Westmoreland was developing requests for an increase to 542,000 troops by the end of 1967.

<sup>6</sup> William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, N.Y., 1976), pp. 149-150.

Furnished thousands of fresh American troops and a massive arsenal of modern weaponry, [Westmoreland](#) took the war to the enemy. He accomplished what has properly been called a "logistical miracle," constructing virtually overnight the facilities to handle huge numbers of U.S. troops and enormous volumes of equipment. The Americans who fought in Vietnam were the best fed, best clothed, and best equipped army the nation had ever sent to war. In what Westmoreland described as the "most sophisticated war in history," the United States attempted to exploit its technological superiority to cope with the peculiar problems of a guerrilla war. To locate an ever elusive enemy, the military used small, portable radar units and "people sniffers" which picked up the odor of human urine. IBM 1430 computers were programmed to predict likely times and places of enemy attacks. Herbicides were used on a wide scale and with devastating ecological consequences to deprive the [Vietcong](#) of natural cover. C-123 "[RANCHHAND](#)" crews, with the sardonic motto "Only You Can Prevent Forests," sprayed more than 100 million pounds of chemicals such as [Agent Orange](#) over millions of acres of forests, destroying an estimated one-half of [South Vietnam](#)'s timberlands and leaving human costs yet to be determined. C-47 transports were converted into awesome [gunships](#) (called "Puff the Magic Dragon") that could fire 18,000 rounds a minute.

The United States relied heavily on [artillery](#) and airpower to dislodge the enemy at minimal cost, and waged a furious war against Vietcong and North Vietnamese base areas. "The solution in Vietnam is more bombs, more shells, more [napalm](#) ... till the other side cracks and gives up," observed General William Depuy, one of the principal architects of "search and destroy."<sup>7</sup> From 1965 to 1967, South Vietnamese and U.S. airmen dropped over a million tons of bombs on South Vietnam, more than twice the tonnage dropped on the north. Retaliatory bombing was employed against some villages suspected of harboring Vietcong. Airpower was used to support forces in battle according to the "pile-on concept," in which U.S. troops encircled enemy units and called in the aircraft. "Blow the hell out of him and police up," one officer described it.<sup>8</sup> A much greater proportion of the air strikes comprised what was

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in [Daniel Ellsberg](#), *Papers on the War* (New York, 1972), p. 234.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Littauer and Uphoff, *Air War*, p. 52.

loosely called interdiction - massive, indiscriminate raids, primarily by [B-52s](#), against enemy base areas and logistics networks. Entire areas of [South Vietnam](#) were designated [Free Fire Zones](#) which could be pulverized without regard for the inhabitants.

[North Vietnam](#) matched the U.S. escalation of the war. Although surprised by the American willingness to fight for South Vietnam and keenly aware of the enormous cost of a full-scale war, [Hanoi](#) had invested so much in the struggle that it saw no choice but to meet the challenge. In late 1965, North Vietnamese leaders mobilized the entire nation to "foil the war of aggression of the U.S. imperialists." Recognizing that the South Vietnamese government and army and American public opinion were their enemies' most vulnerable points, they attempted through intensive guerrilla and main unit operations to put maximum military pressure on the South Vietnamese and keep U.S. [casualties](#) as high as possible in hopes that the Americans might weary of the war. [Infiltration](#) increased sharply, and during peak periods in the mid-1960s North Vietnam was able to move an estimated 400 tons of supplies per week and as many as 5,000 men per month on the three-month, more than 600-mile journey along the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) into South Vietnam.

Throughout 1965 and 1966, the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) attempted to keep U.S. units off balance, thereby disrupting search-and-destroy operations. In 1967, they engaged U.S. forces in major actions around the [demilitarized zone](#), giving themselves short supply lines and convenient sanctuary and hoping to draw the Americans away from the populated areas and leave the countryside vulnerable to the Vietcong. Tactically, the North Vietnamese relied on ambushes and hit-and-run operations and sought to "cling to the belts" of the Americans in close-quarter fighting that would minimize the impact of the vastly superior U.S. firepower. Like their Vietcong counterparts, the North Vietnamese were capable [fighters](#). "Damn, give me two hundred men that well disciplined and I'll capture this whole country," one U.S. adviser commented after a major battle in the [Central Highlands](#) in late 1965.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in the New York Times, October 28, 1965. William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colo., 1981), pp. 240-256, contains a persuasive assessment of North Vietnamese strategy. The story of the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) is well told in Douglas Pike, "Road to Victory," *War and Peace*, 5 (Issue 60, 1984), 1196-1199.

Throughout 1966 and 1967, intensive fighting took place across much of [South Vietnam](#). Along the [demilitarized zone](#), Marines and North Vietnamese regulars were dug in like the armies of World War I, pounding each other relentlessly with [artillery](#). In the jungle areas, small American units probed for the hidden enemy in a manner comparable to the Pacific island campaigns of World War II. Increasingly, however, [Westmoreland](#) concentrated on large-scale search-and-destroy operations against enemy base areas. [Operation CEDAR FALLS](#), a major campaign of early 1967, sent some 30,000 U.S. troops against [the Iron Triangle](#), a [Vietcong](#) stronghold just north of [Saigon](#). After [B-52s](#) saturated the area, U.S. troops surrounded it and helicopters dropped large numbers of specially trained combat forces into the villages. Following removal of the population, giant Rome plows with huge spikes on the front leveled the area, destroying what remained of the vegetation and leaving the guerrillas no place to hide. The region was then burned and bombed again to destroy the miles of underground tunnels dug by the insurgents.

It remains difficult to assess the results of U.S. ground operations from 1965 to 1967. American troops fought well, despite the miserable conditions under which the war was waged—dense jungles and deep swamps, fire ants and leeches, [booby traps](#) and ambushes, an elusive but deadly enemy. In those instances where main units were actually engaged, the Americans usually prevailed, and there was no place in South Vietnam where the enemy enjoyed security from American firepower. It was clear by 1967 that the infusion of American forces had staved off what had appeared to be certain defeat in 1965.

In a war without front lines and territorial objectives, where "attriting the enemy" was the major goal, the "[body count](#)" became the index of progress. Most authorities agree that the figures were notoriously unreliable. The sheer destructiveness of combat made it difficult to produce an accurate count of enemy killed in action. It was impossible to distinguish between Vietcong and noncombatants, and in the heat of battle American "statisticians" made little effort. "If it's dead and Vietnamese, it's VC, was a rule of thumb in the bush," Philip Caputo has recalled.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the chain of command there was heavy pressure to produce favorable

<sup>10</sup> Caputo, *Rumor of War*, p. xviii.

figures, and padding occurred at each level until by the time the numbers reached Washington they bore little resemblance to reality. Even with an inflated [body count](#) - and estimates of padding range as high as 30 percent - it is clear that the United States inflicted huge losses on the enemy. Official estimates placed the number as high as 220,000 by late 1967. Largely on the basis of these figures, the American military command insisted that the United States was "winning" the war.

As with the air war, the strategy of [attrition](#) had serious flaws. It assumed that the United States could inflict intolerable losses on the enemy while keeping its own losses within acceptable bounds, an assumption that flew in the face of past experience with land wars on the Asian continent and the realities in Vietnam. An estimated 200,000 North Vietnamese reached draft age each year, and [Hanoi](#) was able to replace its losses and match each American escalation. Moreover, the conditions under which the war was fought permitted the enemy to control its losses. The North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) remained extraordinarily elusive and were generally able to avoid contact when it suited them. They fought at times and places of their own choosing and on ground favorable to them. If losses reached unacceptable levels, they could simply melt away into the jungle or retreat into [sanctuaries](#) in [North Vietnam](#), [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#).

Thus, the United States could gain no more than a stalemate. The North Vietnamese and Vietcong had been hurt, in some cases badly, but their main forces had not been destroyed. They retained the strategic initiative, and could strike sharply and quickly when and where they chose. [Westmoreland](#) did not have sufficient forces to wage war against the enemy's regulars and control the countryside. The Vietcong political structure thus remained largely untouched, and even in areas such as [the Iron Triangle](#), when American forces moved on to fight elsewhere, the Vietcong quietly slipped back in. It all added up to a "state of irresolution," Robert Shaplen observed in 1967.<sup>11</sup>

Skeptics increasingly questioned whether the progress made was not more than offset by the consequences of large-scale American military operations. In 1966 alone, unexploded American bombs and shells provided the Vietcong enough explosives to kill

11 Robert Shaplen, *The Road from War: Vietnam, 1965-1970* (New York, 1970), p. 167.

as many as 1,000 men. The massive bombing and [artillery](#) fire disrupted the agriculture upon which the South Vietnamese economy depended, produced huge numbers of civilian [casualties](#), and drove millions of noncombatants into hastily constructed refugee camps or into the already overcrowded cities. American military operations further undermined the social fabric of an already fragile nation and alienated the people from a government which had never had a firm base of popular support. "It was as if we were trying to build a house with a bulldozer and wrecking crane," one American official later observed.<sup>12</sup>

Americanization of the war also had a debilitating effect on the South Vietnamese Army. [Westmoreland](#) had called for American forces because he doubted the [ARVN](#)'s battle-worthiness, and once he had them he relied primarily on them. During the period of American military preponderance, the ARVN was largely shunted aside, relegated to lesser operations and population control, chores its officers considered demeaning and took on with considerable reluctance. The sense of inferiority thus engendered did nothing to resolve the problems of morale and leadership which had always been the ARVN's curse. Much time and money were spent training and equipping the South Vietnamese from 1965 to 1967, but it was all in the American mold, preparing the ARVN to fight the kind of war the Americans were waging. The ARVN thus became more than ever dependent on the United States and was ill prepared to assume the burden of the fighting at some later, unspecified date.

The United States paid a heavy price for limited gains. In many operations vast quantities of firepower were expended, sometimes with negligible results. The ammunition costs of the war were "astronomical," Army Chief of Staff [Harold Johnson](#) later recalled, and some surveys revealed that as much as 85 percent of the ammunition used was unobserved fire, "a staggering volume."<sup>13</sup> Although the United States killed 700 [Vietcong](#) in the [CEDAR FALLS](#) operation, the enemy main force escaped. American casualties were small compared to Vietnamese, but the number killed in action rose to 13,500 by late 1967, and swelling [draft](#) calls and mounting casualties brought rising opposition to the war at home.

Thus, despite the impressive [body count](#) figures, it was clear to

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Young, quoted in W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzell, *The Lessons of Vietnam* (New York, 1977), p. 225.

<sup>13</sup> Harold Johnson oral history interview, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.



many observers by mid-1967 that the hopes of a quick and relatively inexpensive military victory had been misplaced. Each American blow "was like a sledgehammer on a floating cork," the journalist Malcolm Browne observed. "Somehow the cork refused to stay down."<sup>14</sup> By this point the United States had nearly 450,000 troops in Vietnam. [Westmoreland](#) conceded that if his request for an additional 200,000 men was granted, the war might go on for as long as two years. If not, he warned, it could last five years or even longer.

While drastically expanding its military operations in Vietnam, the United States also grappled with what many had always regarded as the central problem - construction of a viable South Vietnamese nation. [Ky](#) surprised the skeptics by surviving in office for more than six months. Persuaded that it had found a solid foundation upon which to build, in early 1966 the administration decided to make clear its commitment and to press Ky to reform his government. At a hastily arranged "summit" meeting in Honolulu, Johnson publicly embraced a somewhat embarrassed Ky, symbolizing the new commitment, and secured his agreement to a sweeping program of reform. The President left no doubt of the importance he attached to the program. The Honolulu communiqué was a "kind of bible," he declared. He would not be content with promises or "high-sounding words," but must have "coonskins on the wall."<sup>15</sup>

No sooner had Ky returned to [Saigon](#) than he faced a stiff internal challenge. Quiescent for nearly a year, the [Buddhists](#) viewed Honolulu as a clear sign that Ky, with American support, would attempt to maintain absolute power, and they again took to the streets. As in 1963, the demonstrations began in [Hue](#) and were led by Buddhist monks, but they quickly spread to Saigon and drew together the many groups dissatisfied with the regime: students, labor unions, Catholics, even factions within the army. The demonstrations took on an increasingly anti-American tone. Signs reading "END FOREIGN DOMINATION OF OUR COUNTRY" appeared in Hue and Danang. An angry mob burned the U.S. Consulate in Hue, and firemen refused to extinguish the blaze.

<sup>14</sup> Malcolm W. Browne, *The New Face of War* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1968), p. ix.

<sup>15</sup> Transcript of Johnson briefing, February 8, 1966, Johnson Papers, National Security File, International Meetings File: Honolulu, Box 2.

The [Buddhist](#) crisis exposed the fragility of the [Saigon](#) government and the weakness of the American position in Vietnam. The existence of a virtual civil war within an insurrection dampened the hopes that had begun to develop for [Ky's](#) government. The protesters advocated the holding of elections and the restoration of civilian government, goals to which the United States could hardly take exception. The State Department nevertheless feared that giving in to the [Buddhists](#) would "take us more rapidly than we had envisaged down a road with many pitfalls," and [Rusk](#) instructed the Embassy to persuade moderate Buddhist leaders to drop their "unrealistic demands" because of the "grave danger of simply handing the country over to the [Viet Cong](#)."<sup>16</sup> When American "mediation" failed and the crisis worsened, some administration officials proposed abandoning Ky in order to save [South Vietnam](#), and others began to develop plans for a face-saving American [withdrawal](#). Acting without prior approval from Washington, the embattled Premier eventually solved the American dilemma and saved his own skin by dispatching 1,000 South Vietnamese marines to [Danang](#) to suppress the rebellion. The Buddhists gave way in the face of superior force and withdrew in sullen protest. Although deeply annoyed by Ky's independence, the administration was more than satisfied with the outcome. The President "categorically thrust aside the withdrawal option," [William Bundy](#) recalled, and "we all relaxed."<sup>17</sup>

In the aftermath of the Buddhist crisis, Americans and Vietnamese struggled to live up to the lofty promises of Honolulu. From Washington's standpoint, pacification was a top-priority item. Improving the South Vietnamese standard of living was the one area of the war that struck a responsive chord in [Johnson](#). He identified with the people of South Vietnam and deeply sympathized with their presumed desire for political freedom and economic progress. Like most of his colleagues, he believed that it was necessary to win the support of the people in order to defeat the [Vietcong](#), and he felt a keen personal need to endow the war with some higher purpose. He could wax eloquent about such things as inoculation programs, educational reform, and use of American expertise to teach

<sup>16</sup> Rusk to Embassy Saigon, March 16, 1966, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 28; Rusk to Embassy Saigon, April 5, 1966, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File'. Vietnam, Box 29.

<sup>17</sup> William Bundy oral history interview, Johnson Papers.

the Vietnamese to raise larger hogs and grow more sweet potatoes. "Dammit," he exploded on one occasion, "we need to exhibit more compassion for these Vietnamese plain people .... We've got to see that the South Vietnamese government wins the battle... of crops and hearts and caring."<sup>18</sup> Under intensive prodding from Washington, the Americans and South Vietnamese devised an ambitious Revolutionary Development Program (RD), consciously imitative of [Vietcong](#) techniques, in which fifty-nine-man teams, trained in propaganda and social services, would go into the villages, live with the people, and carry out hundreds of tasks to build popular support for the government and undermine the Vietcong.

Revolutionary Development ran afoul of many of the problems that had frustrated earlier pacification programs. The creaking [Saigon](#) bureaucracy and poor coordination between Americans and Vietnamese hampered administration of the plan. It was impossible to recruit sufficient personnel in a country short of manpower, and less than half the cadres needed actually went into training. Candidates were trained on a mass-production basis for a mere three months and in most cases were inadequately prepared for the formidable task that lay ahead. Once in the field, the RD teams were frustrated by local officials who regarded them as a threat. Funds promised for many projects never reached their destination. Having seen so many other programs come and go, the villagers greeted the arrivals with a mixture of apathy and caution. Because of the chronic manpower shortage, many cadres were often shifted to new areas before their work was completed, and any gains were quickly erased. Good performance by RD teams was sometimes undercut by the behavior of [ARVN](#) units that extorted taxes and fees from the villagers and stole chickens and pigs. When asked what would most help pacification in his area, one U.S. adviser responded: "Get the 22nd [ARVN] Division out of the province."<sup>19</sup>

The fundamental problem was the absence of security. The U.S. military was preoccupied with the shooting war and gave little attention to what became known as "the other war" (the term itself suggested the absence of coordination between pacification and military operations). In most cases the ARVN was incapable of providing security, and in some areas it was part of the problem.

<sup>18</sup> Jack Valenti, *A Very Human President* (New York, 1973), p. 133; Lady Bird Johnson, *A White House Diary* (New York, 1970), pp. 370-371.

<sup>19</sup> [Daniel Ellsberg](#) memorandum, March 30, 1966, John P. Vann Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

Sometimes, RD teams would make some progress, only to have it nullified when American aircraft bombed their villages. Cadres were frequently sent into insecure areas where they were harassed and terrorized by the [Vietcong](#). Many fled. Those who stayed and worked effectively with the people were often found with their throats slit. During a seven-month period in 1966, 3,015 Revolutionary Development personnel were murdered or kidnapped.<sup>20</sup>

Under these circumstances, pacification achieved little. Roads were repaired, schools built, and village elections held, but even on the basis of the highly inaccurate methods used to measure progress, the number of "pacified" villages increased by a mere 5 percent in the first year. In an attempt to revive the program, in the spring of 1967 Johnson placed it under the immediate authority of the U.S. Military Command, and [Westmoreland](#) persuaded a reluctant [ARVN](#) to commit the bulk of its forces to rural security. These changes would eventually produce better results, but at a time when the vast American military effort had attained nothing better than a stalemate, the failure of pacification was especially discouraging.

In at least one area, the two nations did live up to the goals of the Honolulu communiqué: a new constitution was drafted and national elections were held. The Americans did not presume that the export of democracy would solve [South Vietnam's](#) problems. On the contrary, many agreed with [Lodge](#) (who had returned for a second tour as Ambassador) that the establishment of real democracy in a land with no Western democratic traditions was "clearly an impossible task," and some feared that a genuinely open political process would lead to chaos. The Americans nevertheless felt that a new constitution and elections would give South Vietnam a better image and might, in Lodge's words, "substitute a certain legitimacy for the hurly-burly of unending coups."<sup>21</sup>

The [Ky](#) regime dutifully followed American advice but in a way that ensured its own perpetuation. Elections for a constituent assembly were so tightly circumscribed that the [Buddhists](#) boycotted them. The assembly met in early 1967 and turned out a polished document, based on American and French models and including a

<sup>20</sup> Douglas A. Blaufarb, [The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrines and Performance](#) (New York, 1977), pp. 205-242, contains a full discussion of the Revolutionary Development Program.

<sup>21</sup> [Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.](#), [The Storm Has Many Eyes](#) (New York, 1973), p. 215.

Bill of Rights. The government nevertheless insisted on a strong executive and on provisions permitting the President to assume near-dictatorial powers in an emergency, which could be declared at his discretion. Those branded Communists or "neutralist sympathizers" were disqualified from office. The President was to be elected by a plurality, ensuring that opposition candidates did not band together in a runoff.

Throughout the preelection maneuvering, the United States quietly but firmly supported the government's efforts to remain in power. The State Department expressed concern about the wholesale disqualification of opposition candidates, but [Lodge's](#) argument that the "GVN should not be discouraged from taking moderate measures to prevent [the] elections from being used as a vehicle for a Communist takeover" prevailed.<sup>22</sup> The most serious challenge to the government came from bitter internal squabbling which was resolved only under intense pressure from the United States and after a long meeting, filled with histrionics, in which [Ky](#) tearfully gave way and agreed to run for the vice presidency on a ticket headed by Thieu.

The [September 1967 elections](#) were neither as corrupt as critics charged nor as pure as [Johnson](#) claimed. The regime conducted them under conditions which made defeat unlikely, and there was evidence of considerable last-minute fraud. But the large turnout and the fact that elections had been held in the midst of war were cited by Americans as evidence of growing political maturity. What stands out in retrospect is the narrowness of the government's victory. The Thieu-Ky ticket won 35 percent of the vote, but [Truong Dinh Dzu](#), an unknown lawyer who had run on a platform of negotiations with the [Vietcong](#), won 17 percent. The elections may have provided the regime a measure of respectability, but they also underscored its continued weakness. In a nation where political authority derived from the will of heaven and popular support was an obligation, the narrowness of the victory could only appear ludicrous. Many Vietnamese cynically regarded the entire process as "an American-directed performance with a Vietnamese cast."<sup>23</sup>

While the United States and [South Vietnam](#) struggled to resolve

<sup>22</sup> [U.S. Congress](#), Senate, Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds, The [Pentagon Papers](#) (The [Senator Gravel](#) Edition) (4 vols., Boston, 1971), II, 384.

<sup>23</sup> Shaplen, *Road from War*, p. 151.

old problems, Americanization of the war created new and equally formidable problems. Among these, the most serious - and most tragic - was that of the [refugees](#). The expansion of American and enemy military operations drove an estimated four million South Vietnamese, roughly 25 percent of the population, from their native villages. Some drifted into the already teeming cities; others were herded into shabby refugee camps. The United States furnished the government some \$30 million a year for the care of the refugees, but much of the money never reached them. Resettlement programs were initiated from time to time, but the problem was so complex that it would have taxed the ingenuity of the most imaginative officials. In any event, nothing could have compensated the refugees for the loss of their homes and lands. A large portion of [South Vietnam](#)'s population was left rootless and hostile, and the refugee camps became fertile breeding grounds for [Vietcong](#) fifth columns.

The sudden infusion of a half million American troops, hundreds of civilian advisers, and billions of dollars had a profoundly disruptive effect on a weak and divided nation. The buildup was so rapid and so vast that it threatened to overwhelm South Vietnam. [Saigon](#)'s ports were congested with ships and goods, and vessels awaiting unloading were backed up far out to sea. The city itself became a "thorough-going boom town," Shaplen remarked, its streets clogged with traffic, its restaurants "bursting with boisterous soldiers," its bars as "crowded as New York subway cars in the rush hour."<sup>24</sup> Signs of the American presence appeared everywhere. Long strips of seedy bars and brothels sprang up overnight around base areas. In a remote village near [Danang](#), Caputo encountered houses made of discarded beer cans: "red and white Budweiser, gold Miller, cream and brown Schlitz, blue and gold Hamm's from the land of sky-blue waters."<sup>25</sup>

American spending had a devastating effect on the vulnerable South Vietnamese economy. Prices increased by as much as 170 percent during the first two years of the buildup. The United States eventually controlled the rate of inflation by paying its own soldiers in scrip and by flooding the country with consumer goods, but the corrective measures themselves had harmful side effects. Instead of

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-21.

<sup>25</sup> Caputo, *Rumor of War*, p. 107.

using American aid to promote economic development, South Vietnamese importers bought watches, transistor radios, and Hondas to sell to people employed by the United States. The vast influx of American goods destroyed [South Vietnam](#)'s few native industries and made the economy even more dependent on continued outside aid. By 1967, much of the urban population was employed providing services to the Americans.

In the bonanza atmosphere, crime and corruption flourished. Corruption was not new to South Vietnam or unusual in a nation at war, but by 1966 it operated on an incredible scale. Government officials rented land to the United States at inflated prices, required bribes for driver's licenses, passports, visas, and work permits, extorted kickbacks for contracts to build and service facilities, and took part in the illicit importation of opium. The black market in scrip, dollars, and stolen American goods became a major enterprise. On [Saigon](#)'s PX Alley, an open-air market covering two city blocks and comprised of more than 100 stalls, purchasers could buy everything from hand grenades to scotch whiskey at markups as high as 300 percent. Americans and Vietnamese reaped handsome profits from the illegal exchange of currencies. International swindlers and "monetary camp followers" quickly got into the act, and the currency-manipulation racket developed into a "massive financial international network" extending from Saigon to Wall Street with connections to Swiss banks and Arab sheikdoms. The pervasive corruption undermined the U.S. aid program and severely handicapped American efforts to stabilize the economy of South Vietnam.<sup>26</sup>

American officials perceived the problem, but they could not find solutions. [Ky](#) candidly admitted that "most of the generals are corrupt. Most of the senior officials in the provinces are corrupt." But, he would add calmly, "corruption exists everywhere, and people can live with some of it. You live with it in Chicago and New York."<sup>27</sup> The Embassy pressed the government to remove officials known to be corrupt, but with little result. "You fight like hell to get someone removed and most times you fail and you just make it

<sup>26</sup> New York Times, November 16, 1966; Abraham Ribicoff to Robert McLellan, January 15, 1969, and memorandum, January 15, 1970, Abraham Ribicoff Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Box 432.

<sup>27</sup> Harry McPherson to Johnson, June 13, 1967, Johnson Papers, McPherson File, Box 29.

worse," a frustrated American explained to [David Halberstam](#). "And then on occasions you win, why hell, they give you someone just as bad."<sup>28</sup> The United States found to its chagrin that as its commitment increased, its leverage diminished. Concern with corruption and inefficiency was always balanced by fear that tough action might alienate the government or bring about its collapse. [Lodge](#) and [Westmoreland](#) were inclined to accept the situation and deal with other problems.

Tensions between Americans and South Vietnamese increased as the American presence grew. Because of chronic security leaks, the United States kept Vietnamese off its major bases, and [Vietcong infiltration](#) of the [ARVN](#)'s top ranks compelled U.S. officers to keep from their Vietnamese counterparts the details of major military operations. Americans were openly cynical toward their ally. "I wish the southern members of the clan would display the fighting qualities of their northern brethren," a senior U.S. officer observed with obvious scorn.<sup>29</sup> The ARVN indeed became an object of ridicule, its mode of attack best depicted, according to a standard American joke, by the statue of a seated soldier in the National Military Cemetery. Vietnamese slowness to accept American methods exasperated U.S. advisers. "I am sure that if [Saigon](#) were left to fend for itself... in 20 years this place would be all rice paddies again," one American acidly observed.<sup>30</sup> The seeming indifference of many Vietnamese, while Americans were dying in the field, provoked growing resentment and hatred. The unerring ability of the villagers to avoid mines and [booby traps](#) that killed and maimed GIs led to charges of collusion with the enemy.

The Vietnamese attitude toward the foreigner was at best ambivalent. The Vietnamese undoubtedly appreciated American generosity, but they came to resent American ways of doing things. They complained that American soldiers "acted despicably" toward the villagers, tearing up roads and endangering the lives of noncombatants by reckless handling of vehicles and firearms. An ARVN major protested that Americans trusted only those Vietnamese who accepted without question their way of doing things and

<sup>28</sup> David Halberstam, "Return to Vietnam," *Harpers*, 235 (December 1967), 52.

<sup>29</sup> General A. S. Collins to Edward F. Smith, November 15, 1966, A. S. Collins Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

<sup>30</sup> Curtis Herrick diary, January 13, 1965, Curtis Herrick Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.



that they doled out their aid "in the same way as that given to beggars."<sup>31</sup> The Vietnamese recognized their need for U.S. help, and some were probably quite content to let the United States assume complete responsibility for the war. On the other hand, many Vietnamese resented the domineering manner of the Americans and came to consider the U.S. "occupation" a "demoralizing scourge." Thoughtful Vietnamese recognized that Americans were not "colonialists," Shaplen observed. But, he added, "there has evolved here a colonial ambiance that can sometimes be worse than colonialism itself."<sup>32</sup>

Progress in the critical area of nation-building was thus even more limited than on the battlefield. To be sure, the government survived, and after the chronic instability of the Khanh era, that in itself appeared evidence of progress. Survival was primarily a result of the formidable American military presence, however, and did not reflect increased popular support or intrinsic strength. Returning to [South Vietnam](#) after an absence of several years, [Halberstam](#) was haunted by a sense of *deja vu*. There were new faces, new programs, an abundance of resources, and the Americans continued to speak optimistically. But the old problems persisted, and the "new" solutions appeared little more than recycled versions of old ones. "What finally struck me," he concluded, "was how little had really changed here."<sup>33</sup>

The steady expansion of the war spurred strong international and domestic pressures for negotiations, but the military stalemate produced an equally firm diplomatic impasse. American officials later tallied as many as 2,000 attempts to initiate peace talks between 1965 and 1967. Neither side could afford to appear indifferent to such efforts, but neither was willing to make the concessions necessary to make negotiations a reality. Although the North Vietnamese attempted to exploit the various peace initiatives for propaganda advantage, they counted on the American people to tire of the war and they remained certain that they could achieve their goals if they persisted. [Hanoi](#) adamantly refused to negotiate without first securing major concessions from the United States. Johnson and his advisers could not ignore the various proposals for negotiations,

31\_Weekly Psyops Field Operation Report, December 2, 1967, Vann Papers.

32\_Shaplen, Road from War, p. 154.

33\_Halberstam, "Return to Vietnam," p. 50.

but they doubted that anything would come of them and suspected, not without reason, that [Hanoi](#) was expressing interest merely to get the bombing stopped. Despite any firm evidence of results, the President remained confident at least until 1967 that [North Vietnam](#) would eventually bend to American pressure, and he feared that if he were too conciliatory it would undercut his strategy. To defuse international and domestic criticism, [Johnson](#) repeatedly insisted that he was ready to negotiate, but he refused to make the concessions Hanoi demanded. As each side invested more in the struggle, the likelihood of serious negotiations diminished.<sup>34</sup>

The positions of the two sides left little room for compromise. The North Vietnamese denounced American involvement in Vietnam as a blatant violation of the Geneva Accords, and as a precondition to negotiations, insisted that the United States withdraw its troops, dismantle its bases, and stop all acts of war against their country. Hanoi stressed that the internal affairs of [South Vietnam](#) must be resolved by the South Vietnamese themselves "in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front." North Vietnam was apparently flexible in regard to the timing and mechanism for political change in the south, but on the fundamental issues it was adamant. The "puppet" [Saigon](#) regime must be replaced by a government representative of the "people" in which the front would play a prominent role. Hanoi made clear, moreover, that the "unity of our country is no more a matter for negotiations than our independence."<sup>35</sup>

The United States formally set forth its position in early 1966. Persuaded that he would soon have to expand the bombing and increase the level of American forces, Johnson, with some reluctance, agreed to initiate a bombing pause over the Christmas holiday. The pause was partially designed, in McNamara's words, to "lay a foundation in the minds of the American public and world opinion ... for an enlarged phase of the war."<sup>36</sup> The President accordingly decided to combine it with a well-publicized "peace offensive." With great fanfare, he dispatched such luminaries as [Averell Harriman](#)

<sup>34</sup> Allan E. Goodman, *The Lost Peace: America's Search for a Negotiated Settlement of the Vietnam War* (Stanford, Calif., 1978), pp. 23-60, contains a detailed and generally persuasive account of the 1965-1967 peace initiatives.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Gareth Porter, *A Peace Denied: The United States, Vietnam, and the Paris Agreements* (Bloomington, Ind., 1975), p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), IV, 33.

and Vice President [Hubert Humphrey](#) across the world to deliver the message that the United States was prepared to negotiate without condition.

Simultaneously, the State Department revealed American terms for a settlement. "We put everything into the basket but the surrender of [South Vietnam](#)," Rusk later claimed, but in fact the administration's Fourteen Points offered few concessions.<sup>37</sup> The United States indicated that it was willing to stop the bombing, but only after [Hanoi](#) took reciprocal steps of deescalation. It would withdraw its troops from the south, but only after a satisfactory political settlement had been reached. The administration accepted the principle that the future of South Vietnam must be worked out by the South Vietnamese. At the same time, it made clear that it would not admit the [Vietcong](#) to the government, a move that would be like "putting the fox in a chicken coop," Humphrey declared publicly.<sup>38</sup> The Fourteen Points conceded merely that the views of the Vietcong "would have no difficulty being represented," and this only after Hanoi had "ceased its aggression." Beneath these ambiguous words rested a firm determination to maintain an independent, non-Communist South Vietnam.

The fate of [Johnson](#)'s peace offensive underscored the great gulf between the two nations. [Ho Chi Minh](#)'s formal response was uncompromising. The North Vietnamese made a sharp distinction between American interference in a foreign country and their own involvement in matters that concerned Vietnamese, and they firmly refused to perform reciprocal acts in exchange for a cessation of the bombing. Denouncing the bombing pause as a "sham peace trick," Ho demanded that the United States "end unconditionally and for good all bombing raids and other attacks against the [DRV](#)" and accept Hanoi's position as the basis for a political settlement.<sup>39</sup> Some administration officials urged Johnson to extend the bombing pause, but the President angrily refused. Ho's response seemed to say, "All right, damn you! Forget it!" [William Bundy](#) recalled, and Johnson was infuriated by its tone. After a thirty-seven-day pause, the President on January 31 resumed and greatly expanded the bombing. He was never enthusiastic about

37 Quoted in [Chester Cooper](#), *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam* (New York, 1970), p. 294.

38 Quoted in Henry Graft, *The Tuesday Cabinet* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), p. 67.

39 Quoted in Cooper, *Lost Crusade*, p. 294.

the pause, and from this point on his attitude toward conciliatory gestures hardened. "It was a new and tougher ball game," according to Bundy.<sup>40</sup>

To silence domestic and international critics and to test the diplomatic winds in [Hanoi](#) once again, the administration modified its position a bit in late 1966. Throughout the summer and fall, various third parties struggled to find a common ground for negotiations, and after a series of frenzied trips back and forth between Hanoi and [Saigon](#), the Polish diplomat Januszc Lewandowski drafted a ten-point plan for settlement of the conflict. [Johnson](#) and his advisers were highly skeptical of the peace moves, which they dismissed as "Nobel Prize fever." They felt that the Lewandowski draft was vague on many critical points and that it gave away too much. The administration could not afford to appear intransigent, however, and it eventually accepted Lewandowski's proposals as a basis for negotiations with the qualification that "several specific points are subject to important differences of interpretation." Responding to Lewandowski's entreaties, the United States also advanced a two-track proposal to provide a face-saving way around Hanoi's opposition to mutual deescalation. The United States would stop the air strikes in return for confidential assurance that [North Vietnam](#) would stop [infiltration](#) into key areas of [South Vietnam](#) within a reasonable period. Once Hanoi had acted, the United States would freeze its combat forces at existing levels and peace talks could begin.<sup>41</sup>

Code-named MARIGOLD, the Polish initiative ended in fiasco. Spokesmen for Hanoi later claimed that a North Vietnamese delegate was en route to Warsaw, where talks were slated to begin in early December, but the extent to which North Vietnam had committed itself to the ten-point plan and was willing to compromise on the basic issues remains unclear. In any case, the initiative aborted. Several days before the scheduled opening of the talks, U.S. aircraft struck railroad yards within five miles of the center of Hanoi, causing heavy damage to residential areas and numerous civilian [casualties](#). Frequently explained away as the product of poor coordination within the American government - the right hand did

<sup>40</sup> [William Bundy](#) oral history interview, Johnson Papers.

<sup>41</sup> George C. Herring (ed.), *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the [Pentagon Papers](#)* (Austin, Tex., 1983), pp. 211-370, contains a full account of the Polish initiative along with many of the major American documents.

not know what the left was doing - the bombing in fact resulted from a conscious decision. [Lodge](#), [McNamara](#), and Undersecretary of State Nicholas [Katzenbach](#) all urged Johnson to refrain from bombing near [Hanoi](#) during the most delicate stage of Lewandowski's diplomacy, but the President would have none of it. Like many other American officials, he suspected that the entire arrangement was "phoney," and he insisted that a bombing halt had not been specified as a precondition for the Warsaw talks.<sup>42</sup> [Johnson](#)'s assessment of North Vietnamese intentions may have been correct, but the December bombings, which came after a long lull forced by bad weather, must have appeared to Hanoi as a major escalation of the air war timed to coincide with the peace moves. The North Vietnamese had always insisted that they would not negotiate under duress, and they quickly broke off the contact. The Poles felt betrayed and MARIGOLD withered.

An initiative sponsored by British Prime Minister Harold Wilson met a similar fate in early 1967. Wilson persuaded a cautious Soviet premier Alexei Kosygin, then in London, to try to bring the North Vietnamese to formal peace negotiations on the basis of the two-track proposal unveiled during MARIGOLD. By the time Kosygin had agreed to Wilson's ploy, however, the American position had hardened. The administration had initiated another bombing pause to coincide with the [Tet](#) holiday, but North Vietnam had seized the opportunity to drastically step up the [infiltration](#) of men and supplies into [South Vietnam](#). An enraged Johnson now retreated to his original position that Hanoi must stop infiltration before he would end the bombing. This change was not made clear to Wilson, and when he learned of the actual American stand he was furious, feeling, justifiably, that he had been put in a "hell of a situation." The tenacious Prime Minister hastily concocted a compromise which Kosygin agreed to present to Hanoi, but Washington gave him only fifteen hours to complete the transaction before it resumed the bombing. What Wilson later described as a "historic opportunity" broke down under this "utterly unrealistic timetable."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> [William Bundy](#) and Nicholas Katzenbach oral history interviews, Johnson Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government, 1964-1970: A Personal Record* (London, 1971), pp. 359-365. Benjamin Read, executive secretary to [Dean Rusk](#), later claimed that the misunderstanding had been caused by sloppy phraseology in a cable to London. The message explaining the American position was prepared "with midnight oil and without the presence of a lawyer," according to Read, and the "tense slipped." Read oral history interview, Johnson Papers.

Wilson exaggerated the likelihood of productive negotiations. Kosygin's apparent willingness to serve as an intermediary may have represented an important shift in Russian policy. As long as the war diverted American attention and resources from other areas and enabled them to undercut [Chinese](#) influence in [Hanoi](#), the Soviets had been willing for it to go on. But continued American escalation, the upheaval that had accompanied the Cultural Revolution in [China](#), and the increasingly bitter rhetoric employed by the Chinese may have aroused Soviet fears that the situation in Southeast Asia was getting out of hand. The Russians seem also to have been alarmed by the opening of Chinese-American contacts in Warsaw, angrily charging the two nations with conspiring to impose terms on [North Vietnam](#). Kosygin may have concluded by early 1967 that it was desirable to end the war, and that a negotiated settlement might isolate China and solidify Russia's position with North Vietnam and the United States. His capacity to bring about a settlement was very limited, however. He could not press Hanoi too hard lest he play into the hands of the Chinese, who were accusing the Soviet "scabs and renegades" of collusion with the United States at Hanoi's expense. He could agree to nothing less than a settlement that met North Vietnam's basic goals.

Peace hinged, therefore, not on the influence of third parties but on the willingness of the belligerents to compromise. In response to international, and, in the case of the United States, domestic, pressures, each side by 1967 had inched cautiously away from the rigid positions assumed two years earlier. North Vietnam no longer insisted on acceptance of its four points, including a complete American military [withdrawal](#), as a precondition to negotiations, demanding only that the bombing must be ended without condition. Hanoi had also relaxed its terms for a settlement, indicating, among other things, that reunification could take place over a long period of time. The United States had retreated from its original position that North Vietnam must withdraw its forces from the south in return for cessation of the bombing, insisting merely that further [infiltration](#) must be stopped. Despite these concessions, the two nations remained far apart on the means of getting negotiations started. And although their bargaining positions had changed slightly, they had not abandoned their basic goals. Each had met with frustration and had incurred heavy losses on the battlefield, but each still retained hope that it could force the other to accept its terms. Thus the two sides remained unwilling to compromise

on the central issue - the future of [South Vietnam](#) to the extent that their objectives would be jeopardized. The Wilson-Kosygin initiative was badly handled by the [Johnson](#) administration, but there is little reason to assume that even the most skillful and patient diplomacy could have achieved a breakthrough in the absence of concessions neither nation was prepared to make. The story of the 1965-1967 peace initiatives, one scholar has concluded, marks "one of the most fruitless chapters in U.S. diplomacy."<sup>44</sup>

By mid-1967, Johnson was snared in a trap he had unknowingly set for himself. His hopes of a quick and relatively painless victory had been frustrated. He was desperately anxious to end the war, but he had been unable to do so by force, and in the absence of a clear-cut military advantage, or a stronger political position in South Vietnam, he could not do so by negotiations. As the conflict increased in cost, moreover, he found himself caught in the midst of an increasingly angry and divisive debate at home, a debate which by 1967 seemed capable of wrecking his presidency and tearing the country apart.

At one extreme were the "hawks," largely right-wing Republicans and conservative Democrats, who viewed the conflict in Vietnam as an essential element in the global struggle with Communism. Should the United States not hold the line, they argued, the Communists would be encouraged to further aggression, allies and neutrals would succumb to Communist pressures, and the United States would be left alone to face a powerful and merciless enemy. Strong nationalists, certain of America's invincibility, and deeply frustrated by the stalemate in Vietnam, the hawks bitterly protested the restraints imposed on the military and demanded that the administration do whatever was necessary to attain victory. "Win or get out," Representative Mendel Rivers (D-S.C.) advised [President Johnson](#) in early 1966.<sup>45</sup>

At the other extreme were the "doves," a vast, sprawling, extremely heterogeneous and fractious group, which opposed the war with increasing bitterness and force. The [antiwar movement](#) grew almost in proportion to the escalation of the conflict. It included such diverse individuals as the pediatrician Dr. [Benjamin Spock](#),

<sup>44</sup> Goodman, *Lost Peace*, p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> Notes on meeting with Congressional leadership, January 25, 1966, Johnson Papers, Meeting Notes File, Box 1.

heavyweight boxing champion [Muhammad Ali](#), actress [Jane Fonda](#) and author Norman Mailer, old-line pacifists such as A. J. Muste and new radicals such as Tom Hayden, the black civil rights leader Dr. [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), and Arkansas Senator [J. William Fulbright](#). The doves comprised only a small percentage of the population, but they were an unusually visible and articulate group. Their attack on American foreign policy was vicious and unrelenting. In time, their movement became inextricably linked with the cultural revolution that swept the United States in the late 1960s and challenged the most basic of American values and institutions.

Although it defies precise categorization, the [antiwar movement](#) tended to group along three principal lines.<sup>46</sup> For pacifists such as Muste, who opposed all wars as immoral, Vietnam was but another phase of a lifelong crusade. For the burgeoning radical movement of the 1960s, opposition to the war extended beyond questions of morality. Spawned by the civil rights movement, drawing its largest following among upper-middle-class youth on college campuses, the "New Left" joined older leftist organizations in viewing the war as a classic example of the way the American ruling class exploited helpless people to sustain a decadent capitalist system.<sup>47</sup> Antiwar liberals far exceeded in numbers the pacifists and radicals. Although they did not generally question "the system," they increasingly questioned the war on both moral and practical grounds. Many liberal internationalists who had supported World War II, [Korea](#), and the Cold War found Vietnam morally repugnant. By backing a corrupt, authoritarian government, they contended, the United States was betraying its own principles. In the absence of any direct threat to American security, the devastation wreaked on [North](#) and [South Vietnam](#) was indefensible. Many more liberals questioned the war on practical grounds. It was essentially an internal struggle, they argued, whose connection with the Cold War was at best indirect. Liberals questioned the validity of the [domino theory](#), especially after the Indonesian army threw out Sukarno and crushed the Indonesian Communist party. They agreed that Vietnam was of no more than marginal significance to the security of the United States. Indeed,

46 See Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington, Ind., 1984), pp. 171-178.

47 Irwin Unger, *The Movement* (New York, 1974), pp. 35-93.



they insisted that the huge investment there was diverting attention from more urgent problems at home and abroad, damaging America's relations with its allies, and inhibiting the development of a more constructive relationship with the [Soviet Union](#). The liberal critique quickly broadened into an indictment of American "globalism." The United States had fallen victim to the "arrogance of power," [Fulbright](#) claimed, and was showing "signs of that fatal presumption, that over-extension of power and mission, which brought ruin to ancient Athens, to Napoleonic [France](#) and to Nazi Germany."<sup>48</sup>

The various groups that made up "the movement" disagreed with each other and among themselves on goals and methods. For some pacifists and liberals, terminating the war was an end in itself; for radicals it was merely a means to the ultimate end - the overthrow of American capitalism. Many New Left radicals indeed feared that a premature end to the war might sap the revolutionary spirit and hinder achievement of their principal goal. Most liberals stopped short of advocating [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam, much less domestic revolution, proposing merely an end to the bombing, gradual deescalation, and negotiations. Disagreement on methods was even sharper. Liberals generally preferred nonviolent protest and political action within the system and sought to exclude the Communists from demonstrations. Radicals and some pacifists increasingly pressed for a shift from protest to resistance, and some openly advocated the use of violence to bring down a system that was itself violent.

Opposition to the war took many different forms. Fulbright conducted a series of nationally televised hearings, bringing before the viewing public critics of administration policies. There were hundreds of acts of individual defiance. The folk singer [Joan Baez](#) refused to pay that portion of her income tax that went to the defense budget. [Muhammad Ali](#) declared himself a conscientious objector and refused induction orders. Three army enlisted men - the Fort Hood Three - challenged the constitutionality of the conflict by refusing to fight in what they labeled an "unjust, immoral, and illegal war." Army Captain Howard Levy used the doctrine of individual responsibility set forth in the Nuremberg war crimes trials to justify his refusal to train combat teams for action in Vietnam. Thousands of young Americans exploited legal loopholes, even

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Thomas Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home* (Boston, 1984), p. 118.

mutilated themselves, to evade the [draft](#); others fled to [Canada](#) or served jail sentences rather than to go to Vietnam. A handful of Americans adopted the method of protest of [South Vietnam's Buddhists](#), publicly immolating themselves. Antiwar rallies and demonstrations drew larger crowds in 1966 and 1967, and the participants became more outspoken in their opposition. Protesters marched daily around the White House chanting "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids have you killed today?" and "Ho, Ho, [Ho Chi Minh](#), NLF is going to win." Antiwar forces attempted "lie-ins" in front of troop trains, collected blood for the [Vietcong](#), and tried to disrupt the work of draft boards, Army recruiters, and the Dow Chemical Company, one of the makers of the [napalm](#) used in Vietnam. The most dramatic single act of protest came on October 21, 1967, when as many as 100,000 foes of the war gathered in Washington and an estimated 35,000 demonstrated at the entrance to the Pentagon, the "nerve center of American militarism."

The impact of the antiwar protests remains one of the most controversial issues raised by the war. The obvious manifestations of dissent in the United States probably encouraged [Hanoi's](#) will to hold out for victory, although there is nothing to suggest that the North Vietnamese would have been more compromising in the absence of the movement. Antiwar protest did not turn the American people against the war, as some critics have argued. The effectiveness of the movement was limited by the divisions within its own ranks. Public opinion polls make abundantly clear, moreover, that a majority of Americans found the [antiwar movement](#), particularly its radical and "hippie" elements, more obnoxious than the war itself. In a perverse sort of way, the protest may even have strengthened support for a war that was not in itself popular. The impact of the movement was much more limited and subtle. It forced Vietnam onto the public consciousness and challenged the rationale of the war and indeed of a generation of Cold War foreign policies. It limited Johnson's military options and may have headed off any tendency toward more drastic escalation. Perhaps most important, the disturbances and divisions set off by the antiwar movement caused fatigue and anxiety among the policymakers and the public, and thus eventually encouraged efforts to find a way out of the war.<sup>49</sup>

49 DeBenedetti, *Peace Reform*, pp. 174-182; Melvin Small, "The Impact of the Antiwar Movement on [Lyndon Johnson](#), 1965-1968: A Preliminary Report," *Peace and Change*, X (Spring 1984), 1-17.

The majority of Americans appear to have rejected both the hawk and dove positions, but as the war dragged on and the debate became more divisive, public concern increased significantly. Expansion of the war in 1965 had been followed by a surge of popular support - the usual rally-round-the-flag phenomenon. But the failure of escalation to produce any discernible result and indications that more troops and higher taxes would be required to sustain a prolonged and perhaps inconclusive war combined to produce growing frustration and impatience.<sup>50</sup> If any bird symbolized the growing public disenchantment with Vietnam, opinion analyst Samuel Lubell observed, it was the albatross, with many Americans sharing a "fervent desire to shake free of an unwanted burden." The public mood was probably best expressed by a housewife who told Lubell: "I want to get out but I don't want to give up."<sup>51</sup>

Support for the war dropped sharply during 1967. By the summer of that year, [draft](#) calls exceeded 30,000 per month, and more than 13,000 Americans had died in Vietnam. In early August, the President recommended a 10 percent surtax to cover the steadily increasing costs of the war. Polls taken shortly after indicated that for the first time a majority of Americans felt the United States had been mistaken in intervening in Vietnam, and a substantial majority concluded that despite a growing investment, the United States was not "doing any better." Public approval of [Johnson](#)'s handling of the war plummeted to 28 percent by October. Waning public confidence was mirrored in the press and in Congress. A number of major metropolitan dailies shifted from support of the war to opposition in 1967, and the influential Time-Life publications, fervently hawkish at the outset, began to raise serious questions about the administration's policies. Members of Congress found it impossible to vote against funds for American forces in the field and hesitated to challenge the President directly, but many who had firmly backed him at first came out openly against him. Admitting that he had once been an "all-out hawk," Republican Senator Thruston B.

<sup>50</sup> Sidney Verba et al. "Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam," *American Political Science Review*, 61 (June 1967), 317-333; John E. Mueller, "Trends in Popular Support for the Wars in [Korea](#) and Vietnam," *ibid.*, 65 (June 1971), 358-375; and Peter W. Sperlich and William L. Lurch, "American Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam," *Western Political Quarterly*, 32 (March 1979), 21-44.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Lubell, *The Hidden Crisis in American Politics* (New York, 1971), pp. 254-260.

Morton of Kentucky spoke for the converts when he complained that the United States had been "planted into a corner out there" and insisted that there would "have to be a change."<sup>52</sup> White House aides nervously warned of further defections in Congress and major electoral setbacks in 1968 in the absence of dramatic changes in the war.<sup>53</sup>

By late 1967, for many observers the war had become the most visible symbol of a malaise that had afflicted all of American society. Not all would have agreed with [Fulbright](#)'s assertion that the [Great Society](#) was a "sick society," but many did feel that the United States was going through a kind of national nervous breakdown. The "[credibility gap](#)" - the difference between what the administration said and what it did had produced a pervasive distrust of government. Rioting in the cities, a spiraling crime rate, and noisy demonstrations in the streets suggested that violence abroad had produced violence at home. Increasingly divided against itself, the nation appeared on the verge of an internal crisis as severe as the Great Depression of the 1930s. Anxiety about the war had not translated into a firm consensus for either escalation or [withdrawal](#), but the public mood - tired, angry, and frustrated - perhaps posed a more serious threat to the administration than the [antiwar movement](#).

The public debate on Vietnam was paralleled by increasingly sharp divisions within the government. Rejecting [CIA](#) estimates that played down the impact of U.S. military operations on the enemy, [Westmoreland](#) insisted that progress was being made and that the war could be won if the United States used its military power effectively. Although they had beaten down many of the restrictions on the bombing by 1967, the Joint Chiefs remained deeply dissatisfied with the conduct of the air war, and they were angered by the President's continuing refusal to mobilize the reserves. Westmoreland had been given considerable leeway in implementing ground operations, but he keenly resented what he later described as the "naive, gratuitous advice" he constantly received

<sup>52</sup> For the shift of 1967, see Don Oberdorfer, *Tet!* (Garden City, N.Y., 1971), pp. 83-92, and Louis Harris, *The Anguish of Change* (New York, 1973), pp. 60-61.

<sup>53</sup> Rostow to Johnson, August 1, 1967, Johnson Papers, Declassified and Sanitized Documents from Unprocessed Files (DSDUF), Box 2; Harry McPherson to Johnson, August 2, 5, 1967, Harry McPherson Files, [Lyndon Baines Johnson](#) Library, Austin, Tex., Box 32.

from the "self-appointed field marshals" in the State and Defense Departments, and he was greatly frustrated by the restrictions which forbade him from pursuing the enemy into its [sanctuaries](#).<sup>54</sup>

[Westmoreland](#) and the Joint Chiefs joined forces in the spring of 1967 to try to secure a commitment to all-out war. Still confident that search and destroy could succeed, Westmoreland requested an additional 200,000 troops to step up ground operations against the enemy. The Joint Chiefs strongly supported him and urged a limited mobilization of the reserves to secure the new increments. To deny the enemy its sanctuaries, the military pressed for intensive ground and air operations in [Cambodia](#) and [Laos](#), as well as for an amphibious "hook" across the [demilitarized zone](#) into [North Vietnam](#). Conceding that the bombing of North Vietnam had reached the point of "target saturation," the Joint Chiefs nevertheless advocated intensified bombing of the [Hanoi-Haiphong](#) area and the mining of North Vietnamese ports. Presenting a united front, the military urged further escalation and expansion of the war to force a North Vietnamese defeat.<sup>55</sup>

By the time the military presented its proposals, some of [Johnson](#)'s civilian advisers were openly advocating the abandonment of policies they had come to regard as bankrupt. Throughout 1966, opposition to escalation of the war increased within the administration. Some internal critics, including Bill Moyers of the White House staff and [George Ball](#), quietly resigned, feeling, as James Thomson later put it, "totally alienated from the policy, but helpless as to how to change it."<sup>56</sup> The opposition continued to grow and increasingly centered among the civilians in the Defense Department. The major proponent of change by the spring of 1967 was, ironically, the [Secretary of Defense](#), a man who had been so closely associated with escalation that the war had for a time been called "[McNamara](#)'s war." As early as the summer of 1966, McNamara began to fear that the vast expansion of the war was endangering

<sup>54</sup> Westmoreland, Soldier Reports, p. 161.

<sup>55</sup> Westmoreland to Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 28, 1967, in Neil Sheehan et al., [The Pentagon Papers](#) as Published by the New York Times (New York, 1971), pp. 560-565; Joint Chiefs of Staff to McNamara, April 20, 1967, *ibid.*, pp. 565-567.

<sup>56</sup> James C. Thomson, "Getting Out and Speaking Out," *Foreign Policy*, 13 (Winter 1973-1974), 57.

the global security position he had labored so diligently to construct since taking office in 1961. He was troubled by the destructiveness of the war, particularly the civilian [casualties](#), and by the growing domestic opposition, brought home to him time and again in public appearances when he had to shove his way through and shout down protesters. [McNamara](#)'s reputation as a businessman and public servant had been based on his ability to attain maximum results at minimal cost. By early 1967, however, he was forced to admit that escalation of the war had not produced results in the major "end products - broken enemy morale and political effectiveness." The South Vietnamese government seemed no more stable than before; pacification had "if anything, gone backward." The air war had brought heavy costs but no results. "[Ho Chi Minh](#) is a tough old S.O.B.," McNamara conceded to his staff. "And he won't quit no matter how much bombing we do."<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the [Secretary of Defense](#) admitted that the bombing had cost the United States heavily in terms of domestic and world opinion. "The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1,000 non-combatants a week, while trying to pound a tiny, backward nation into submission on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not a pretty one," he advised Johnson in early 1967.<sup>58</sup> McNamara and his advisers were also disillusioned with the ground war in South Vietnam. Increases in U.S. troops had not produced correspondingly large enemy losses, and there was nothing to indicate that further expansion of the war would place any real strains on North Vietnamese manpower.

Throughout 1967, McNamara quietly and somewhat hesitantly pressed for basic changes in policy. Arguing that the major military targets in [North Vietnam](#) had already been destroyed, he proposed either an unconditional bombing halt or the restriction of the bombing to the area south of the twentieth parallel. Such a move, he added, would help to appease critics of the war at home and might lead to serious negotiations. The Secretary of Defense also advocated placing a ceiling on American troop levels, and shifting from search and destroy to a more limited ground strategy based on providing security for the population of [South Vietnam](#). In somewhat ambiguous terms, he further proposed a scaling down of

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Henry Trehwitt, *McNamara* (New York, 1971), p. 235.

<sup>58</sup> McNamara to Johnson, May 18, 1967, in Sheehan, [Pentagon Papers](#) (NYT), p. 580.

American political objectives. Inasmuch as the United States had gone to war to contain [China](#), he argued, it had succeeded: the Communist defeat in Indonesia, as well as rampant political turmoil within China itself, suggested that trends in Asia were now running against China and in favor of the United States. The administration might therefore adopt a more flexible bargaining position. It could still hope for an independent, non-Communist [South Vietnam](#), but it should not obligate itself to "guarantee and insist upon these conditions." Obliquely at least, [McNamara](#) appears to have been suggesting that the United States modify its military strategy and diplomatic stance in order to find a face-saving way out of its dilemma in Vietnam.<sup>59</sup>

By the summer of 1967, [Lyndon Johnson](#) was a deeply troubled man, physically and emotionally exhausted, frustrated by his lack of success, torn between his advisers, uncertain which way to turn. He seems to have shared many of McNamara's reservations, and he flatly rejected the view of the military that the solution was expansion of the war. He was disenchanted by the Joint Chiefs. "Bomb, bomb, bomb, that's all you know," he is said to have complained on several occasions.<sup>60</sup> He was worried by the implications of [Westmoreland](#)'s ground strategy and his request for more troops. "When we add [divisions](#), can't the enemy add divisions," he asked the General pointedly in April. "If so, where does it all end?"<sup>61</sup> He remained firmly opposed to mobilizing the reserves and expanding the war. Such measures would heighten the domestic opposition. They would not satisfy the military but would only lead to pressures for further escalation, perhaps even for the use of nuclear weapons. He continued to fear a confrontation with the [Soviet Union](#) or China. "I am not going to spit in China's face," he insisted.<sup>62</sup>

Johnson could not accept McNamara's recommendations, however. He had gradually lost confidence in his [Secretary of Defense](#), whose dovishness he incorrectly attributed to the pernicious influence

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 584-585.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Lawrence J. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Bloomington, Ind., 1976), p. 181.

<sup>61</sup> Excerpt from Johnson-Westmoreland conversation, April 20, 1967, in Sheehan, [Pentagon Papers](#) (NYT), p. 567.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in C. L. Sulzberger, *Seven Continents and Forty Years* (New York, 1977), p. 435.

of his arch-rival [Robert Kennedy](#). The relationship between Johnson and [McNamara](#) had so soured by late 1967 that the Secretary gladly accepted an appointment to head the World Bank. [Westmoreland](#) continued to report steady progress, moreover, and the President was not ready to concede defeat. He would not consider a return to the [enclave strategy](#) - "We can't hunker down like a jackass in a hailstorm," he said - or even a ceiling on the troop level.<sup>63</sup> Although he seems to have agreed that the bombing had accomplished nothing, he was not prepared to stop or even limit it. Denouncing McNamara's proposals as an "aerial [Dienbienphu](#)," the Joint Chiefs had threatened to resign en masse if [Johnson](#) approved them, and the hawkish Mississippi Senator [John Stennis](#) was planning an investigation into the conduct of the air war.<sup>64</sup> The President was not prepared to risk a major confrontation with the hawks or a potentially explosive public debate on the bombing. Moreover, many of those to whom Johnson turned for advice posed strong arguments against McNamara's recommendations. [Dean Rusk](#), [Walt Rostow](#), [Maxwell Taylor](#), [Clark Clifford](#), and [McGeorge Bundy](#) all agreed that domestic critics would not be appeased by a bombing halt. Doves, like hawks, had "insatiable appetites," Bundy warned, and if concessions were made to them they would merely demand more. "To stop the bombing today would give the Communists something for nothing," Bundy added, and would be seen by [Hanoi](#) as a sign of weakness.<sup>65</sup>

Johnson thus continued to hold the middle ground between the extremes offered by his advisers. He rejected the military's proposals to expand the war and Westmoreland's request for 200,000 additional men, approving an increase of only 55,000. No ceilings were set, however, and there was no reassessment of the search-and-destroy strategy. Johnson also turned down McNamara's proposals to limit or stop the bombing. Indeed, to placate the Joint Chiefs and Congressional hawks, he significantly expanded the list of targets, authorizing strikes against bridges, railyards, and barracks within the Hanoi-Haiphong "donut" and formerly restricted areas along the [Chinese](#) border.

63 Ibid., p. 436.

64 Korb, Joint Chiefs of Staff, p. 166.

65 Bundy to Johnson, ca. May 4, 1967, in Sheehan, [Pentagon Papers](#) (NYT), pp. 569-572.



[Johnson](#)'s decisions of 1967, even more than those of 1965, were improvisations that defied military logic and did not face, much less resolve, the contradictions in American strategy. The bombing was sustained not because anyone thought it would work but because Johnson deemed it necessary to pacify certain domestic factions and because stopping it might be regarded as a sign of weakness. The President refused to give his field commander the troops he considered necessary to make his strategy work, but he did not confront the inconsistencies in the strategy itself.

The administration did modify its negotiating position again in late 1967. The so-called [San Antonio formula](#), first conveyed secretly to the North Vietnamese by the Harvard political scientist [Henry Kissinger](#) through French intermediaries and then announced publicly in September, backed away from a firm prior agreement on mutual deescalation. The United States would stop the bombing "with the understanding" that this would lead "promptly to productive discussions"; it would "assume" that [North Vietnam](#) would not "take advantage" of the cessation of air strikes. As later explained, this meant that [Hanoi](#) would not significantly increase the [infiltration](#) of men and supplies across the seventeenth parallel.<sup>66</sup> The administration also indicated its willingness to admit the [Vietcong](#) to political participation in [South Vietnam](#), a major step away from its earlier stance. This softening of the American bargaining position did not reflect the change of goals which McNamara had recommended, however. The commitment to the Thieu regime remained firm, and the willingness to deal with the Vietcong appears to have been based on a hope that it could be co-opted or defeated by political means.

By the end of the year, moreover, Johnson recognized that additional steps would be necessary to hold off disaster. After months of uncertainty, the administration finally concluded in the late summer that slow but steady progress was in fact being made in Vietnam. Officials in [Saigon](#) optimistically reported that U.S. operations were keeping the enemy off balance and inflicting enormous losses. The Vietcong was encountering increasingly difficult problems in recruiting. The [ARVN](#)'s [desertion](#) rate had declined noticeably, and the performance of some units in combat had improved. After months of floundering, the pacification program seemed at

<sup>66</sup> Herring, *Secret Diplomacy*, pp. 538-544.

last to be getting off the ground. Even the generally pessimistic [McNamara](#) was moved to comment in July that "There is no military stalemate."<sup>67</sup>

By this time, however, the home front was obviously collapsing. The consensus which [Johnson](#) had so carefully woven in 1964 was in tatters, the nation more divided than at any time since the Civil War. Opposition in Congress, as well as inattention and mismanagement resulting at least partially from the administration's preoccupation with Vietnam, had brought his cherished [Great Society](#) programs to a standstill. The President himself was a man under siege in the White House, his popularity steadily waning, the target of vicious personal attacks. His top aides had to be brought surreptitiously into public forums to deliver speeches.

Johnson was alarmed by the position he found himself in, stung by his critics, and deeply hurt by the [desertion](#) of trusted aides such as McNamara. He angrily dismissed much of the criticism as unfair, and he repeatedly emphasized that his critics offered no alternatives. He had accomplished great things at home, he insisted. But the press could only whine "Veetnam, Veetnam, Veetnam, Veetnam," he would add, savagely mimicking a baby crying.<sup>68</sup> The harsher the criticism became, the more Johnson chose to disregard it by discrediting the source. [Fulbright](#) was a "frustrated old woman" because he had never been appointed [Secretary of State](#). The dissent of the young sprang from ignorance. They had not lived through World War II. They would not "know a Communist if they tripped over one." The President cited with undisguised satisfaction an FBI report indicating that a large number of [draft](#)-card burners had spent time in mental institutions.<sup>69</sup>

Johnson recognized that he could not ignore the opposition, however. From the beginning of the war he had perceived that "the weakest chink in our armor is public opinion." During the early years, he seems to have feared the hawks more than the doves, but by late 1967 he had changed his mind. "The major threat we have is from the doves," he told his advisers in September

<sup>67</sup> Notes on meeting, July 12, 1967, Johnson Papers, Tom Johnson Notes on Meetings, Box 1.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Sulzberger, *Seven Continents*, p. 443.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Doris Kearns, [Lyndon Johnson](#) and the American Dream (New York, 1976, pp. 312-313; Graft, *Tuesday Cabinet*, pp. 99-100; notes on meeting with Congressional leaders, October 31, 1967, Johnson Papers, Diary Backup.

1967.<sup>70</sup> Increasingly fearful that the war might be lost in the United States, the President launched a two-pronged offensive to silence his most outspoken enemies and win public support for his policies.

Mistakenly believing that the peace movement was turning the public against the war, he set out to destroy it. He instructed the [CIA](#) to institute a program of surveillance of antiwar leaders to prove his suspicions that they were Communists operating on orders from foreign governments. This program, later institutionalized as Operation CHAOS, violated the CIA's charter. It eventually led to the compilation of files on more than 7,000 Americans. Johnson repeatedly expressed his unwillingness to indulge in McCarthyite methods, but when the CIA was unable to prove the links he suspected, he leaked information to right-wing Congressmen that he had such proof, leaving it to them to issue public charges that the peace movement was "being cranked up in [Hanoi](#)." The war against the peace movement soon shifted from surveillance to harassment and disruption. Law enforcement agencies began to indict antiwar leaders like [Dr. Spock](#) for such things as counseling [draft](#) resistance. The FBI infiltrated the peace movement with the object of disrupting its work and causing its members to do things that would further discredit them in the eyes of the public.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time, the administration mounted an intensive public relations campaign to shore up popular support for the war. From behind the scenes, administration officials helped to organize the Committee for Peace with Freedom in Vietnam, an ostensibly private organization headed by former Illinois Senator Paul Douglas, the principal aim of which was to mobilize the "silent center" in American politics. Johnson's advisers supplied to friendly senators, including some Republicans, information to help answer the charges of Congressional doves. A Vietnam Information Group was set up in the White House to monitor public reactions to the war and deal with problems as soon as they surfaced.<sup>72</sup> Recognizing that the major obstacle he faced was the widespread perception

<sup>70</sup> Jim Jones notes on meeting, September 5, 1967, Johnson Papers, Meeting Notes File, Box 2.

<sup>71</sup> Charles DeBenedetti, "A CIA Analysis of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement: October 1967," *Peace and Change*, 9 (Spring 1983), 31-35.

<sup>72</sup> See the extensive correspondence in Johnson Papers, Marvin Watson File, Box 32.

that the war was a stalemate, the President ordered the embassy and military command in [Saigon](#) to "search urgently for occasions to present sound evidence of progress in Viet Nam." U.S. officials dutifully responded, producing reams of statistics to show a steady rise in enemy body counts and the number of villages pacified, and publishing captured documents that supported these claims. The White House even helped to make arrangements for influential citizens to go to Vietnam and observe the progress that was being made.<sup>73</sup>

As part of the public relations offensive, [Westmoreland](#) was brought home in November, ostensibly for top-level consultations, in fact to reassure a troubled nation. Upon arriving in Washington, he told reporters, "I am very, very encouraged .... We are making real progress." In a speech to Congress, he offered a generally optimistic appraisal of the war, advising that although the enemy had not been defeated, it had been badly hurt. "We have reached an important point where the end begins to come into view," he concluded, and he even hinted that the United States might begin troop withdrawals within two years.<sup>74</sup>

Although his public relations offensive began to show immediate results, [Johnson](#) seems to have concluded by the end of the year that a change of strategy in Vietnam might also be necessary to win the war at home. Pressures for abandoning Westmoreland's search-and-destroy operations mounted throughout 1967. Increasingly disillusioned with the high cost and lack of results, [McNamara](#)'s civilian advisers pressed for a shift to small unit patrols that would be more "cost-effective" and would reduce U.S. [casualties](#).<sup>75</sup> In his last major policy memorandum to Johnson, the [Secretary of Defense](#) endorsed their views, proposing a study of military operations in the south to find ways of reducing U.S. casualties and forcing the South Vietnamese to assume a greater burden of the fighting. Recognizing that public disillusionment threatened not only success in Vietnam but also the internationalist foreign policy the nation had pursued since World War II, a group of leading "establishment"

73 Rostow to Bunker, September 27, 1967, Johnson Papers, DSDUF, Box 4; Eugene Locke to Johnson, October 7, 1967, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 99.

74 Quoted in Richard P. Stebbins; *The United States in World Affairs, 1967* (New York, 1968), p. 68.

75 Depuy to Westmoreland, October 19, 1967, Depuy Papers, Folder WXYZ(67).

figures, meeting under the auspices of the Carnegie Endowment, proposed adoption of a "[clear and hold](#)" strategy that would stabilize the war at a "politically tolerable level" and save [South Vietnam](#) "without surrender and without risking a wider war."<sup>76</sup>

The major impetus for change came from the so-called [Wise Men](#) a distinguished group of former government officials whom [Johnson](#) occasionally called upon for guidance. Admitting that he was "deeply concerned about the deterioration of public support," he appealed to them in early November to advise him on how to unite the country behind the war. The Wise Men generally endorsed existing policies. They did warn, however, that "endless inconclusive fighting" was "the most serious single cause of domestic disquiet." To counter this, they proposed adopting a ground strategy that would be less expensive in lives and funds, and they advised shifting to the South Vietnamese greater responsibility for the fighting. Acting as a spokesman for the Wise Men, former presidential assistant [McGeorge Bundy](#) went a step further. Conceding that it was a serious matter to challenge the field commander in time of war, Bundy advised the President that since Vietnam had now become a critical issue at home, he had an obligation to do so. He urged Johnson to "visibly take command of a contest that is more political in its character than any other in our history except the Civil War" and to find a strategy that would be tolerable in cost to the American people for the five to ten years that might be required to stabilize the situation in Vietnam.<sup>77</sup> Johnson did not initiate a change in strategy before the end of the year. He did, however, privately commit himself to "review" the conduct of ground operations with an eye toward reducing U.S. [casualties](#) and transferring greater responsibility to the South Vietnamese.<sup>78</sup> Even before the [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968, he was moving in the direction of what would later be called [Vietnamization](#).

Although he began to consider a change in strategy, Johnson did not reevaluate his essential goals in Vietnam. To take such a

<sup>76</sup> "Carnegie Endowment Proposals," December 5, 1967, Matthew B. Ridgway Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., Box 34A.

<sup>77</sup> Jim Jones notes on meeting, November 2, 1967, Johnson Papers, Meeting Notes File, Box 2; Bundy to Johnson, November 10, 1967, Johnson Papers, Diary Backup, Box 81.

<sup>78</sup> Johnson memorandum for the record, December 18, 1967, in [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), *The Vantage Point* (New York, 1971), pp. 600-601.

step would have been difficult for anyone as long as there was hope of eventual success. It would have been especially difficult for [Lyndon Johnson](#). Enormously ambitious, he had set high goals for his presidency, and he was unwilling to abandon them even in the face of frustration and massive unrest at home. It was not a matter of courage, for by persisting in the face of declining popularity Johnson displayed courage as well as stubbornness. It was primarily a matter of pride. The President had not wanted the war in Vietnam, but once committed to it he had invested his personal prestige to a degree that made it impossible for him to back off. He chose to stay the course in 1967 for the same reasons he had gone to war in the first place - because he saw no alternative that did not require him to admit failure or defeat.

While quietly contemplating a change in strategy, the President publicly made clear his determination to see the war through to a successful conclusion. "We are not going to yield," he stated repeatedly. "We are not going to shimmy. We are going to wind up with a peace with honor which all Americans seek." At a White House dinner for the Prime Minister of Singapore, the President expressed his commitment in different terms. "Mr. Prime Minister," he said, "you have a phrase in your part of the world that puts our determination very well. You call it 'riding the tiger.' You rode the tiger. We shall!" The words would take on a bitterly ironic ring in the climactic year 1968.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Stebbins, *United States in World Affairs, 1967*, pp. 397-398.



## CHAPTER 6

### A Very Near Thing:

#### The Tet Offensive and

After, 1968

At 2:45 A.M. on January 30, 1968, a team of [Vietcong](#) sappers blasted a large hole in the wall surrounding the United States Embassy in [Saigon](#) and dashed into the courtyard of the compound. For the next six hours, the most important symbol of the American presence in Vietnam was the scene of one of the most dramatic episodes of the war. Unable to get through the heavy door at the main entrance of the Embassy building, the attackers retreated to the courtyard and took cover behind large concrete flower pots, pounding the building with rockets and exchanging gunfire with a small detachment of military police. They held their positions until 9:15 A.M., when they were finally overpowered. All nineteen of the Vietcong were killed or severely wounded.

The attack on the Embassy was but a small part of the [Tet Offensive](#), a massive, coordinated Vietcong assault against the major urban areas of [South Vietnam](#). In most other locales, the result was the same: the attackers were repulsed and incurred heavy losses. Later that morning, standing in the Embassy courtyard amidst the debris and fallen bodies in a scene one reporter described as a "butcher shop in Eden," [Westmoreland](#) rendered his initial assessment of Tet. The "well-laid plans" of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong had failed, he observed. "The enemy exposed himself by virtue of his strategy and he suffered heavy [casualties](#)." Although his comments brought moans of disbelief from the assembled journalists, from a short-term tactical standpoint Westmoreland was



correct: Tet represented a defeat for the enemy.<sup>1</sup> As Bernard Brodie has observed, however, the [Tet Offensive](#) was "probably unique in that the side that lost completely in the tactical sense came away with an overwhelming psychological and hence political victory."<sup>2</sup> Tet had a tremendous impact in the United States and ushered in a new phase of a seemingly endless war.

In the spring or summer of 1967, the North Vietnamese decided upon a change in strategy. Some Americans have depicted the Tet Offensive as a last-gasp, desperation move, comparable to the Battle of the Bulge, in which a beleaguered [North Vietnam](#) attempted to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. This seems quite doubtful, although [Hanoi](#)'s decision to take the offensive probably did reflect growing concern with the heavy [casualties](#) in the south and fear of the costs of a prolonged [war of attrition](#) with the United States. It seems more likely that the offensive was born of excessive optimism, a growing perception that the urban areas of [South Vietnam](#) were ripe for revolution. There are no indications that Hanoi thought the offensive would be decisive, however. Certainly its leaders would have been pleased to force the collapse of the South Vietnamese government and bring about an American [withdrawal](#). Most probably, they viewed the offensive as an essential part of a complex, multifaceted, long-term strategy of "fighting while negotiating." There is no evidence that the North Vietnamese timed the offensive to coincide with the first stages of the American presidential election campaign, although they certainly hoped to exploit the rising discontent with the war in the United States.

Sometime in 1967, Hanoi began developing specific plans to implement the new strategy. To lure American troops away from the major population centers and maintain a high level of U.S. casualties, a series of large-scale diversionary attacks were to be launched in remote areas. These would be followed by coordinated [Vietcong](#) assaults against the major cities and towns of South Vietnam designed to weaken the government and ignite a "general uprising" among the population. Simultaneously, new efforts would be made to open negotiations with the United States. The North Vietnamese most probably hoped through these coordinated actions

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *Tet!* (Garden City, N.Y., 1973), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Brodie, "The Tet Offensive," in Noble Frankland and Christopher Dowling, eds., *Decisive Battles of the Twentieth Century* (London, 1976), p. 321.

to get the bombing stopped, weaken the [Saigon](#) regime, exacerbate differences between the United States and its South Vietnamese ally, and intensify pressures for a change in policy in the United States. Their ultimate objective was to secure an acceptable negotiated settlement, the minimum ingredients of which would have been a coalition government and a U.S. [withdrawal](#).

Hanoi began executing its plan in late 1967. In October and November, North Vietnamese regulars attacked the [Marine](#) base at Con Thien across the Laotian border, and the towns of Loc Ninh and Song Be near Saigon and [Dak To](#) in the [Central Highlands](#). Shortly after, two North Vietnamese [divisions](#) laid siege to the Marine garrison at [Khe Sanh](#) near the Laotian border. In the meantime, crack [Vietcong](#) units moved into the cities and towns, accumulating supplies and laying final plans. To undermine the Saigon government, the National Liberation Front encouraged the formation of a "popular front" of neutralists, and attempted to entice government officials and troops to defect by offering generous pardons and positions in a coalition government. To spread dissension between the United States and [Thieu](#), the front opened secret contacts with the American Embassy in Saigon and disseminated rumors of peace talks. Hanoi followed in December 1967 by stating categorically that it would negotiate with the United States if Johnson stopped the bombing.

The first phase of the North Vietnamese plan worked to perfection. [Westmoreland](#) quickly dispatched reinforcements to Con Thien, Loc Ninh, Song Be, and Dak To, in each case driving back the North Vietnamese and inflicting heavy losses but dispersing U.S. forces and leaving the cities vulnerable. By the end of 1967, moreover, the attention of Westmoreland, the President, and indeed much of the nation, was riveted on Khe Sanh, which many Americans assumed was [Giap's](#) play for a repetition of [Dienbienphu](#). The press and [television](#) carried daily reports of the action. [Johnson](#), insisting that the fortress must be held at all costs, kept close watch on the battle with a terrain map in the White House "war room." Westmoreland sent 6,000 men to defend the garrison, and American [B-52s](#) carried out the heaviest air raids in the history of warfare, eventually dropping more than 100,000 tons of explosives on a five-square-mile battlefield. 3

3 Robert Pisor, *The End of the Line: The Siege of Khe Sanh* (New York, 1982).

While the United States was preoccupied with [Khe Sanh](#), the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) prepared for the second phase of the operation. The offensive against the cities was timed to coincide with the beginning of [Tet](#), the lunar new year and the most festive of Vietnamese holidays. Throughout the war, both sides had traditionally observed a cease-fire during Tet, and [Hanoi](#) correctly assumed that [South Vietnam](#) would be relaxing and celebrating, soldiers visiting their families, government officials away from their offices. While the Americans and South Vietnamese prepared for the holidays, Vietcong units readied themselves for the bloodiest battles of the war. Mingling with the heavy holiday traffic, guerrillas disguised as [ARVN](#) soldiers or civilians moved into the cities and towns, some audaciously hitching rides on American vehicles. Weapons were smuggled in on vegetable carts and even in mock funeral processions.

Within twenty-four hours after the beginning of Tet, January 30, 1968, the Vietcong launched a series of attacks extending from the [demilitarized zone](#) to the Ca Mau Peninsula on the southern tip of Vietnam. In all, they struck thirty-six of forty-four provincial capitals, five of the six major cities, sixty-four district capitals, and fifty hamlets. In addition to the daring raid on the Embassy, Vietcong units assaulted [Saigon](#)'s Tan Son Nhut Airport, the presidential palace, and the headquarters of South Vietnam's general staff. In [Hue](#), 7,500 Vietcong and North Vietnamese troops stormed and eventually took control of the ancient Citadel, the interior town which had been the seat of the Emperors of the Kingdom of [Annam](#).

The offensive caught the United States and South Vietnam off guard. American intelligence had picked up signs of intensive Vietcong activity in and around the cities and had even translated captured documents which, without giving dates, outlined the plan in some detail. The U.S. command was so preoccupied with Khe Sanh, however, that it viewed evidence pointing to the cities as a diversion to distract it from the main battlefield. As had happened so often before, the United States underestimated the capability of the enemy. The North Vietnamese appeared so bloodied by the campaigns of 1967 that the Americans could not conceive that they could bounce back and deliver a blow of the magnitude of Tet. "Even had I known exactly what was to take place," [Westmoreland](#)'s intelligence officer later conceded, "it was so preposterous

that I probably would have been unable to sell it to anybody."<sup>4</sup>

Although taken by surprise, the United States and [South Vietnam](#) recovered quickly. The timing of the offensive was poorly coordinated, and premature attacks in some towns sounded a warning which enabled [Westmoreland](#) to get reinforcements to vulnerable areas. In addition, the [Vietcong](#) was slow to capitalize on its initial successes, giving the United States time to mount a strong defense. In [Saigon](#), American and [ARVN](#) forces held off the initial attacks and within several days had cleared the city, inflicting huge [casualties](#), taking large numbers of prisoners, and forcing the remnants to melt into the countryside. Elsewhere the result was much the same. The ARVN fought better under pressure than any American would have dared predict, and the United States and South Vietnam used their superior mobility and firepower to devastating advantage. The Vietcong launched a second round of attacks on February 18, but these were confined largely to rocket and mortar barrages against U.S. and South Vietnamese military installations and steadily diminished in intensity.

Hue was the only exception to the general pattern. The liberation of that city took nearly three weeks, required heavy bombing and intensive [artillery](#) fire, and ranks among the bloodiest and most destructive battles of the war. The United States and South Vietnam lost an estimated 500 killed while enemy killed in action have been estimated as high as 5,000. The savage fighting caused huge numbers of civilian casualties and created an estimated 100,000 [refugees](#). The bodies of 2,800 South Vietnamese were found in mass graves in and around Hue, the product of Vietcong and North Vietnamese executions, and another 2,000 citizens of Hue were unaccounted for and presumed murdered. The beautiful city, with its many architectural treasures, was left, in the words of one observer, a "shattered, stinking hulk, its streets choked with rubble and rotting bodies."<sup>5</sup>

It remains difficult to assess the impact of the battles of Tet. The North Vietnamese and Vietcong did not force the collapse of South Vietnam. They were unable to establish any firm positions in the urban areas, and the South Vietnamese people did not rise up to

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, N.Y., 1976), p. 321.

<sup>5</sup> Dave Richard Palmer, *Summons of the Trumpet* (San Rafael, Calif., 1978), p. 194.

welcome them as "liberators." [Vietcong](#) and North Vietnamese battle deaths have been estimated as high as 40,000, and although this figure may be inflated, the losses were huge. The Vietcong bore the brunt of the fighting; its regular units were decimated and would never completely recover, and its political infrastructure suffered crippling losses.

If, in these terms, Tet represented a "defeat" for the enemy, it was still a costly "victory" for the United States and [South Vietnam](#). [ARVN](#) forces had to be withdrawn from the countryside to defend the cities, and the pacification program incurred another major setback. The destruction visited upon the cities heaped formidable new problems on a government that had shown limited capacity to deal with the routine. American and South Vietnamese losses did not approach those of the enemy, but they were still high: in the first two weeks of the Tet campaigns, the United States lost 1,100 killed in action and South Vietnam 2,300. An estimated 12,500 civilians were killed, and Tet created as many as one million new [refugees](#). As with much of the war, there was a great deal of destruction and suffering, but no clear-cut winner or loser.

To the extent that the North Vietnamese designed the [Tet Offensive](#) to influence the United States, they succeeded, for it sent instant shock waves across the nation. Early wire service reports exaggerated the success of the raid on the Embassy, some even indicating that the Vietcong had occupied several floors of the building. Although these initial reports were in time corrected, the reaction was still one of disbelief. "What the hell is going on?" the venerable newscaster [Walter Cronkite](#) is said to have snapped. "I thought we were winning the war!"<sup>6</sup> [Televised](#) accounts of the bloody fighting in [Saigon](#) and [Hue](#) made a mockery of [Johnson](#) and of [Westmoreland](#)'s optimistic year-end reports, widening the [credibility gap](#), and cynical journalists openly mocked Westmoreland's claims of victory. The humorist Art Buchwald parodied the general's statements in terms of Custer at Little Big Horn. "We have the Sioux on the run," Buchwald had Custer saying. "Of course we still have some cleaning up to do, but the Redskins are hurting badly and it will only be a matter of time before they give in."<sup>7</sup> The

6 Quoted in Oberdorfer, Tet! p. 158.

7 Washington Post, February 6, 1968.

battles of Tet raised to a new level of public consciousness basic questions about the war which had long lurked just beneath the surface. The offhand remark of a U.S. Army officer who had participated in the liberation of the delta village of [Ben Tre](#) - "We had to destroy the town to save it" seemed to epitomize the purposeless destruction of the war. Candid photographs of the police chief of [Saigon](#) holding a pistol to the head of a [Vietcong](#) captive - and then firing - starkly symbolized the way in which violence had triumphed over morality and law.<sup>8</sup>

The [Tet Offensive](#) left Washington in a state of "troubled confusion and uncertainty."<sup>9</sup> [Westmoreland](#) insisted that the attacks had been repulsed and that there was no need to fear a major setback, and administration officials publicly echoed his statements. [Johnson](#) and his advisers were shocked by the suddenness and magnitude of the offensive, however, and intelligence estimates were much more pessimistic than Westmoreland. Many officials feared that Tet was only the opening phase of a larger Communist offensive. Some felt that [Khe Sanh](#) was still the primary objective, a fear that seemed to be borne out when the besieging forces renewed their attack on the [Marine](#) base in early February. Others feared a major offensive in the northern provinces or a second wave of attacks on the cities. An "air of gloom" hung over White House discussions, [Taylor](#) later observed, and General [Wheeler](#) likened the mood to that following the first Battle of Bull Run.<sup>10</sup>

The President responded with a stubborn determination to hold the line at any cost. He insisted that Khe Sanh must be held and advised Westmoreland that he was prepared to send whatever reinforcements were needed to defend the threatened fortress or meet any other threat. "The United States is not prepared to accept a defeat in [South Vietnam](#)," Wheeler advised Saigon, "... if you need more troops, ask for them." When Westmoreland indicated that he would appreciate any help he could get, Johnson immediately ordered an additional 10,500 men to Vietnam. In the first few weeks after Tet, the President's main concern seemed to be to "get on with the war as quickly as possible," not only by sending reinforcements

<sup>8</sup> Oberdorfer, *Tet!* pp. 164-171, 184-185; George A. Bailey and Lawrence W. Lichty, "Rough Justice on a Saigon Street: A Gatekeeper Study of NBC's Tet Execution Film," *Journalism Quarterly*, 49 (Summer 1972), 221-229.

<sup>9</sup> [Townsend Hoopes](#), *The Limits of Intervention* (New York, 1970), p. 145

<sup>10</sup> [Earle Wheeler](#) oral history interview, Johnson Papers.

but also by stepping up the air attacks against [North Vietnam](#).<sup>11</sup>

From the standpoint of the military, the new mood of urgency in Washington provided a timely opportunity to force decisions that had been deferred for too long. Wheeler and the Joint Chiefs had been pressing for mobilization of the reserves since 1965, and by February 1968 they were certain this step must be taken at once. The [Tet Offensive](#) raised the distinct possibility that significant reinforcements would have to be sent to Vietnam. North Korea's seizure of the American warship [Pueblo](#) in January and a new flareup in Berlin aroused fears that additional troops might have to be dispatched to these perennial Cold War trouble spots. Available forces were nearly exhausted, and [Wheeler](#) feared that unless the United States mobilized the reserves immediately it could not meet its global commitments.

Confident that he could exploit the enemy's defeat at Tet and buoyed by the President's apparent willingness to send substantial reinforcements, [Westmoreland](#) revived his 1967 proposals to expand the war. The enemy's decision to throw in "all his military chips and go for broke," the General advised Washington, provided the United States a "great opportunity." The North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) could not afford the heavy losses sustained in the Tet Offensive, and with large numbers of additional troops Westmoreland was certain he could gain the upper hand. His "two-fisted" strategy envisioned an "amphibious hook" against North Vietnamese bases and staging areas across the [demilitarized zone](#), attacks on the [sanctuaries](#) in [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#), and an intensified bombing campaign against North Vietnam. By taking the offensive at a time when the enemy was overextended, the General was confident that he could significantly shorten the war.<sup>12</sup>

Wheeler and Westmoreland conferred in [Saigon](#) in late February and devised an approach to force the President's hand. Wheeler appears to have been considerably less optimistic about the immediate prospects in Vietnam than Westmoreland, but he agreed that whether Tet provided new opportunities or posed increased dangers,

<sup>11</sup> Herbert Schandler, *The Unmaking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam* (Princeton, N.J., 1977), p. 91; "March 31 Speech," Johnson Papers, National Security File, [National Security Council](#) Histories: March 31, 1968 Speech, Box 47.

<sup>12</sup> John B. Henry, "February 1968," *Foreign Policy*, 4 (Fall 1971), 17.

it justified a call for major reinforcements. The two men settled on the figure of 206,000 men, a number large enough to meet any contingency in Vietnam and to force mobilization of the reserves. Roughly half of the men would be deployed in Vietnam by the end of the year; the rest would constitute a strategic reserve. Wheeler raised no objections to [Westmoreland](#)'s proposed changes in strategy, but he persuaded the field commander that it would be best to defer such recommendations until the President had approved the new troop level. He was keenly aware of [Johnson](#)'s opposition to widening the war, and he apparently feared that if he presented the case for additional troops on the basis of an optimistic assessment and an offensive strategy, he would be turned down again. Troops, not strategy, offered the "stronger talking point."<sup>13</sup>

Wheeler's report to Washington was deeply pessimistic. Describing the [Tet Offensive](#) as a "very near thing," he warned that the initial enemy attacks had almost succeeded in numerous places and had been turned back only by the "timely reaction of the United States forces." The North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) had suffered heavily, but they had repeatedly demonstrated a capacity for quick recovery, and they would probably attempt to sustain the offensive with renewed attacks. Without additional troops, he concluded, the United States must be "prepared to accept some reverses," a line calculated to sway a President who had already made clear he was not willing to accept defeat. Wheeler insisted that large-scale reinforcements were necessary to protect the cities, drive the enemy from the northern provinces, and pacify the countryside. His pessimism may have been sincere; he had never been as confident as Westmoreland. It seems clear, however, that by presenting a gloomy assessment he hoped to stampede the administration into providing the troops needed to rebuild a depleted strategic reserve and meet any contingency in Vietnam. His proposal reopened in even more vigorous fashion the debate that had raged in Washington throughout 1967.<sup>14</sup>

[Wheeler](#)'s report shocked a government already in a state of deep alarm. In terms of policy choices, it posed a hard dilemma. The General suggested that denial of the request for 206,000 troops

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>14</sup> Wheeler Report, February 27, 1968, excerpted in Neil Sheehan et al., [The Pentagon Papers](#) as Published by the New York Times (New York, 1971), pp. 615-621.



could result in a military defeat, or at least in an indefinite continuation of the war. Acceptance of his recommendations, on the other hand, would force a major escalation of the war and the imposition of heavy new demands on the American people in an election year and at a time when public anxiety about Vietnam was already pronounced. Not inclined to make a hasty decision on a matter fraught with such grave implications, [Johnson](#) turned the problem over to [Clark Clifford](#), who had just replaced [McNamara](#) as [Secretary of Defense](#), with the grim instruction: "Give me the lesser of evils."<sup>15</sup>

Whether Johnson instructed Clifford to initiate a full reevaluation of Vietnam policy or whether the Secretary of Defense acted on his own is not clear. The magnitude of the request was such that it demanded careful study, a point Johnson perceived even if he did not explicitly instruct Clifford along these lines. Clifford had consistently defended the President's policies in Vietnam, but his newness to the job and his need to clarify many fundamental issues led him naturally in the direction of a full reassessment. He was encouraged in this regard by the senior civilians in the Pentagon, men such as [Paul Warnke](#), [Townsend Hoopes](#), and [Paul Nitze](#), who had long been disenchanted with American strategy and had been partially responsible for McNamara's conversion. Thus, Clifford immediately began raising at the highest levels questions that had been avoided for years. He demanded of [Wheeler](#) and [Westmoreland](#) precise information on how the additional troops might be deployed and what results could be expected. He instructed his civilian advisers to study all the implications of the request and to review possible alternatives.<sup>16</sup>

Seizing the opportunity, the civilians in the Pentagon responded with a vigorous indictment of prevailing policy. [Alain Enthoven](#) of Systems Analysis attacked the request for more troops as another "payment on an open-ended commitment" and challenged the argument that it would shorten the war.<sup>17</sup> [North Vietnam](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), *The Vantage Point* (New York, 1971), pp. 392-393.

<sup>16</sup> For differing views on this issue, see *ibid.*, p. 397; Clark Clifford, "A Viet Nam Reappraisal," *Foreign Affairs*, 47 (July 1969), 609; and Schandler, *Johnson and Vietnam*, pp. 134-137.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in [U.S. Congress](#), Senate, Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds, *The Pentagon Papers* (The [Senator Gravel](#) Edition) (4 vols.; Boston, 1971), IV, 558.

had already demonstrated that it could match American increases with increases of its own and that it could limit its losses if it chose. Even with 206,000 additional troops, [Enthoven](#) and others concluded, the current strategy could "promise no early end to the conflict, nor any success in attriting the enemy or eroding [Hanoi's](#) will to fight." The costs would be heavy, moreover. The provision of substantial additional troops could lead to "total Americanization of the war," encouraging the [ARVN's](#) tendency to do nothing and reinforcing the belief of [South Vietnam's](#) "ruling elite that the U.S. will continue to fight while it engages in backroom politics and permits widespread corruption." Expansion of the war would bring increased American [casualties](#) and require new taxes, risking a "domestic crisis of unprecedented proportions." [Clifford's](#) advisers thus agreed that the administration should maintain existing limits on the war and give [Westmoreland](#) no more than a token increase in troops.<sup>18</sup>

The Pentagon civilians went further, however, proposing major changes in American policy. In their final report, they urged a shift from search and destroy, with its goal of "attriting" the enemy, to a strategy based on the principle of "population security." The bulk of American forces would be deployed along the "demographic frontier," an imaginary line just north of the major population centers, where they could defend against a major North Vietnamese thrust and, by engaging in limited offensive operations, keep the enemy's main forces off balance. At the same time, the United States should force the ARVN to assume greater responsibility for the war and compel the [Saigon](#) government to "end its internal bickering, purge corrupt officers and officials and move to develop efficient and effective forces." The goal of the new approach would be a negotiated settlement rather than military victory, and in this regard the civilians urged the scaling down of American objectives to a "peace which will leave the people of SVN free to fashion their own political institutions." The plan closely resembled McNamara's proposals of 1967, but it was stated more emphatically and it went further in outlining specific alternatives.<sup>19</sup>

The military bitterly opposed the Defense Department recommendations.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 563-564.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 564-568.

Recognizing the threat to his request for additional troops - indeed, to his entire strategy - [Westmoreland](#), with the support of Wheeler, warned that rejection of his proposals would deny the United States a splendid opportunity to take advantage of an altered strategic situation. [Wheeler](#) found "fatal flaws" in the population security strategy, admonishing that it would lead to increased fighting near the population centers, and hence to expanded civilian [casualties](#), and that it would leave the initiative with the enemy.<sup>20</sup> The United States was at a "cross-road," Admiral [U.S. Grant Sharp](#), Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Forces, warned. It must choose between using its power without restriction to achieve victory, accepting a "campaign of gradualism" and a "long drawn-out contest," or retreating "in defeat from Southeast Asia," leaving its "allies to face the Communists alone." Along with Westmoreland, the Joint Chiefs continued to advocate that the military be permitted to pursue enemy forces into [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#), "beat up" [North Vietnam](#) from the sea and air, and, after an Inchon-type landing, take and occupy parts of North Vietnam as far as thirty miles north of the [demilitarized zone](#).<sup>21</sup>

As had happened so often before, [Clifford](#) recommended against the military's proposals without resolving the debate on strategy. The Secretary seems to have leaned toward the population security strategy and a scaling down of American objectives. "I see more and more fighting with more and more casualties on the U.S. side and no end in sight to the action," he complained on March 4.<sup>22</sup> He seems to have felt, however, that the proposed change, with its implicit assumption that American policy had failed, would be more than the President could accept and he may have wished to prepare [Johnson](#) for change gradually rather than confront him immediately. Clifford's formal report attempted to keep the strategic issue alive by calling for continued study of possible alternatives, but it did not address itself to the issues raised by the civilians in the Pentagon. The [Secretary of Defense](#) merely recommended the immediate deployment to Vietnam of 22,000

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 568.

<sup>21</sup> Sharp is quoted in Schandler, Johnson and Vietnam, pp. 166-167. For the views of the Joint Chiefs, see Clifford notes on meeting, March 18, 1968, [Clark Clifford](#) Papers, [Lyndon Baines Johnson](#) Library, Austin, Tex.

<sup>22</sup> Notes on meeting, March 4, 1968, Johnson Papers, Tom Johnson Notes on Meetings, Box 1.

troops, a reserve call-up of unspecified magnitude, and a "highly forceful approach" to [Thieu](#) and [Ky](#) to get the South Vietnamese to assume greater responsibility for the war.<sup>23</sup>

The administration accepted [Clifford](#)'s recommendations without serious debate. The President and his top civilian advisers had long opposed expansion of the war, and they seem to have agreed as early as November 1967 that American forces should not be enlarged above prevailing levels. In the immediate aftermath of the [Tet](#) attacks, [Johnson](#) had been ready to send additional troops if they were required to hold the line, but by the time he received Clifford's report, the military situation in [South Vietnam](#) seemed well in hand. [Westmoreland](#) and Ambassador [Ellsworth Bunker](#) reported that American and South Vietnamese forces had fully recovered from the initial shock of the enemy offensive and were ready to mount a major counteroffensive. Under these circumstances, there seemed to be no need for immediate large-scale reinforcements, and although Johnson did not formally approve Clifford's recommendations at this time, he agreed with them and was prepared to act upon them.

The administration also accepted the principle that South Vietnam should do more to defend itself. Johnson's advisers agreed that from a long-range standpoint the key to achieving American objectives was South Vietnam's ability to stand on its own, and they had concluded in late 1967 that more should be done to promote self-sufficiency. The [ARVN](#)'s quick recovery from the initial panic of Tet and its surprising effectiveness in the subsequent battles reinforced this notion by suggesting that "[Vietnamization](#)" might in fact work. Indeed, in the discussions of late February and early March 1968, some of the strongest arguments against sending massive American reinforcements were that it would encourage the South Vietnamese to do less at a time when they should be doing more and that it would take equipment which might better be used by the ARVN. The administration thus agreed in early March that Thieu and Ky should be bluntly informed that the United States was willing to send limited reinforcements and substantial quantities of equipment but that continued American assistance would depend upon South Vietnam's ability to put its own affairs in order

23 Draft presidential memorandum, March 4, 1968, in [Pentagon Papers](#) (Gravel), IV, 575-576.

and assume a greater burden of the fighting.<sup>24</sup> The decision represented a significant shift in American policy - a return, at least in part, to the principle that had governed its involvement before 1965 and adoption, at least in rudimentary fashion, of the concept of [Vietnamization](#), which would be introduced with much fanfare by the [Nixon](#) administration a year later.

While agreeing in principle to [Clifford](#)'s recommendations, the administration also began serious consideration of a cutback in the bombing and a new peace initiative. The [Secretary of Defense](#) had recommended against further peace moves in his report and, perhaps as a sop to the military, had even urged intensification of the bombing. The initiative came from [Secretary of State Rusk](#). Rusk had felt for some time that the bombing had produced only marginal gains at heavy cost, and he proposed that the administration seriously consider the possibility of limiting it, without condition, to those areas "which are integrally related to the battlefield," namely, the supply routes and staging areas just north of the [demilitarized zone](#). Such a move would cost the United States nothing, he argued, since inclement weather in the next few months would severely restrict raids over the northern part of [North Vietnam](#). Bunker had speculated that [Hanoi](#)'s purpose in launching the [Tet Offensive](#) may have been to establish a favorable position for negotiations, and in late February neutral intermediaries had brought several peace feelers to the State Department. Rusk was inclined to believe that the chances for productive negotiations remained "bleak," but relaxation of the ambiguous [San Antonio formula](#) might entice Hanoi to the conference table and at least would test its intentions. Even if North Vietnam did not respond positively, domestic critics would be persuaded that the administration was taking important steps to get negotiations under way. The United States could resume air attacks on Hanoi and Haiphong later, if necessary, the Secretary pointed out, probably with increased public support.<sup>25</sup>

Since the abortive "peace offensive" of 1965, Johnson had stubbornly opposed any reduction of the bombing, but he was attracted to Rusk's proposal. The President was certain that North Vietnam had suffered heavy losses in the Tet Offensive, and he appears to

<sup>24</sup> Schandler, Johnson and Vietnam, p. 179.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 181-193.

have concluded that the United States could undertake negotiations from a vastly strengthened position. He recognized the need to do something to still the growing outcry against the war at home. And he was responsive to the idea because it came from [Rusk](#), a man whose loyalty, caution, and measured judgment he had come to respect deeply.<sup>26</sup> [Johnson](#) later claimed to have accepted the idea of a reduction of the bombing and a new peace initiative as early as March 7, but he was not inclined to move hastily and he remained outwardly noncommittal for several weeks. He urged his advisers merely to study the matter carefully and to develop specific proposals that might be included in a major speech he was scheduled to deliver at the end of the month.

The administration's inclination to move in new directions was strengthened by mounting evidence of public dissatisfaction with the war. Discussion of Vietnam during February and March 1968 took place in an atmosphere of gloom and futility. The media continued to depict events in highly unfavorable and sometimes distorted terms. Early reports of a smashing enemy victory went largely uncorrected. The fact that the United States and [South Vietnam](#) had hurled back the attacks and quickly stabilized their position was completely lost in the image of chaos and defeat.<sup>27</sup> For those [television](#) and newspaper commentators who had long opposed the conflict, [Tet](#) provided compelling evidence of its folly. "The war in Vietnam is unwinnable," the columnist Joseph Kraft reported, "and the longer it goes on the more the Americans ... will be subjected to losses and humiliation." Many opinion-makers who had supported the President or had been only mildly critical now came out force fully against the war. Tet made clear, Newsweek commented, that "a strategy of more of the same is intolerable." In a much-publicized broadcast on February 27, Walter [Cronkite](#) eloquently summed up the prevailing mood. "To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest that we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism.

<sup>26</sup> Of Rusk, Johnson once said: "He has the compassion of a preacher and the courage of a Georgia cracker. When you're going in with the marines, he's the kind you want at your side." Max Frankel notes of conversation with Johnson, July 8, 1965, Krock Papers, Box 1.

<sup>27</sup> For a critical analysis of press and television coverage of Tet, see Peter Braestrup, *Big Story* (2 vols.; Westview, Colo., 1977).

To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only reasonable, yet unsatisfactory conclusion."<sup>28</sup>

A New York Times story of March 10, reporting that the administration was considering sending another 206,000 men to Vietnam, added to the furor. By this time, [Johnson](#) had decided to turn down [Westmoreland](#)'s request, but he had not revealed his intentions publicly and the story set off a barrage of protest.<sup>29</sup> Critics asked why so many troops were needed and whether more would follow. Skeptics questioned the results of further escalation, warning that the North Vietnamese would be able to match any American increase. The only thing that would change, NBC's Frank McGee observed, would be the "capacity for destruction." The time had come, McGee concluded, "when we must decide whether it is futile to destroy Vietnam in the effort to save it."<sup>30</sup>

The possibility of another major troop increase provoked a stormy reaction in Congress. Democrats and Republicans, hawks and doves, demanded an explanation and insisted that Congress must share in any decision to expand the war. On March 11 and 12, the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#) grilled [Rusk](#) for a total of eleven hours, dramatically revealing a growing discontent with the administration's policies and a determination to exercise some voice in future decisions. A week later, 139 members of the House of Representatives sponsored a resolution calling for a full review of American policy in Vietnam. The Congressional outcry reinforced the administration's conviction that it could not escalate the war without setting off a long and bitter debate, and persuaded some officials, [Clifford](#) among them, that major steps must be taken to scale down American involvement.<sup>31</sup>

Indexes of public opinion also revealed a sharp rise in disillusionment. Support for the war itself remained remarkably steady between November 1967 and March 1968, hovering around 45 percent.<sup>32</sup> But approval of Johnson's conduct of it, which had risen to 40 percent as a result of the 1967 public relations campaign,

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Oberdorfer, *Tet!* p. 251.

<sup>29</sup> Schandler, *Johnson and Vietnam*, pp. 200-205.

<sup>30</sup> Oberdorfer, *Tet!* p. 273.

<sup>31</sup> Schandler, *Johnson and Vietnam*, pp. 207-217.

<sup>32</sup> Approval and disapproval of the war were measured by the question "Do you think the United States made a mistake sending troops to Vietnam?" - at best an imperfect way of judging a complex issue.

plummeted to an all-time low of 26 percent during [Tet](#). By March, moreover, an overwhelming majority of Americans (78 percent) were certain that the United States was not making any progress in Vietnam. The polls indicated no consensus for either escalation or [withdrawal](#), only a firm conviction that the United States was hopelessly bogged down and growing doubt that [Johnson](#) could break the stalemate.<sup>33</sup>

By mid-March, public discontent had assumed ominous political overtones. Senator [Eugene McCarthy](#) of Minnesota, an outspoken dove, had audaciously decided to challenge Johnson's renomination, and his surprisingly strong showing in the New Hampshire primary on March 12, suddenly transformed what had seemed a quixotic crusade into a major political challenge. Johnson's name had not been on the ballot, but the party organization had mounted a vigorous write-in campaign for him, and when McCarthy won 42 percent of the vote it was widely interpreted as a defeat for the President. Subsequent analysis revealed that hawks outnumbered doves by a wide majority among McCarthy supporters in New Hampshire. Early appraisals, however, emphasized that the vote reflected a growing sentiment for peace, and within several days a more formidable peace candidate had entered the field. After weeks of hesitation and soul-searching, Senator [Robert Kennedy](#) of New York announced on March 16 that he too would run against the President on a platform of opposition to the war. With his name, his glamor, and his connections in the party, Kennedy appeared a serious threat to Johnson's renomination. Worried party regulars urged the President to do "something exciting and dramatic to recapture the peace issue" and to shift the emphasis of his rhetoric from winning the war to securing "peace with honor."<sup>34</sup>

The impact of public opinion on the decision-making process in March 1968 is difficult to measure. [Westmoreland](#) and others have charged that a hostile and all-too-powerful media, especially the [television](#) networks, seized defeat from the jaws of victory by turning the public against the war and limiting the government's freedom of action just when the United States had a battered enemy on

33 Louis Harris, *The Anguish of Change* (New York, 1973), pp. 63-64, and Burns W. Roper, "What Public Opinion Polls Said," in Braestrup, *Big Story*, I, 674-704.

34 James Rowe to Johnson, March 19, 1968, Johnson Papers, Marvin Watson File, Box 32.



the ropes.<sup>35</sup> In fact, up to [Tet, television](#) coverage of the war tended overwhelmingly to be neutral or favorable to the government. The reporting during and after Tet was much more critical. A direct link between television reporting and public opinion cannot be established, however, and it seems more likely that the media's shift to a critical position reflected rather than caused the parallel shift in public opinion.<sup>36</sup> Vietnam was the first television war, to be sure, and it is possible that the nightly exposure to violence contributed to public war-weariness. Such an assertion can never be proven, however, and it can be argued as plausibly that television generated support for the war or even caused apathy.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, the [Johnson](#) administration itself was at least partially responsible for media and public disillusionment during Tet. Its unduly optimistic pronouncements of 1967 made the shock of Tet greater than it might have been otherwise and widened an already large [credibility gap](#). The President and his advisers could have corrected the distortions of the media, but their public response to Tet was itself halting and confused, in part because they were uncertain what was happening and how to respond.

The stab-in-the-back thesis is suspect on more basic grounds. That victory was within grasp, even had [Westmoreland](#) been given all the troops he requested, remains quite doubtful. And the influence of public opinion does not appear to have been as great as Westmoreland alleges. None of Johnson's civilian advisers favored expansion of the war and another large troop increase, and the President had rejected Westmoreland's proposals before the public protest reached significant proportions. Evidence of growing popular discontent merely confirmed the view that it would be disastrous to escalate the war. Public anxiety persuaded some officials that the United States must move toward a [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam, but the President did not go this far. He eventually concluded that he must make additional conciliatory gestures, but he did not alter his policy in any fundamental way or abandon his goals.

On March 22, Johnson formally rejected Westmoreland's proposals

<sup>35</sup> Westmoreland, *Soldier Reports*, p. 410; also Robert Elegant, "How to Lose a War," *Encounter*, LVII (August 1981), 73-90.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Mandelbaum, "Vietnam: The Television War," *Daedalus*, III (Fall 1982), 157-168; Daniel C. Hallin, "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media," *Journal of Politics*, 46 (1984), 1-23.

<sup>37</sup> Michael J. Arlen, *The Living Room War* (New York, 1969).

to seek victory through an expanded war. He was undoubtedly influenced by public opinion, but the steadily improving situation in [South Vietnam](#) seems to have been decisive. The [Saigon](#) government was responding to American pressures. Stability and order had been restored to the cities, and in late March, [Thieu](#) announced a massive increase in draft calls that would raise the [ARVN](#)'s strength by 135,000 men. The intensity of [Vietcong](#) rocket attacks was steadily diminishing. Enemy forces were withdrawing from the positions established before [Tet](#) and splitting into small groups to avoid destruction or capture. In mid-March, [Westmoreland](#) informed [Johnson](#) of plans for a major offensive in the northern provinces, the central objective of which was to relieve the siege of [Khe Sanh](#).

Under these circumstances, Johnson saw no need for a major increase in American forces. Indeed, he did not even authorize the 22,000 men recommended by [Clifford](#), agreeing merely to deploy 13,500 support troops to augment the emergency reinforcements sent in February. At the same time, he decided to bring Westmoreland back to Washington to assume the position of Chief of Staff of the Army. The General had come under heavy fire for his prophecies of victory and for his failure to anticipate the Tet Offensive, and Johnson wanted to spare him from becoming a scapegoat. The President may also have wished to remove him from the untenable position of fighting a war under conditions he did not approve. Whatever the precise purpose, the recall of Westmoreland seems to have signified the administration's determination to maintain the limits it had placed on the war and, tacitly at least, to check further escalation of the conflict.

During the last week of March, the internal debate on Vietnam policy reached a decisive stage, and it became increasingly sharp and emotional. Some of the President's advisers still insisted that the United States should do everything possible to "hang in there." At one time during the Tet crisis, [Rostow](#) had proposed sending to Congress a new Southeast Asia Resolution to rally the nation behind the war, and he continued to urge the President to stand firm at what could be a critical turning point. Rusk persisted in working for the partial bombing halt he had outlined in early March. He was concerned by the domestic protest, but he had not despaired of success in Vietnam nor was he disposed to capitulate to the administration's critics. He seems to have been certain that the North

Vietnamese would reject his proposal, but a conciliatory gesture would show the American people that the administration was doing everything possible to bring about negotiations, thus buying time to stabilize the home front and shore up [South Vietnam](#).<sup>38</sup>

By this time, [Clifford](#) had moved significantly beyond his position of late February. He was concerned by the apparent damage Vietnam was doing to the nation's international financial position. He was alarmed by the growing domestic unrest, particularly the "tremendous erosion of support" among the nation's business and legal elite. These men felt the United States was in a "hopeless bog," he reported, and the idea of "going deeper into the bog" struck them as "mad." Although unclear precisely how to proceed, he had set his mind on a "winching down" strategy that would put the United States irreversibly on a course of step-by-step deescalation. U.S. forces should not be expanded above existing levels and should be used primarily to protect the South Vietnamese population from another enemy offensive. [Thieu](#) should be pressed to clean up and broaden his government. Clifford seems also to have been prepared to make major concessions to secure a negotiated settlement. He frankly conceded that the United States might have to settle for the best it could obtain. "Nothing required us to remain until the North had been ejected from the South and the [Saigon](#) government had established complete control of all South Viet Nam," he later wrote. At a meeting on March 28, he delivered a long, impassioned plea to initiate the process of deescalation. Working behind the scenes with White House aide Harry McPherson, he waged an unrelenting campaign to win the battle for the President's mind.<sup>39</sup>

While the debate raged about him, [Johnson](#) remained noncommittal. His instincts leaned toward the [Rusk](#) position. He was infuriated by the [desertion](#) of Clifford, on whose support he had counted, and he was deeply opposed to abandoning a policy in which he had invested so much, particularly in view of the improved situation in South Vietnam. Publicly, he continued to take a hard line, proclaiming that "We must meet our commitments in

38 See Rostow to Johnson, March 15, 1968, Johnson Papers, Diary Backup, Box 95; Schandler, Johnson and Vietnam, p. 243.

39 Clifford, "Viet Nam Reappraisal," 613; memorandum of conversation with Clifford, March 20, 1968, Krock Papers; Harry McPherson oral history interview, Johnson Papers.

Vietnam and the world. We shall and we are going to win!"<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, he could not ignore the protest that was building around him, inside and outside the government, and he concluded, gradually and apparently with reluctance, that some additional conciliatory steps must be taken.

Trusted advisers from outside the government seem to have clinched it for [Johnson](#). To move the President from his indecision, [Clifford](#) suggested that he call his senior advisory group, the [Wise Men](#), back to Washington for another session on Vietnam. After a series of briefings by diplomatic and military officials on March 26, the group, in a mood of obvious gloom, reported its findings. A minority advocated holding the line militarily and even escalating if necessary, but the majority favored immediate steps toward deescalation. After its last meeting in November, [McGeorge Bundy](#) reported, the group had expected slow and steady progress. This appeared not to have happened, however, and the majority view, as summed up by former [Secretary of State](#) Dean [Acheson](#), was that the United States could "no longer do the job we set out to do in the time we have left and we must begin to take steps to disengage." The Wise Men disagreed among themselves on what needed to be done, some proposing a total and unconditional bombing halt, others a shift in the ground strategy. Most of them agreed that the goal of an independent, non-Communist [South Vietnam](#) was probably unattainable and that moves should be made toward eventual disengagement. "Unless we do something quick, the mood in this country may lead us to [withdrawal](#)," Cyrus Vance warned.<sup>41</sup> "The establishment bastards have bailed out," an angry and dispirited Johnson is said to have remarked after the meeting.<sup>42</sup>

Keeping his intentions under wraps until the very end, the President

<sup>40</sup> Schandler, Johnson and Vietnam, p. 248.

<sup>41</sup> Summary of notes, March 26, 1968, Johnson Papers, Meeting Notes File, Box 2. The "Wise Men" were [Dean Acheson](#), [George Ball](#), McGeorge Bundy, Douglas Dillon, Cyrus Vance, Arthur Dean, John McCloy, Omar Bradley, Matthew Ridgway, [Maxwell Taylor](#), Robert Murphy, [Henry Cabot Lodge](#), Abe Fortas, and Arthur [Goldberg](#).

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Roger Morris, *An Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1977), p. 44. Johnson was furious with the negative tone of the March 26 briefings. The "first thing I do when you all leave is to get those briefers ...," he told one of the Wise Men. Notes, March 26, 1968, Johnson Papers, Diary Backup File, 95. See also Deputy oral history interview, Deputy Papers.

in a televised address on March 31 dramatically revealed a series of major decisions. Accepting [Rusk's](#) proposal, he announced that the bombing of [North Vietnam](#) would henceforth be limited to the area just north of the [demilitarized zone](#). Responding to the en-treaties of [Clifford](#) and the [Wise Men](#), however, he went further. "Even this limited bombing of the North could come to an early end," he stressed, "if our restraint is matched by restraint in [Hanoi](#)." He named the veteran diplomat [Averell Harriman](#) as his personal representative should peace talks materialize, and he made clear that the United States was ready to discuss peace, any time, any place. In a bombshell announcement that caught the nation by surprise, [Johnson](#) concluded by saying firmly: "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President." He later revealed that for some time he had considered not running for reelection. He was exhausted physically and emotionally from the strains of office. He realized that he had spent most of his political capital and that another term would be conflict-ridden and barren of accomplishment. By removing himself from candidacy, he could emphasize the sincerity of his desire for negotiations and contribute to the restoration of national unity and domestic harmony.<sup>43</sup>

Johnson's speech is usually cited as a major turning point in American involvement in Vietnam, and in some ways it was. No ceiling was placed on American ground forces, and the President did not obligate himself to maintain the restrictions on the bombing. Indeed, in explaining the partial bombing halt to the Embassy in [Saigon](#), the State Department indicated that Hanoi would probably "denounce" it and "thus free our hand after a short period."<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the circumstances in which the March decisions were made and the conciliatory tone of Johnson's speech made it difficult, if not impossible, for him to change course. March 31, 1968, marked an inglorious end to the policy of gradual escalation.

The President did not change his goals, however. The apparent American success in the battles of [Tet](#) reinforced the conviction of Johnson, Rusk, and [Rostow](#) that they could yet secure an independent,

<sup>43</sup> Public Papers of [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), 1968-1969 (2 vols.; Washington D.C., 1970), I, 469-476. On Johnson's decision not to run, see also George Christian memorandum, March 31, 1968, Johnson Papers, Diary Backup File, Box 96

<sup>44</sup> "March 31 Speech," Johnson Papers, National Security File, [National Security Council Histories](#): March 31, 1968 Speech, Box 47.

non-Communist [South Vietnam](#). "My biggest worry was not Vietnam itself," the President later conceded, "it was the divisiveness and pessimism at home .... I looked on my approaching speech as an opportunity to help right the balance and provide better perspective. For the collapse of the home front, I knew well, was just what [Hanoi](#) was counting on."<sup>45</sup> By rejecting major [troop](#) reinforcements, reducing the bombing, shifting some military responsibility to the Vietnamese, and withdrawing from the presidential race, [Johnson](#) hoped to salvage his policy at least to the end of his term, and he felt certain that history would vindicate him for standing firm under intense criticism. Johnson's speech did not represent a change of policy, therefore, but a shift of tactics to salvage a policy that had come under bitter attack.

The new tactics were even more vaguely defined and contradictory than the old, however. The March decisions marked a shift from the idea of graduated pressure to the pre-1965 concept of saving South Vietnam by denying the enemy victory. Precisely how this was to be achieved was not spelled out. The debate over ground strategy was not resolved, and [Westmoreland's](#) successor, General [Creighton Abrams](#), was given no strategic guidance. Administration officials generally agreed that ground operations should be scaled down to reduce American [casualties](#), but it was not clear how they would contribute to the achievement of American goals. The bombing was to be concentrated against North Vietnamese staging areas and supply lines, but it had not reduced [infiltration](#) significantly in the past and there was no reason to assume it would be more effective in the future. The exigencies of domestic politics required acceptance of the concept of [Vietnamization](#), and the surprising response of the [ARVN](#) during [Tet](#) raised hopes that it would work. There was little in the past record of various South Vietnamese governments to suggest, however, that [Thieu](#) and his cohorts could conciliate their non-Communist opponents and pacify the countryside while effectively waging war against a weakened but still formidable enemy. Negotiations were also desirable from a domestic political standpoint, but in the absence of concessions the administration was not prepared to make, diplomacy could accomplish nothing and its failure might intensify the pressures the talks were designed to ease. In short, the tactics of

<sup>45</sup> Johnson, *Vantage Point*, p. 422.

1968 perpetuated the ambiguities and inconsistencies that had marked American policy from the start.

U.S. policy in the months after [Tet](#) makes clear that, although the [Johnson](#) administration spoke a more conciliatory language and altered its tactics, it had not retreated from its original goals. The President made good on his pledge to negotiate, accepting, after numerous delays, [Hanoi's](#) proposal to send representatives to Paris for direct talks. From the outset, however, he refused to compromise on the fundamental issues. In the meantime, the United States sought to keep maximum pressure on enemy forces in [South Vietnam](#) and assisted the South Vietnamese in a frantic drive to gain control of the countryside, while making plans for a gradual shift of the military burden to the [ARVN](#). The result was to harden the stalemate, leaving resolution of the problem to the next administration.

Despite the accommodating tone of Johnson's March 31 speech, the administration approached the reality of negotiations with extreme caution. Hanoi's positive response caught Washington by surprise, and many U.S. officials suspected a clever North Vietnamese ploy to exploit antiwar sentiment in the United States. The administration had no choice but to accept the enemy's proposal for direct talks, but it was determined not to rush into negotiations. Although Johnson had vowed to send representatives "to any forum, at any time," he rejected Hanoi's proposed sites of Phnom Penh, [Cambodia](#), and Warsaw, where, he said, the "deck would be stacked against U.S."<sup>46</sup>

The two nations finally agreed to meet in Paris, and the administration took a hard line from the outset. [Harriman](#) and [Clifford](#) advocated a generous initial offer to get negotiations moving and extricate the United States from Vietnam as quickly as possible. Johnson's other advisers were not persuaded, however. [Westmoreland](#) and Bunker claimed that the U.S. position in South Vietnam had improved significantly and that the administration would be negotiating from strength in Paris. Johnson and his advisers expressed grave doubts that the talks would lead to anything. They were certainly sincere in their desire for peace, but the terms for which they were prepared to hold out made virtually certain that nothing would be accomplished. [Rusk](#) insisted that the United

46 Ibid., pp. 505-506.

States should get [North Vietnam](#) "to make concessions" or "take responsibility for breaking off the talks." In return for a complete bombing halt, administration officials seemed inclined to back off from the [San Antonio formula](#). [Rusk](#) even talked about holding out for North Vietnamese observance of the 1962 Geneva Accords on [Laos](#) and reestablishment of the [demilitarized zone](#). The United States was opposed to a cease-fire that would tie its hands militarily in the south, and in terms of a political settlement Rusk spoke hopefully of restoration of the status quo antebellum.<sup>47</sup>

Formal talks opened in Paris on May 13 and immediately deadlocked. North Vietnam had agreed to talks as part of its broader strategy of fighting while negotiating. It probably had no interest in substantive negotiations while the military balance of forces was unfavorable, and it may have viewed the Paris talks primarily as a means of getting the bombing stopped, exacerbating differences between the United States and [South Vietnam](#), and intensifying antiwar pressures in the United States. The North Vietnamese made clear that they were establishing contact with the United States to secure the "unconditional cessation of U.S. bombing raids and all other acts of war so that talks may start." The [Johnson](#) administration was willing to stop the bombing, but, as in the past, it insisted on reciprocal steps of deescalation. [Hanoi](#) continued to reject the American demand for reciprocity and refused any terms which limited its ability to support the war in the south while leaving the United States a free hand there.

The American delegation subsequently introduced a new proposal, actually a variant of the old two-track plan, in an attempt to break the impasse. The United States would stop the bombing "on the assumption that" North Vietnam would respect the demilitarized zone and refrain from further rocket attacks on [Saigon](#) and other cities, and that "prompt and serious talks" would follow. The offer brought no formal response or any indication that one might be forthcoming. American officials complained that the North Vietnamese seemed prepared to sit in Paris "and even read the telephone directory if necessary to keep non-productive talks going," and the Joint Chiefs pressed relentlessly for reescalation, including

<sup>47</sup> Notes on meeting, May 6, 1968, Johnson Papers, Meeting Notes File, Box 3; [Harold Johnson](#) notes on meetings, May 6, 8, 1968, Harold Johnson Papers, Box 127; Andrew Goodpaster oral history interview, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.



[B-52](#) strikes against North Vietnamese [sanctuaries](#) in [Cambodia](#).<sup>48</sup>

Fearful that the talks might drag on inconclusively, perpetuating the war and exacerbating domestic divisions, the chief American negotiator, [W. Averell Harriman](#), urged the President to compromise. Although [North Vietnam](#) had not responded formally to the American proposal, [Vietcong](#) rocket attacks had subsided and there were indications that significant numbers of North Vietnamese troops had been withdrawn from the south. Harriman argued that the military lull could be interpreted as the sign of deescalation the United States had sought, and he pressed [Johnson](#) to stop the bombing and reduce the level of American military activity while making clear the next move he expected from [Hanoi](#). [Clifford](#) supported Harriman's proposal, but the military argued that the lull was simply a regroupment for the next offensive and warned that stopping the bombing would endanger American troops. Johnson flatly rejected Harriman's proposal. Indeed, at a press conference on July 31, he threatened that if there were no breakthrough in Paris, he might be compelled to undertake additional military measures. "Our most difficult negotiations were with Washington and not Hanoi .... "one U.S. diplomat later lamented, "we just couldn't convince the President that summer."<sup>49</sup>

While standing firm in Paris, the administration used every available means to strengthen its position in [South Vietnam](#). The United States stepped up the pace of military operations in the spring of 1968. The air war in the south reached a new peak of intensity, as [B-52s](#) and [fighter-bombers](#) relentlessly attacked [infiltration](#) routes, lines of communication, and suspected enemy base camps. The number of B-52 missions tripled in 1968, and the bombs dropped on South Vietnam exceeded one million tons. In March and April, the United States and South Vietnam conducted the largest search-and-destroy mission of the war, sending more than 100,000 troops against enemy forces in the provinces around [Saigon](#). "Charlie [the Vietcong] is being relentlessly pursued night and

<sup>48</sup> Notes on [National Security Council](#) meeting, May 22, 1968, Johnson Papers, National Security File, NSC Meetings, Box 3; notes on meetings, May 25, 28, Johnson Papers, Meeting Notes File, Box 3.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Allan E. Goodman, *The Lost Peace: America's Search for a Negotiated Settlement of the Vietnam War* (Stanford, Calif., 1978), p. 69.

day and pounded to shreds whenever and wherever we catch him," one U.S. officer exclaimed.<sup>50</sup> The scale of American military operations diminished somewhat in the summer and fall as [Abrams](#) shifted to small-unit patrols and mobile spoiling attacks, but throughout the remainder of the year the United States kept intense pressure on enemy forces in [South Vietnam](#).

The United States and South Vietnam also launched an [Accelerated Pacification campaign](#) to secure as much of the countryside as possible in the event serious negotiations should begin. Abrams committed a major proportion of American and [ARVN](#) manpower to the program, and local defense forces were enlarged and given modern military equipment. To use their resources more effectively, the United States and South Vietnam focused their pacification efforts in certain key areas. U.S. and South Vietnamese officials energetically applied both carrot and stick to cripple an already weakened [Vietcong](#). The [Chieu Hoi](#) Program, which offered amnesty and "rehabilitation" to defectors, was intensified, as was the [Phoenix Program](#), a direct attack on the Vietcong infrastructure through mass arrests. By late 1968, for the first time, the United States and South Vietnam had committed a major portion of their resources and manpower to the task of controlling the countryside.<sup>51</sup>

The United States also pressed forward with [Vietnamization](#). American officials candidly admitted that the South Vietnamese were nowhere near ready to assume the burden of their own defense. "If you took out all the United States ... forces now," Abrams conceded, "the Government would have to settle for a piece of Vietnam."<sup>52</sup> New plans were nevertheless drawn up to expand and upgrade the South Vietnamese armed forces and to shift to them gradually the primary responsibility for military operations. The force level was increased from 685,000 to 850,000, training programs were drastically expanded, and ARVN units were given the newest equipment. To increase the combat-readiness of Vietnamese troops and to smooth the transition, Abrams employed

<sup>50</sup> Frank Clay to Mr. and Mrs. Lucius Clay, May 15, 1968, Frank Clay Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

<sup>51</sup> Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The [Counterinsurgency](#) Era: U.S. Doctrines and Performance* (New York, 1977), pp. 264-265.

<sup>52</sup> A. J. Langguth, "General Abrams Listens to a Different Drummer," *New York Times Magazine* (May 5, 1968), 28.

[ARVN](#) and American units in combined operations.<sup>53</sup>

Pacification and [Vietnamization](#) were both long-range undertakings, however, and the frenzied efforts of 1968 could not make up for years of neglect. It was the end of the year before the pacification program got back to where it had been before [Tet](#). The establishment of a presence in the villages was not tantamount to gaining the active support of the people, something that could not be accomplished overnight. The ARVN was larger and better equipped, but its basic problems remained uncorrected. Desertions reached an all-time high in 1968; an acute shortage of qualified officers persisted. At the end of the year, American advisers rated two ARVN [divisions](#) "outright poor," eight no better than "improving," and only one "excellent."<sup>54</sup> Americans detected among the Vietnamese a stubborn, if quiet, resistance to the whole notion of Vietnamization. [Clifford](#) returned from a visit to [Saigon](#) "oppressed" by the "pervasive Americanization" of the war. The United States was still doing most of the fighting and paying the cost. "Worst of all," he concluded, "the South Vietnamese leaders seemed content to have it that way."<sup>55</sup>

The crash programs of 1968 did not decisively alter the military or political balance in South Vietnam. The [Vietcong](#)'s hold on the countryside was weaker than ever before, and defections increased significantly. The harsh methods used to rebuild the insurgents' depleted ranks alienated many villagers. The government was therefore able to regain much of what had been lost in the early days of Tet and even extend its influence into new areas. The United States held the military initiative throughout much of South Vietnam during 1968, and its spoiling attacks on base areas and supply lines kept the enemy off balance. Americans detected a marked deterioration in the quality of the NVA soldiers they faced after Tet. The Vietcong clandestine organization and North Vietnamese main units remained intact, however, and the launching of major operations in May and September, as well as sporadic rocket attacks on

<sup>53</sup> J. Lawton Collins, Jr., *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972* (Washington, D.C., 1975), pp. 85-88, 100-101, 104-105, 117-118.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Shaplen, *The Road from War: Vietnam, 1965-1970* (New York, 1970), p. 250.

<sup>55</sup> Clifford, "Viet Nam Reappraisal," pp. 614-615; also Clifford to Johnson, July

the cities, made clear that the adversary retained significant strength and the will to fight on.

Although it improved markedly in the aftermath of [Tet](#), the performance of the Government of [Vietnam](#) remained at best uneven, its stability uncertain. Government and people worked together effectively in implementing Operation Recovery, a massive crash program to repair the damage done the cities by the battles of Tet. At American urging, [Thieu](#) adopted a new economic program to combat inflation, and instituted an anti-corruption program to deal with one of [South Vietnam's](#) oldest and most pervasive problems. On the basis of these actions and others, some optimistic observers concluded by late in the year that the government was functioning more effectively than at any time since the mid-1950s. For every problem attacked, however, others remained unchallenged and new ones surfaced. [Land reform](#) moved forward at a snail's pace, if at all. Tet created thousands of new [refugees](#), and American officials expressed grave concern at the government's apparent indifference to their plight. The prospect of negotiations made Thieu more reluctant than ever to broaden the base of his government. He made some cosmetic changes, appointing a civilian, [Tran Van Huong](#), as Prime Minister and promising to increase civilian influence in the government. Increasingly, however, he withdrew into himself, trusting no one and making most decisions on his own. "He is his own [Nhu](#)," one American complained with more than a touch of resignation.<sup>56</sup>

The possibility of an American [withdrawal](#) exacerbated the fragmented political system of South Vietnam. "Divisiveness is still endemic," Robert Shaplen observed in late 1968, "and rivalries exist across the board, in politics, in the Army, among religious groups, and so on." The rivalry between [Ky](#) and Thieu intensified, factionalizing much of the government. The [Buddhists](#) remained more alienated than ever, issuing open demands for the foundation of a "peace cabinet" and urging the soldiers to lay down their arms. Both the Buddhists and the sects appeared to look forward to the collapse of the government so that they could pick up the pieces. New political groups proliferated after the peace negotiations

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Shaplen, *Road from War*, p. 248. See also [William Colby](#) oral history interview, Johnson Papers, and James P. Grant to Ernest Lindley, September 21, 1968, Johnson Papers, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 101.

began, but they were dissension-ridden and could not work together. Much of the urban population persisted in its demeanor of watchful waiting. The South Vietnamese, Shaplen concluded, seem "more and more like men who know they are suffering from an incurable malady."<sup>57</sup>

Vietnamese-American tensions increased significantly in the period after [Tet](#). The government and its supporters angrily protested that they had been railroaded into negotiations before they were ready. Those Vietnamese who had come to depend upon the United States expressed bitter fears that they would be left at the mercy of the [Vietcong](#). The accumulated frustrations of fighting a war they could not "win" in a hostile environment were manifested more openly among American servicemen in 1968, and the savagery of the battles of Tet and the heavy losses sustained inflamed anti-Vietnamese feelings. A gallows' humor solution to the Vietnam dilemma that went the round of fire bases and GI bars typified the attitude. "What you do is, you load all the Friendlies onto ships and take them out to the South China Sea. Then you bomb the country fiat. Then you sink the ship."<sup>58</sup> The murder of more than 200 civilians, including women and children, in the village of [My Lai](#) by an American company under the command of Lieutenant [William Calley](#) in March 1968 starkly reveals the hostility that some Americans had come to feel for all Vietnamese.

Divisions within the United States also increased dramatically in 1968, and although Vietnam was only one of numerous causes, it increasingly became the focal point. Campus unrest mounted significantly, with some 200 demonstrations erupting in the first half of the year. The most violent took place at Columbia University in New York, where 1,000 police wielding nightsticks forcefully broke up a mass sit-in. The assassination of [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), in April brought latent racial unrest to the surface, provoking rioting, looting, and burning of urban areas throughout the country. U.S. Army units had to be brought into the nation's capital to maintain order. The assassination of presidential candidate [Robert Kennedy](#) in June seemed to indicate the extent to which violence had triumphed over reason. More than anything else, the Democratic convention in Chicago in August dramatized the reality of a nation

<sup>57</sup> Shaplen, *Road from War*, p. 208.

<sup>58</sup> Michael Herr, *Dispatches*, (New York, 1978), p. 59.

divided against itself. While delegates inside the convention hall bitterly debated the war, antiwar protesters engaged police in bloody battles in the streets of [Chicago](#). The convention nominated [Johnson](#)'s preferred candidate, Vice President [Hubert H. Humphrey](#), and endorsed the President's policies, proving beyond doubt to some critics that the war could not be ended by working within the system. More important, the bloodshed in the streets of "night-stick city" was brought into the homes of Americans each night on [television](#), and the nation "could no longer turn away from the fact that the war in Southeast Asia... was causing a kind of civil war in the United States."<sup>59</sup>

Largely in response to domestic pressures, Johnson in late 1968 made one last effort to get the peace talks off dead center. The convention in Chicago badly discredited the Democrats, and in its aftermath some party leaders pleaded for a dramatic peace move to assist Humphrey, who lagged well behind Republican candidate [Richard M. Nixon](#) in the early polls. The President had repeatedly insisted that he would not be swayed by political considerations, but he was sympathetic to the concerns of leading Democrats, and he was eventually persuaded that he might be able to break the deadlock in Paris without undue risk. [Harriman](#) continued to argue that the military lull in [South Vietnam](#) was a clear sign of North Vietnamese interest in substantive negotiations, and [Abrams](#) assured Johnson that a bombing halt would not pose a military threat. The North Vietnamese had been badly hurt by the spring campaigns. In any case, the approach of the monsoon season would severely limit the effectiveness of the bombing for several months. To appease the military and keep pressure on North Vietnam, Johnson agreed, in the event of a bombing halt, to redeploy American air-power against North Vietnamese supply lines in [Laos](#). The President, with apparent reluctance, finally committed himself to stop the bombing altogether if some concessions could be obtained from the North Vietnamese.<sup>60</sup>

Over the next few weeks, Harriman diligently negotiated an "understanding." To meet [Hanoi](#)'s continuing objections to reciprocity, he indicated that the bombing would be stopped unilaterally,

<sup>59</sup> Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975* (New York, 1984), p. 200.

<sup>60</sup> Johnson, *Vantage Point*, pp. 514-515; memorandum for the record, October 23, 1968, Johnson Papers, Diary Backup, November 11, 1968, Box 115.

and [North Vietnam](#) eventually dropped its insistence that the bombing halt be unconditional. The U.S. delegation made clear, however, that North Vietnam would be expected to stop rocket and mortar attacks on South Vietnamese cities and limit the [infiltration](#) of men and supplies across the [demilitarized zone](#). In addition, the North Vietnamese informally agreed that serious peace talks would begin within four days after the bombing had been stopped. The administration was especially pleased to secure [Hanoi's](#) consent to the [Saigon](#) government's participation in the peace talks. To get around North Vietnam's repeated refusal to negotiate directly with the "puppet" Saigon government and Thieu's refusal to join in any negotiations in which the NLF participated, Harriman devised an ingenious "our side, your side" formula. The negotiations would be two-sided, but each side was free to work out its own composition and to interpret the makeup of the other as it chose. The NLF and the Saigon government could thus participate in the proceedings without recognizing the other as an independent entity. The North Vietnamese refused to commit themselves formally to these "understandings," but they gave numerous private assurances that they would "know what to do" once the bombing had stopped. Hesitant to the end, Johnson finally agreed to "go the last mile" for peace, although administration officials agreed that if the North Vietnamese took advantage of the bombing halt or appeared not to be negotiating seriously, the United States might resume air operations.<sup>61</sup>

No sooner had the arrangements been completed than the South Vietnamese balked. Thieu may have been responding to right-wing politicians in his own country, [Ky](#) included, who issued dire warnings of an American "sellout." His intransigence was encouraged by Republican leaders who feared a Democratic preelection "peace gimmick" that would undercut the Nixon campaign, and hence urged the South Vietnamese to hold out until after the election.<sup>62</sup> A wily, calculating politician, Thieu probably concluded

<sup>61</sup> Johnson, *Vantage Point*, p. 518; notes on meetings, October 14, 31, 1968, Johnson Papers, Meeting Notes File, Box 3.

<sup>62</sup> The Nixon contact with Thieu comprises a story of "espionage" and intrigue worthy of a spy novel. Nixon's future [National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger](#) had excellent contacts in the Johnson administration, having served as an intermediary in a major peace move the preceding year. Eager to secure a top-level foreign policy position, Kissinger kept the Nixon camp informed as Johnson's secret negotiations for a bombing halt unfolded. Nixon used Madame Anna Chen-

without any prompting that he would do better with the Republicans than with the Democrats and that delay was advantageous. Proclaiming that his government was not a "car that can be hitched to a locomotive and taken anywhere the locomotive wants to go," he insisted that he would not meet with the [Vietcong](#) and that the American-arranged understanding was a "clear admission of defeat." [Hanoi](#) must issue formal assurances that it would deescalate the war and must negotiate directly with [Saigon](#).<sup>63</sup>

[Thieu](#)'s obstinacy posed a dilemma for the United States. [Johnson](#) recognized that to concede to Saigon's demands would "blow the whole peace effort sky high," perhaps wrecking [Humphrey](#)'s chances as well.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, he feared that to negotiate without Saigon, as [Harriman](#) and even [Rusk](#) urged, offered little prospect of an acceptable settlement and risked Republican charges of a sellout. The President thus announced the bombing halt on October 31 without South Vietnamese approval, but he delayed the opening of formal talks. In the meantime, the United States combined renewed assurance that it would not recognize the Vietcong or impose a coalition government on [South Vietnam](#) with private pressures and eventually a public threat to begin talks without Saigon if it did not give way. After a two-week delay, during which time [Nixon](#) won a precariously thin victory over Humphrey, Thieu agreed to send representatives to Paris.

Once in Paris, the South Vietnamese raised procedural objections which nullified any hope of a peace settlement. The United States had originally proposed that the delegations be seated at two long tables to emphasize the two-sided nature of the talks, but [North Vietnam](#) had demanded a square table with one delegate on each side to give force to its contention that the NLF was a separate party to the talks. To get around this impasse, Harriman had proposed a round table and the North Vietnamese had acquiesced. But Saigon refused to go along. Thieu may have felt that the issue was of sufficient symbolic or even practical importance to merit resistance,

nault, widow of the legendary founder of the World War II Flying Tigers, to urge Thieu to sabotage the administration's diplomacy, suggesting that South Vietnam might fare better with a Nixon administration in January than with a Johnson administration in its last days. See Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York, 1983), pp. 15-22.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Shaplen, *Road from War*, p. 243.

<sup>64</sup> Johnson, *Vantage Point*, pp. 517-519.



or he may simply have seized on it to stall the talks until a presumably more sympathetic [Nixon](#) took office. [Harriman](#), outraged at what he later denounced as a "ridiculous performance" on the part of the South Vietnamese, again urged [Johnson](#) to negotiate without them, and [Clifford](#) raised the possibility of starting to withdraw U.S. troops.<sup>65</sup> The President upheld [Thieu](#)'s objections, however, and with the assistance of the [Soviet Union](#) persuaded [Hanoi](#) to accept a compromise: two rectangular tables placed at opposite ends of a round table. By the time the battle of the tables had been resolved, the Johnson administration was in its last days and any chance of substantive negotiations had passed.<sup>66</sup>

It seems highly doubtful that South Vietnamese intransigence sabotaged an opportunity for a peace settlement. Hanoi's approach on procedural issues was more flexible in late 1968 than previously, probably because the North Vietnamese wanted to get the bombing stopped, possibly because they hoped to extract an acceptable settlement from Johnson before he left office. Hanoi's flexibility most likely did not extend to substantive issues, however. There is nothing to indicate that Hanoi would have accepted anything short of an American [withdrawal](#) and a coalition government. These terms would not have been acceptable to the United States. Although he had given in on the bombing halt and was deeply annoyed with Thieu, Johnson still clung to the goals he had pursued so doggedly since taking office. He made clear to Thieu that he would not recognize the NLF or accept a coalition government or some form of cosmetic settlement that would permit an American withdrawal. He seems to have felt that he could still achieve his original goals, and he was convinced that he had the enemy on the ropes.<sup>67</sup> On the day he ordered the bombing halt, he instructed [Abrams](#) to "use his manpower and resources in a maximum effort" to "keep the enemy on the run" and convince him "he could never win on the field of battle."<sup>68</sup> Thus, even if Thieu had gone along

65 Clifford notes for meeting with Johnson, November 18, 1968, Clifford Papers, Box 6.

66 New York Times Magazine (August 24, 1969), 72; Harriman oral history interview, Johnson Papers; Cooper, *Lost Crusade*, pp. 406-407.

67 The enemy could "still knock out a window light," Johnson remarked in November, but "they have been out of it since September." Henry Graft, *The Tuesday Cabinet* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), p. 163. Also notes on meeting with Nixon, November 11, 1968, Johnson Papers, Tom Johnson Notes, Box 1.

68 Johnson, *Vantage Point*, p. 523.

from the start, it appears highly unlikely that any meaningful peace agreement could have been reached in 1968, particularly in view of the short timetable. Each side could claim "victory" in the campaigns of [Tet](#), but the position of each was also significantly weakened and neither emerged with sufficient leverage to force a settlement. Tet merely hardened the deadlock, and it would take four more years of "fighting while negotiating" before it was finally broken.



## CHAPTER 7

### A War for Peace: Nixon, Kissinger, and Vietnam, 1969-1973

"We will not make the same old mistakes," [Henry A. Kissinger](#) proclaimed of Vietnam in 1969. "We will make our own." <sup>1</sup> Kissinger's remark underscored the [Nixon](#) administration's determination to find new solutions to an old problem, and the self-effacing humor, a Kissinger trademark, suggested a certainty of success. But the prediction turned out to be only partially correct. Kissinger and Nixon did try new approaches, some of which in time produced their own mistakes, but their policy suffered from the same flaws as those of their predecessors. Although disguising it in the rhetoric of "peace with honor," the Nixon administration persisted in the quixotic search for an independent, non-Communist Vietnam. This goal was to be achieved primarily by a massive buildup of South Vietnamese military strength and by the application of military pressure against [North Vietnam](#), methods that had been tried before in various forms and had been found wanting. The result was four more years of bloody warfare in [Indochina](#), a marked increase in domestic strife, and a peace settlement that permitted American extrication but was neither honorable nor lasting.

American foreign policy in the Nixon-Kissinger era bore the distinct personal imprint of its shapers. The Middle American professional politician and the German-born Harvard professor could hardly have been more different in background, but they shared a

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Roger Morris, *An Uncertain Greatness: [Henry Kissinger](#) and American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1977), p. 4.

love of power and a burning ambition to mold a fluid world in a way that would establish their place in history. Loners and outsiders in their own professions, they were perhaps naturally drawn to each other, and at least in the first years, a lingering mutual suspicion was kept in check by mutual dependence, [Kissinger](#) viewing [Nixon](#) as a means to prominence and power, Nixon relying on Kissinger to shape and implement his broad designs. Although both men had reputations as rigid ideologues, they were pragmatic and flexible in their approach to problems, and they shared a penchant for secrecy and intrigue and a great flair for the unexpected move. Above all, they shared a contempt for bureaucracy. They took the controls of American foreign policy firmly in their own hands and jealously guarded them, using, but never relying on, the rest of the government. The result was a foreign policy that was sometimes bold and imaginative in conception, sometimes crude and improvised; sometimes brilliant in execution, sometimes bungling; a policy dedicated to the noble goal of a "generation of peace," but frequently ruthless and cynical in the use of military power.

Prior to taking office, Nixon and Kissinger had firmly defended the American commitment in Vietnam. At the height of the domestic debate in 1967, Nixon had vigorously argued that the presence of American troops in Southeast Asia had helped to contain an expansionist [China](#) and had given the "free" Asian nations time to develop stable institutions. "Whatever one may think of the '[domino theory](#),'" he asserted, "it is beyond question that without the American commitment in Vietnam, Asia would be a far different place today." <sup>2</sup> Kissinger was more equivocal, conceding that the United States may have exaggerated the significance of Vietnam in the early stages of its involvement. "But the commitment of five hundred thousand Americans has settled the issue of the importance of Vietnam," he quickly added. "For what is involved now is confidence in American promises." <sup>3</sup>

By 1969, Nixon and Kissinger recognized that the war must be ended. It had become, in the words of one of Nixon's speechwriters, a "bone in the nation's throat," a divisive force which had torn the country apart and hindered any constructive approach to domestic

<sup>2</sup> Richard M. Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs*, 46 (October 1967), 111.

<sup>3</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, "The Vietnam Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs*, 47 (January 1969), 219.

and foreign policy problems. 4 [Nixon](#) clearly perceived, moreover, that his ability to extricate the nation from Vietnam would decisively affect his political future and his place in history. "I'm not going to end up like LBJ," he once remarked, "holed up in the White House afraid to show my face on the street. I'm going to stop that war. Fast." 5

The two men nevertheless insisted that the war must be ended "honorably." Simply to pull out of Vietnam would be a callous abandonment of those South Vietnamese who had depended upon American protection and would be unworthy of the actions of a great nation. As a young Congressman, Nixon had led the right-wing Republican attack on [Truman](#) for "losing" [China](#), and, like [Johnson](#) before him, he feared the domestic upheaval that might accompany the fall of [South Vietnam](#) to Communism. The reaction would be "terrible," he told a journalist in May 1969, "... We would destroy ourselves if we pulled out in a way that wasn't really honorable." 6 Most important, Nixon and [Kissinger](#) feared the international consequences of a precipitous [withdrawal](#). Even before taking office, they had begun sketching the outlines of a new world order based on American primacy. Their grand design included at least a limited accommodation with the [Soviet Union](#) and China, and they felt that they must extricate the United States from the war in a manner that would demonstrate to these old adversaries resoluteness of purpose and certainty of action, a manner that would earn the respect of friends and foes alike. "However we got into Vietnam," Kissinger observed, "whatever the judgment of our actions, ending the war honorably is essential for the peace of the world. Any other solution may unloose forces that would complicate the prospects of international order."7 Nixon agreed. "The true objective of this war is peace," he affirmed shortly after taking office. "It is a war for peace."8

An "honorable" settlement had to meet several essential conditions. The American withdrawal from Vietnam must be conducted

4 William Satire, *Before the Fall* (New York, 1975), p. 121. s H. R. Haldeman, *The Ends of Power* (New York, 1978), p. 81.

5 H. R. Haldeman, *The Ends of Power* (New York, 1978), p. 81

6 Quoted in C. L. Sulzberger, *Seven Continents and Forty Years* (New York, 1977), pp. 505-507.

7 Kissinger, "Vietnam Negotiations," 234.

8 Sulzberger, *Seven Continents*, p. 507.

in a way that avoided even the slightest appearance of defeat. There must be no face-saving political settlement designed merely to permit a graceful American exit from Vietnam. [Kissinger](#) explicitly rejected the idea of a coalition government, which, he said, would "destroy the existing political structure and thus lead to a Communist takeover." [Nixon](#) and Kissinger set as their optimum goal a "fair negotiated settlement that would preserve the independence of [South Vietnam](#)." At a minimum, they insisted on a settlement that would give South Vietnam a reasonable chance to survive. 9

Although this objective had eluded the United States for more than a decade, Nixon and Kissinger were certain that they could succeed where others had failed. They perceived that the [Saigon](#) government could not survive an abrupt American [withdrawal](#), but it appeared stronger than ever before in early 1969, and with continued U.S. backing Thieu might hold on indefinitely. The North Vietnamese must recognize, Kissinger reasoned, that they could not eject the United States from Vietnam by force. They might therefore be persuaded to exchange an American withdrawal for a political settlement that would leave [Thieu](#) firmly in control.

Nixon and Kissinger were confident, moreover, that they could compel [Hanoi](#) to accept the terms it had consistently rejected. The [Soviet Union](#) had made clear its strong interest in expanded trade with the United States and an agreement limiting strategic arms, and this leverage could be used to secure Russian assistance in getting [North Vietnam](#) to agree to a "fair" settlement. Great power diplomacy would be supplemented by the use of force. Nixon felt that military pressure had failed thus far because it had been employed in a limited, indecisive manner. A "fourth-rate power like North Vietnam" must have a "breaking point," Kissinger insisted, and he and Nixon were prepared to use maximum force, threatening the very survival of North Vietnam, to get what they wanted.<sup>10</sup> Nixon compared his situation to that faced by [Eisenhower](#) in [Korea](#) in 1953, and he was certain that the threat of "massive retaliation" would intimidate the North Vietnamese as it had the North Koreans. He counted on his image as a hard-line anti-Communist to make the threat credible. "They'll believe any threat of force

9 Richard M. Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of [Richard Nixon](#) (New York, 1978), p. 349; Satire, Before the Fall, p. 134.

10 Quoted in Morris, Uncertain Greatness, p. 164.

[Nixon](#) makes because it's Nixon," he told one of his advisers. "We'll just slip the word to them that, 'for God's sake, you know Nixon's obsessed about Communism... and he has his hand on the nuclear button.' "11

With that sublime self-confidence common among men new to power, Nixon and [Kissinger](#) set out to end the war. Through French intermediaries, the President conveyed a personal message to the North Vietnamese expressing his sincere desire for peace and proposing as a first step the mutual [withdrawal](#) of American and North Vietnamese troops from [South Vietnam](#) and the restoration of the [demilitarized zone](#) as a boundary between north and south. Kissinger informed Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin that the administration was eager to negotiate with Russia on a variety of urgent topics but bluntly warned that a peace settlement in Vietnam must come first.

As a signal to both [Hanoi](#) and Moscow that the United States meant business, Nixon ordered intensive bombing attacks against North Vietnamese [sanctuaries](#) in neutral [Cambodia](#), a step repeatedly advocated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff but rejected by the Johnson administration. The military objective of the bombing was to limit North Vietnam's capacity to launch an offensive against the south, but Nixon's primary motive was to indicate that he was prepared to take measures which Johnson had avoided, thus frightening Hanoi into negotiating on his terms. Over the next fifteen months, 3,630 [B-52](#) raids were flown, dropping more than 100,000 tons of bombs on Cambodia. The operation was dubbed (with singular inappropriateness) [MENU](#), its individual components BREAKFAST, LUNCH, SNACK, DESSERT. At Nixon's insistence, it was kept secret from the public - and indeed from much of the government - and elaborate methods of bookkeeping were devised to conceal its existence. The number of civilian deaths among Cambodians will never be known, and to avoid the American bombs, the North Vietnamese moved deeper into Cambodian territory. 12

Recognizing that the success of his strategy hinged on his ability to maintain at least the appearance of unity at home, Nixon adopted a public strategy to parallel his secret diplomacy. In May

11 Quoted in Haldeman, *Ends of Power*, p. 83.

12 William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York, 1979), pp. 26-35.



1969, he unveiled what he described as a "comprehensive peace plan," publicly revealing the proposals he had privately made to [North Vietnam](#) and adding his hope that all "foreign" troops might be removed from [South Vietnam](#) within a year after the signing of a peace agreement. To make plain his intention of terminating American involvement in the war, he initiated planning for the phased [withdrawal](#) of American combat troops, and after conferring with [Thieu](#) on Midway Island in June, he announced the immediate withdrawal of 25,000 American combat forces. To emphasize to the Russians, the North Vietnamese, and the right wing at home that he had not gone soft, [Nixon](#) delivered several tough speeches, attacking as "new isolationists" those doves who argued that the war was diverting the nation from more pressing problems at home and stressing that his administration intended to uphold America's international responsibilities.

Nixon's secret diplomacy and implied military threats failed to wrench any concessions from [Hanoi](#). From the North Vietnamese standpoint, the President's proposals were no improvement over those of Johnson, and to have accepted them would have represented an abandonment of goals for which they had been fighting for nearly a quarter of a century. The North Vietnamese delegation to the peace talks publicly dismissed the American offer as a "farce" and indicated that, if necessary, they would sit in Paris "until the chairs rot."<sup>13</sup> They continued to insist on the total and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Vietnam and called for the establishment of a provisional coalition government from which Thieu would be excluded. Still hurting from those losses suffered in the [Tet Offensive](#) but by no means ready to quit the fight, Hanoi in 1969 shifted to a defensive, protracted war strategy, sharply curtailing the level of military activity in the south and withdrawing some of its troops back across the [demilitarized zone](#). Certain that American public opinion would eventually force Nixon to withdraw from Vietnam, the North Vietnamese were prepared to wait him out, no matter what additional suffering it might entail.

Nixon's peace moves also failed to contain the opposition at home. When it became apparent that there would be no breakthrough

<sup>13</sup> Robert Shaplen, *The Road from War: Vietnam, 1965-1970* (New York, 1970), pp. 300-301.

in the Paris talks, public approval of the President's handling of the war dropped sharply. Expressing the growing frustration of the hawks, Senator [Richard Russell](#) of Georgia insisted that if the Paris talks did not soon produce results, the United States must make a "meaningful move" against [North Vietnam](#).<sup>14</sup> The organized peace movement, dormant since the Democratic Convention of 1968, began to stir again, announcing plans for massive demonstrations in the fall. Congressional doves had remained silent during the administration's first hundred days, giving the President an opportunity to end the war, but by June they began to speak out anew. Republican Senator [Jacob Javits](#) of New York charged [Nixon](#) with pursuing the same "sterile and unsuccessful approach" followed by Johnson, and [Fulbright](#) denounced the "new isolationism" speech as "demagoguery and personally offensive." Senate doves were not satisfied with Nixon's peace offer and [troop withdrawal](#), and many Democrats rallied behind [Clark Clifford](#)'s call for the withdrawal of all American forces from Vietnam by the end of 1970. By midsummer, Nixon's brief honeymoon with the Democratic-controlled Congress had ended.

Fearful that the rising domestic protest might doom his efforts to pressure the North Vietnamese into a settlement, in July Nixon quickly improvised a "go-for-broke" strategy, an all-out attempt to "end the war one way or the other - either by negotiated agreement or by force." Again through French intermediaries, he sent a personal message to [Ho Chi Minh](#), reiterating his desire for a "just peace," but adding an ultimatum: unless some progress toward a settlement were made by November 1, he would have no choice but to resort to "measures of great consequence and force." [Kissinger](#) again spoke with Dobrynin, warning that "as far as Vietnam is concerned, the train has just left the station and is now headed down the track."<sup>15</sup> On Nixon's orders, [Kissinger](#) convened a special, top-secret [National Security Council](#) study group to draw up plans for what he described as "savage, punishing blows" against North Vietnam, including massive bombing attacks on the major cities, a blockade of the ports, and even the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons in certain "controlled" situations. To give force to his

<sup>14</sup> Russell to L. M. Thacker, July 26, 1969, Richard M. Russell Papers, University of Georgia Library, Athens, Georgia, Dictation File, Box IJ7.

<sup>15</sup> Nixon, RN, pp. 393-394, 399.

warnings, [Nixon](#) leaked word to newsmen that he was considering such options, and he emphatically told a group of Congressmen that he would not be the first American President to lose a war.<sup>16</sup>

Nixon's ultimatum had no effect. [Hanoi](#) did agree to secret peace talks outside the Paris framework, and on August 4 in the first of a long series of secret meetings, [Kissinger](#) met privately with North Vietnamese diplomat [Xuan Thuy](#). Kissinger reiterated Nixon's peace proposals and ultimatum, but Xuan Thuy responded with the standard North Vietnamese line that the United States would have to withdraw all its troops and abandon [Thieu](#) in order to secure an agreement. [Ho Chi Minh](#)'s formal response, written shortly before his death, conveyed the same message and was, in Nixon's words, a "cold rebuff." From Nixon's standpoint, the North Vietnamese were not only intransigent but also deliberately provocative. Hanoi Radio tossed back at the President statements made by Senate doves that Nixon's policies were prolonging the war and expressed to the "American people" hope that their "fall [peace] offensive" would "succeed splendidly."<sup>17</sup>

Unable to intimidate Hanoi into making even the slightest concession, Nixon was forced to choose between a major escalation of the war and an embarrassing retreat. He was infuriated by North Vietnam's defiance and by the domestic criticism, which he felt, encouraged the enemy's intransigence. His natural inclination was to strike back. But [Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird](#) and [Secretary of State William Rogers](#) implored him not to take any action that would inflame the opposition at home. And after weeks of careful analysis, Kissinger's study group concluded that air strikes and a blockade might not force concessions from Hanoi or even significantly limit its capacity to continue the war in the south. Haunted throughout his political career by a near-obsessive fear of defeat and humiliation, Nixon abandoned the plan for "savage, punishing blows" with the greatest reluctance and only after being persuaded that it would not work. Having relied on military pressure to bring a quick and decisive end to the war, he suddenly found himself in November 1969 without a policy.

<sup>16</sup> The most complete discussion of this planning, code-named DUCK HOOK, is in Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York, 1983), pp. 125-130.

<sup>17</sup> Nixon, RN, pp. 397-399.

Unwilling to make concessions and unable to end the war by force, [Nixon](#) again improvised, this time falling back on the [Vietnamization](#) policy he had inherited from Johnson. While he was still pondering escalation in October, [the British counterinsurgency](#) expert, Sir Robert Thompson, informed him that [South Vietnam](#) was daily growing stronger and that if the United States continued to furnish large-scale military and economic assistance, the [Saigon](#) government might be strong enough within two years to resist a Communist takeover without external help. With no place else to go, Nixon eagerly and uncritically embraced Thompson's conclusions as the foundation for a new approach to extricate the United States from the war. He seems to have reasoned that if he could mobilize American opinion behind him, persuade [Hanoi](#) that he would not abandon [Thieu](#), and intensify the buildup of South Vietnamese military strength, the North Vietnamese might conclude that it would be better to negotiate with the United States now than with South Vietnam later, and he could extract from them the concessions necessary to secure peace with honor.

In a major speech on November 3, Nixon set out to isolate his critics and to mobilize popular backing for his policy. He firmly defended the American commitment in Vietnam, warning that a pullout would produce a bloodbath in South Vietnam and a crisis of confidence in American leadership at home and abroad. Spelling out his Vietnamization policy in some detail, he offered the alluring prospect that it would not only reduce American [casualties](#) but might also terminate American involvement in an honorable fashion regardless of what [North Vietnam](#) did. Although some members of his staff cautioned against a confrontation with the peace movement, Nixon rejected their advice. He dismissed the protesters as an irrational and irresponsible element, and accused them of sabotaging his diplomacy. He openly appealed for the support of those he labeled the "great silent majority," and he concluded with a dramatic warning: "North Vietnam cannot humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that."<sup>18</sup>

Nixon's "silent majority" speech was a shrewd and, for the most part, successful political maneuver. He placed his opponents squarely on the defensive. By offering a policy which could achieve

<sup>18</sup> Public Papers, Richard M. Nixon, 1969 (Washington, D.C., 1971), pp. 901-909.

an honorable peace with minimal American sacrifice, he appeared to have reconciled the contradictory elements of popular attitudes toward the war. He cleverly appealed to the patriotism of his listeners and to their reluctance to accept anything resembling defeat. By specifically identifying a "silent majority," he helped to mobilize a bloc of support where none had existed.

The "moratoriums" of October 15 and November 15 were spectacularly successful and signaled a new turn in the evolution of the [antiwar movement](#). Organized by liberals, the demonstrations attracted millions of sober, middle-class citizens, comprising "the greatest outpouring of mass protest that the country had ever known" and making clear that the peace movement was becoming "respectable."<sup>19</sup> In contrast to the bedlam and violence of Chicago, the fall moratoriums were peaceful and dignified affairs with religious overtones. Across the nation, church bells tolled, the names of American war dead were called out at candlelight services, and participants quietly intoned the antiwar chant "Give Peace a Chance." In Washington's March of Death, thousands of protesters carrying candles marched through high winds and rain from Arlington Cemetery to the Capitol, where they placed signs bearing the names of GIs killed in Vietnam in wooden coffins.

The fall demonstrations did not produce a change in policy, however. Although alarmed and deeply angered by the protest, [Nixon](#) publicly reigned indifference, and his [silent majority speech](#) temporarily neutralized the effects of the protest. In the immediate aftermath of the moratoriums, the antiwar movement grew quiescent again. The polls indicated solid support for the administration, and in late November pro-Nixon rallies were held in a number of cities. "We've got those liberal bastards on the run now," the President exulted, "and we're going to keep them on the run."<sup>20</sup>

Making [Vietnamization](#) work proved a much more formidable task than manipulating American public opinion. By the time Nixon formally announced his "new" plan to end the war, the program had been in effect for more than a year and a half. While U.S. combat forces kept the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) off balance by relentlessly attacking their supply lines and base areas,

<sup>19</sup> Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington, Ind., 1984), pp. 184-185.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Szulc, *Illusion of Peace*, p. 158.

American advisers worked frantically to build up and modernize the South Vietnamese armed forces. The force level, about 850,000 when [Nixon](#) took office, was increased to over one million, and the United States turned over to [South Vietnam](#) huge quantities of the newest weapons: more than a million [M-16](#) rifles, 12,000 [M-60](#) machine guns, 40,000 [M-79](#) grenade launchers, and 2,000 heavy [mortars](#) and howitzers. The Vietnamese were also given ships, planes, helicopters, and so many vehicles that one Congressman wondered aloud whether the objective of [Vietnamization](#) was to "put every South Vietnamese soldier behind the wheel."<sup>21</sup> Military schools were expanded to a capacity of more than 100,000 students a year. To improve morale and check the [desertion](#) rate, the promotion system was modernized, pay scales increased, veterans' benefits expanded, and systematic efforts made to improve conditions in military camps.

The [Accelerated Pacification Campaign](#), originally designed as a crash program to extend government control over the countryside prior to negotiations, was institutionalized and expanded in 1969 and 1970. To improve security in the villages, the major weakness of earlier programs, regular forces assigned to pacification were expanded to 500,000 men, armed with M-16 rifles, and supplemented by a hastily created militia numbering in the thousands. Americans and South Vietnamese also attempted to infuse new life into old programs of village development. Village elections were held, restoring the autonomy that had been taken away in the [Diem](#) era. Elected officials were trained in civic responsibilities at the Rural Development Center in [Yung Tau](#) and upon graduation were given black pajamas furnished by the American CIA. The government turned over to individual villages control over the militia and over funds to be used for local projects. Strenuous efforts were made to clear roads, repair bridges, establish schools and hospitals, and expand agricultural production. In March 1970, the government launched an ambitious [land reform](#) program through which nearly one million hectares were eventually redistributed.

Vietnamization was in full swing by early 1970, and most observers agreed that significant gains had been made. Literally overnight the South Vietnamese Army had become one of the largest

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Buckley, "The [ARVN](#) Is Bigger and Better, But -," New York Times Magazine (October 12, 1969), 132.

and best equipped in the world. When properly led, moreover, [ARVN](#) units fought well, and some American advisers began to detect that, perhaps out of necessity, their performance improved noticeably as U.S. support units were withdrawn. In some areas, improvement in the performance of the militia was even greater than that of the ARVN. American "spoiling" tactics, along with [North Vietnam](#)'s decision to go on the defensive, left the countryside more secure than at any time since the war had begun. The ability of the [Vietcong](#) to tax and recruit had been sharply reduced, and NVA units in [South Vietnam](#) appeared to be suffering from serious personnel and materiel shortages. In former Vietcong strongholds, roads were passable at least by day and the number of terrorist incidents declined markedly. On the surface, at least, the insurgency appeared to be under control, and even long-time skeptics like pacification expert John Vann concluded that "we are now on the right road."<sup>22</sup>

Real progress in [Vietnamization](#) remained uncertain, however. American officials claimed to have "neutralized" as many as 20,000 members of the Vietcong infrastructure through the [Phoenix Program](#), and the Communists later conceded that Phoenix caused them serious problems. The figures were grossly inflated, however, and although the insurgents' clandestine apparatus was severely damaged, it remained intact. American officials also conceded that the gains in security had resulted primarily from U.S. military operations and the enemy standdown, and they were unsure whether these could be sustained in the face of the [withdrawal](#) of U.S. forces and the renewal of enemy attacks. The biggest question mark remained the government itself. Despite the frenetic activity in the villages, there was nothing to indicate that the pacification program had generated any real enthusiasm for the Thieu government. One senior U.S. officer observed, moreover, that although significant progress had been made in numerous areas, the government had not yet "succeeded in mobilizing the will and energies of the people against the enemy and in support of national programs."<sup>23</sup>

Americans were also unsure whether the ARVN could fill the vacuum left by U.S. [troop](#) withdrawals. On paper, it was indeed a

<sup>22</sup> Vann to General [Frederick Weyand](#), January 22, 1970, Vann Papers.

<sup>23</sup> Memorandum by General Arthur S. Collins, fall 1970, Collins Papers; see also Report by Vietnam Special Studies Group, January 10, 1970, and Charles S. Whitehouse to [William Colby](#), September 22, 1970, both in Vann Papers.

formidable force, but many of its fundamental weaknesses remained uncorrected. Americans estimated that the practice of "ghosting" keeping on the rosters the names of dead and deserted soldiers so the officer-in-charge could pocket the pay - ran as high as 20 percent. [Desertion](#) remained a chronic problem, and there was a severe shortage of qualified, competent, and honest officers at all levels. Even the better [ARVN](#) units repeatedly manifested an unwillingness to engage the enemy in sustained combat, provoking a senior U.S. officer to question whether the United States would ever "be able to create an army with the offensive and aggressive spirit that will be necessary to counter either the VC or the NVA."<sup>24</sup> Americans also began to realize belatedly the extent to which the South Vietnamese had come to depend on the United States. The "nagging question" in 1968-1969 was whether the ARVN could fend for itself after the United States withdrew, and many U.S. advisers conceded that, at best, much time would be required before the South Vietnamese would be able to stand on their own against [Hanoi's](#) seasoned and disciplined forces.<sup>25</sup>

By the spring of 1970, the contradictions in [Nixon's Vietnamization](#) strategy had become all too apparent. The [silent majority speech](#) had quieted the opposition temporarily, but Nixon realized that his success was only transient. In March he announced the phased [withdrawal](#) of 150,000 troops over the next year in order to "drop a bombshell on the gathering spring storm of anti-war protest."<sup>26</sup> However necessary from the standpoint of domestic politics, Nixon recognized that such a move would weaken his hand in other areas. Abrams had bitterly protested the new troop withdrawals, warning that they would leave [South Vietnam](#) vulnerable to enemy military pressure and could be devastating to the Vietnamization program. Nixon had rather naively hoped that his professed determination to remain in Vietnam indefinitely and the demonstrations of public support that had followed his November 3 speech would persuade the North Vietnamese to negotiate. But there had been no breakthrough in Paris, and he recognized that the announcement of additional troop withdrawals would probably

<sup>24</sup> Collins memorandum, April 25, 1970, Collins Papers.

<sup>25</sup> Collins memorandum, fall 1970, Collins Papers; William Rosson oral history interview, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

<sup>26</sup> Nixon, RN, p. 448.



encourage [Hanoi](#) to delay further. Increasingly impatient for re-suits and still certain that he could end the war by a dramatic show of force, he once more began looking about for "initiatives" that might be undertaken to "show the enemy that we were still serious about our commitment in Vietnam."<sup>27</sup>

The overthrow of [Cambodia's](#) neutralist Prince [Sihanouk](#) in March by a pro-American clique headed by Prime Minister [Lon Nol](#) posed new dangers to the [Vietnamization](#) policy and presented enticing opportunities for the initiative [Nixon](#) sought. [Kissinger](#) has vigorously denied American complicity in the coup, and no evidence has ever been produced to prove that the United States was directly involved. The administration appears not to have been surprised by Lon Nol's move, however, and Washington's longstanding and obvious dislike for Sihanouk and its interest in attacking the North Vietnamese [sanctuaries](#) in Cambodia may have encouraged Lon Nol to believe that a successful coup would be rewarded with U.S. support.<sup>28</sup>

Kissinger's later claim that the United States intervened in Cambodia only hesitantly and belatedly, and only after being persuaded that the North Vietnamese were committed to the destruction of Lon Nol's government, appears at best misleading. Shortly after the coup, presumably with U.S. authorization, South Vietnamese units conducted raids across the border into Cambodia, and the United States quickly recognized the new Cambodian government and initiated covert military aid. That North Vietnam decided in the aftermath of the coup to take over Cambodia remains unproven today and was open to serious question at the time. On the other hand, from the outset, some U.S. officials were eager to exploit developments in Cambodia. The military for years had been anxious to attack the North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia. The change of government in Phnom Penh removed the longstanding concern about violating Cambodian [neutrality](#), and attacks on the sanctuaries could now be justified in terms of sustaining a friendly Cambodian government as well as easing the military threat to South Vietnam. Nixon therefore quickly endorsed a Defense Department proposal that South Vietnamese units with

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 445.

<sup>28</sup> The controversy over Cambodia is one of the most bitter and emotional to come out of the war. The respective positions are spelled out in Shawcross, *Side-show*, especially pp. 112-127, and in Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, 1979), pp. 457-521.

American air support attack an enemy sanctuary on the [Parrot's Beak](#), a strip of Cambodian territory thirty-three miles from [Saigon](#). Even before plans for this operation had been completed, the President approved a more dramatic - and much more risky - move. After nearly a week of careful and apparently agonizing study and over the vigorous opposition of Laird and Rogers, he approved Abrams's proposal that American forces attack [Fishhook](#), a North Vietnamese base area fifty-five miles northwest of Saigon. [Kissinger](#) appears to have muted his own reservations about the enterprise, at least in part to establish himself as [Nixon](#)'s premier foreign policy adviser.

Nixon's decision to send American troops into [Cambodia](#), one of the most important and controversial decisions of his tumultuous presidency, was motivated by a variety of considerations. He was swayed by the military's argument that the operation would buy time for [Vietnamization](#) and would help to sustain a friendly government in Cambodia. On the other hand, he realized that his decision would have a "shattering effect" at home.<sup>29</sup> Nixon's willingness to run this risk for uncertain gains reflects, in part, what he called his "big play philosophy," his belief that since the administration was "going to get unshirted hell for doing this at all," it might as well "go for all the marbles."<sup>30</sup> Rather than fearing the domestic backlash he was sure would come, Nixon seems to have welcomed it. By the spring of 1970, he was embattled at home as well as abroad. The Democratic-controlled Senate had just rejected for the second time his nominee for a Supreme Court vacancy, and he was determined to show "those Senators ... who's really tough."<sup>31</sup> Most important, he was still confident that he could make peace by threatening [Hanoi](#). Embarrassed by backing down from the November ultimatum, a move which conveyed precisely the wrong message, he seems to have reasoned that widening the war into previously off-limits Cambodia would make clear that unlike his predecessor he would not be bound by restraints. The North Vietnamese would then have to decide "whether they want to take us on all over again," he explained to his staff, and in terms of pressures on them to negotiate "this was essential."<sup>32</sup>

Preoccupied

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 449.

<sup>30</sup> Satire, *Before the Fall*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>31</sup> Morris, *Uncertain Greatness*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>32</sup> Satire, *Before the Fall*, p. 190.

throughout his career with the importance of responding to crises, [Nixon](#) appears to have eagerly grasped an opportunity to demonstrate his courage under fire and to show his domestic and foreign adversaries that he would not be intimidated.

The President explained his decision in a belligerent, provocative televised speech on April 30. He justified the Cambodian "incursion" as a response to North Vietnamese "aggression," although [Hanoi](#)'s intentions remained unclear, and as necessary to protect American forces in Vietnam, although he did not explain why an old threat suddenly required such a vigorous response. The real target of the operation, he explained, was the [Central Office for South Vietnam](#) (COSVN), the "nerve center" of North Vietnamese military operations, although the Defense Department had made clear to him its uncertainty as to where COSVN was located or whether it even existed. Anticipating a furor at home, Nixon indicated that he would rather be a one-term President than preside over America's first defeat. He concluded with a bit of inflated rhetoric which appeared to make America's very survival hinge on his Cambodian venture. "If when the chips are down," he warned, "the world's most powerful nation acts like a pitiful helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world."<sup>33</sup>

From a military standpoint, Nixon's Cambodian venture produced at best limited results. The American command claimed to have killed some 2,000 enemy troops, cleared over 1,600 acres of jungle, destroyed 8,000 bunkers, and captured large stocks of weapons, rendering the [sanctuaries](#) unusable for awhile and complicating [North Vietnam](#)'s supply problems. By relieving any immediate threat from [Cambodia](#), the operation may indeed have bought some time for [Vietnamization](#). The incursion set back North Vietnam's offensive capabilities only temporarily, however, and instead of an Asian Pentagon, COSVN turned out to be little more than "a scattering of empty huts."<sup>34</sup> Whatever advantages the operation gained for Vietnamization may have been more than offset by enlargement of the theater of war. At a time when the United States was attempting to scale down its role in Vietnam, it had to divert

<sup>33</sup> Public Papers, Richard M. Nixon, 1970 (Washington, D.C., 1971), pp. 405-410.

<sup>34</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York, 1983), p. 610.

precious resources to support an even more fragile client state in [Cambodia](#).

In Cambodia itself, U.S. actions contributed to one of the great tragedies of recent history. The United States was not exclusively responsible for Cambodia's misery. [North Vietnam](#) had violated Cambodia's precarious [neutrality](#) first, and Cambodians of all political factions inflicted their share of suffering on one another. The United States did encourage the [Lon Nol](#) government to initiate a war it could not win, however. The American invasion forced the North Vietnamese to move out of their [sanctuaries](#) and into the heartland of Cambodia. Whether as a direct or indirect consequence of the American invasion, North Vietnam initiated large-scale support for the [Khmer Rouge](#) insurgents fighting Lon Nol. In the particularly brutal civil war that followed, the United States lavishly supported the Cambodian government and unleashed thousands of tons of bombs on Cambodia. The ultimate tragedy was that from beginning to end, the Nixon administration viewed its new ally as little more than a pawn to be used to help salvage the U.S. position in Vietnam, showing scant regard for the consequences for Cambodia and its people.

The domestic reaction to Cambodia exceeded Nixon's worst expectations - in tragic ways. The unexpected expansion of a war which the President had promised to wind down enraged his critics, and his intemperate defense of his actions, including a statement indiscriminately branding protesters as "bums," added to the furor. Demonstrations broke out on campuses across the nation, and at [Kent State](#) University and Jackson State College six students were killed in angry confrontations with National Guardsmen and police. More than 100,000 demonstrators gathered in Washington the first week of May to protest Cambodia and Kent State. Students at hundreds of colleges went "on strike," and some campuses were closed down to avert further violence. The Kent State killings provoked outbreaks of violence even at normally conservative and placid institutions. At the University of Kentucky, a building was burned and student demonstrations were broken up by National Guardsmen using tear gas.<sup>35</sup>

The Cambodian incursion also provoked the most serious Congressional

<sup>35</sup> Mitchell K. Hall, "A Crack in Time": The Response of Students at the University of Kentucky to the Tragedy at Kent State," *Kentucky Historical Register*, 83 (Winter 1985), 36-63.

challenge to presidential authority since the beginning of the war. The President had consulted only with a handful of Congressmen, all known to be sympathetic. Many legislators, including Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott, were outraged at having been kept in the dark by the administration, and others were infuriated by [Nixon's](#) broadening of the war.<sup>36</sup> In a symbolic act of defiance, the Senate voted overwhelmingly in June to terminate the [Tonkin Gulf Resolution](#) of 1964. An amendment sponsored by Senators [John Sherman Cooper](#) of Kentucky and [Frank Church](#) of Idaho proposed to cut off all funds for American military operations in [Cambodia](#) after June 30. An even more restrictive amendment sponsored by Senators [George McGovern](#) of South Dakota and [Mark Hatfield](#) of Oregon would have required the administration to withdraw all American forces from Vietnam by the end of 1971.

Enraged by the outpouring of criticism, [Nixon](#) struck back with a vengeance. There would be no more "screwing around" with Congressional foes, he instructed his staff. "Don't worry about divisiveness. Having drawn the sword, don't take it out - stick it in hard."<sup>37</sup> The President publicly blamed his domestic opponents for prolonging the war, and he bluntly warned Congressional leaders that if "Congress undertakes to restrict me, Congress will have to assume the consequences."<sup>38</sup> He approved one of the most blatant attacks on individual freedom and privacy in American history, the so-called Huston Plan, which authorized the intelligence agencies to open mail, use electronic surveillance methods, and even burglarize to spy on Americans. The agencies subsequently refused to implement this specific plan, but they did use many of its methods in the futile effort to verify suspected links between radical groups in the United States and foreign governments.<sup>39</sup>

The administration eventually rode out the Cambodian storm. Nixon removed American troops from Cambodia by the end of June, depriving his opponents of their most telling issue, and the protests gradually abated. Despite the flurry of activity, Congress

<sup>36</sup> Scott to [Kissinger](#), May 21, 1970, Hugh Scott Papers, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va., Box 65.

<sup>37</sup> Satire, *Before the Fall*, p. 190.

<sup>38</sup> Henry Brandon, *The Retreat of American Power* (New York, 1974), pp. 146-147.

<sup>39</sup> Athan Theoharis, *Spying on Americans: Political Surveillance from Hoover to the Huston Plan* (Philadelphia, 1978), pp. 13-39.

was not yet ready to challenge the President directly or assume responsibility for ending the war. The more dovish Senate approved the [Cooper-Church amendment](#), but the House rejected it, permitting the administration to continue air operations in [Cambodia](#) and send money and supplies to [Lon Nol](#). The [Hatfield-McGovern amendment](#) could not even secure a majority of the Senate.

Although [Nixon](#) escaped with his power intact, the Cambodian episode tightened the trap he had set for himself. The domestic reaction reinforced his determination to achieve "peace with honor" while sharply limiting his options for attaining it. Cambodia may have bought some time for [Vietnamization](#), but it also imposed clear-cut, if implicit, limits on the future use of American combat forces and increased the pressures for speeding up the pace of [withdrawal](#). Divisiveness within the United States increased even beyond the level of 1968, with far-reaching, if still unforeseen, implications for Nixon's future. In the summer of 1970, an embittered President declared virtual warfare on those he considered his enemies: the "madmen" on the Hill, the "liberal" press, those who marched in protest. "Within the iron gates of the White House, quite unknowingly, a siege mentality was setting in," one of Nixon's aides later stated. "It was now 'us' against 'them.' Gradually, as we drew the circle closer around us, the ranks of 'them' began to swell."<sup>40</sup>

Hoping to break the diplomatic deadlock by going into Cambodia, Nixon seems merely to have hardened it. North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) delegates boycotted the formal Paris talks until American troops had been withdrawn from Cambodia, and the secret talks lapsed for months. [Hanoi](#) was content to bide its time, and the uproar in the United States probably reinforced its conviction that domestic pressures would eventually force an American withdrawal.

In an effort to resolve his foreign and domestic problems, in October 1970, Nixon launched what he described as a "major new initiative for peace." The proposals he made in a televised speech, while cleverly phrased, appear to have offered no concessions on the fundamental issues, and Hanoi promptly rejected his call for a cease-fire in place, which, it perceived, would restrict the Vietcong to areas they presently controlled without assuring them any role in

40 Charles W. Colson, *Born Again* (Old Tappan, N.J., 1976), p. 41.

a political settlement. In any case, the speech appears to have been designed primarily for the upcoming Congressional elections. [Nixon](#) followed it up by touring ten states, angrily denouncing the antiwar protesters and urging the voters to elect men who would "stand with the President." Even here, the results were disappointing. Several doves were defeated, but the Republicans gained only two seats in the Senate and lost nine in the House.

After two years of continued heavy fighting, intensive secret diplomacy, and political maneuvering, Nixon's position was worse than when he had taken office. The negotiations with [North Vietnam](#) remained deadlocked, and a [National Security Council](#) study of late 1970 grimly concluded that the United States could neither persuade nor force [Hanoi](#) to remove its troops from the south. At home, Nixon had kept "one step ahead of the sheriff," as he would put it, narrowly managing to head off any restrictions on his war-making powers. But he still faced a hostile and even more determined opposition in Congress and a revived [antiwar movement](#) which had seemed moribund just a year before. The situation in [South Vietnam](#) remained stable. By the end of the year, however, intelligence reported a sharp increase in the [infiltration](#) of men and supplies into [Laos](#), [Cambodia](#), and South Vietnam, posing an ominous threat to the northern provinces and [Hue](#), where sizable American forces had been withdrawn.

Instead of rethinking a policy which had brought no results, Nixon clung stubbornly throughout much of 1971 to the approach he had improvised the preceding year. To appease critics at home, the timetable of American troop withdrawals was speeded up. Over the protests of General [Abrams](#), the President ordered the removal of 100,000 troops by the end of the year, leaving 175,000 men in Vietnam of whom only 75,000 were combat forces. To make clear, at the same time, his continued determination to secure a "just" peace and to counter the threat to [Vietnamization](#) posed by increased North Vietnamese infiltration and American troop reductions, Nixon stepped up the military pressure against North Vietnam. U.S. aircraft mounted heavy attacks against supply lines and staging areas in Laos and Cambodia. Using as a pretext North Vietnamese firing upon American "reconnaissance" planes, the administration ordered "protective reaction" air strikes against bridges, base camps, and trails across the [demilitarized zone](#) and in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. In February 1971, Nixon again expanded

the war, approving a major ground operation into [Laos](#). The objective was the same as that of the Cambodian incursion - to buy time for [Vietnamization](#) by disrupting enemy supply lines - but this time the [ARVN](#) assumed the burden of the fighting, with only American air support.

The policy of troop withdrawals combined with military pressures brought limited success. The Laotian operation was at best a costly draw, at worst an unmitigated disaster. U.S. intelligence had anticipated only light resistance, but [Giap](#) apparently saw an opportunity to strike a body blow at Vietnamization and hurled some 36,000 troops, supported by the newest Russian-made tanks, against the two South Vietnamese [divisions](#) that crossed the border. After six weeks of the bloodiest fighting of the war, the battered and exhausted ARVN forces retreated back into South Vietnam. Official spokesmen claimed to have killed as many as 15,000 enemy troops and to have destroyed [North Vietnam](#)'s supply network in Laos, thus delaying a major offensive for a year. Even if these claims are true, however, the ARVN took a beating, suffering a [casualty](#) rate as high as 50 percent and an estimated 2,000 dead. The South Vietnamese performance was not what had been hoped, and it would have been much worse without the support of American aircraft, which dumped 48,000 tons of bombs during the operation. Administration assertions that the ARVN had conducted an "orderly retreat" appeared ludicrous amidst the haste and confusion which accompanied the withdrawal from Laos, and the sight of South Vietnamese soldiers clinging desperately to the skids of departing helicopters raised serious questions about the success of the Vietnamization program.

At home, the protests and demonstrations continued, drawing new faces and becoming more rancorous and unruly. In early 1971, the [group Vietnam Veterans Against the War](#) conducted its own "Winter Soldiers" investigation of U.S. war crimes in [Indochina](#). In April, a group of Vietnam war veterans, clothed symbolically in faded uniforms adorned with combat ribbons and peace symbols, gathered in front of the Capitol, testified to their own war crimes, and ceremoniously tossed away their medals. Several days later, 30,000 self-styled members of the Mayday Tribe descended upon Washington with the avowed intention of "shutting the government down," and proceeded to conduct "lie-ins" on bridges and major thoroughfares and at the entrances of government buildings.



Mobs roamed the streets, stopping traffic and breaking windows, leading to one of the worst riots in Washington's history.

Many Americans would undoubtedly have preferred that the war simply go away, but by the summer of 1971 the history of a conflict in which the United States had been engaged for more than a decade had begun to come back to haunt the nation. After a long and much-publicized trial, a military court found Lieutenant [William Calley](#) guilty of at "least twenty-two murders" in the [My Lai](#) incident of 1968 and sentenced him to life imprisonment, once more bringing before public attention the brutality that had attended the war and setting off a brief but bitter debate on the question of responsibility for alleged war crimes. No sooner had the Calley furor abated than the New York Times began publication of the so-called [Pentagon Papers](#), a history of decision-making in [Vietnam](#) based on secret Defense Department documents and leaked by a former Pentagon official, [Daniel Ellsberg](#). The documents confirmed what critics of the war had long been arguing, among other things that [Kennedy](#) and [Johnson](#) had consistently misled the public about their intentions in Vietnam.

An increasingly isolated and embattled [Nixon](#) responded fiercely to what he perceived as sinister threats to his authority to govern. The Justice Department secured an injunction to prevent the veterans from sleeping on the Mall, and the government hauled off to jail some 12,000 Mayday protesters, often without bothering to charge them with any specific offense. Nixon personally intervened in the Calley case while it was still under appeal, ordering Calley released from prison and indicating that he would review the conviction. Obsessed with leaks since revelations of the secret bombing of [Cambodia](#) in 1969 and certain that critics would use the Pentagon Papers "to attack my goals and policies,"<sup>41</sup> the President took the extraordinary step of securing an injunction to prevent their publication. When the Supreme Court overturned the order, an enraged Nixon approved the creation of a clandestine group of "plumbers" to plug leaks within the government and instructed them to use any means necessary to discredit Ellsberg.

Neither Nixon's [withdrawal](#) policy nor his vigorous counterattacks against the opposition could stem the war-weariness and general demoralization which had enveloped the nation by the

41 Nixon, RN, p. 509.

summer of 1971. Former [Secretary of State Dean Acheson](#) lamented the plight of "this floundering republic," and journalist Robert Shaplen labeled the United States "the sick man of the western hemisphere."<sup>42</sup> Disillusionment with the war reached an all-time high, with a whopping 71 percent agreeing that the United States had made a mistake by sending troops to [Vietnam](#) and 58 percent regarding the war as "immoral." [Nixon](#)'s public approval rating on Vietnam had dropped to a low of 31 percent, and opposition to his policies had increased sharply. A near majority felt that the pace of troop withdrawals was too slow, and a substantial majority approved the removal of all troops by the end of the year even if the result was a Communist takeover of [South Vietnam](#).<sup>43</sup> Congress reflected the growing public uneasiness, although it continued to stop short of decisive action. On two separate occasions, the Senate approved resolutions which would have set a specific deadline for the removal of all American troops pending [Hanoi](#)'s release of the [prisoners of war](#). Each time, the House removed the deadline and otherwise watered down the language.

The malaise that increasingly afflicted the nation quickly spread to the U.S. armed forces in Vietnam. Until 1969, American GIs had fought superbly. After the initiation of Nixon's troop-withdrawal policy, however, the purpose of the war became increasingly murky to those called upon to fight it, and many GIs became much more reluctant to put their lives on the line. Discipline broke down in some units, with enlisted men simply refusing to obey the orders given by officers. Attacks on officers in time of war were not unique to Vietnam, but "[fragging](#)" reached unprecedented proportions in the [Vietnamization](#) period, more than 2,000 incidents being reported in 1970 alone. The availability and high quality of drugs in Southeast Asia meant that the drug culture that attracted growing numbers of young Americans at home was easily transported to Vietnam. The U.S. command estimated in 1970 that as many as 65,-000 American servicemen were using drugs. Nor were the armed services immune from the racial tensions that tore America apart in the Vietnam era, and numerous outbreaks of racial conflict in units in Vietnam and elsewhere drew growing attention to the break-

<sup>42</sup> Acheson to Matthew B. Ridgway, July 5, 1971, and Shaplen to Robert Aspey, n.d., both in Ridgway Papers, Box 34B.

<sup>43</sup> Louis Harris, *The Anguish of Change* (New York, 1973), pp. 72-73.

down of morale and discipline. With obvious pain, old soldier Matthew Ridgway, who had restored the morale of the army in [Korea](#) after the firing of [Douglas MacArthur](#), lamented the "grievous blows" that Vietnam had inflicted on his beloved army.<sup>44</sup>

Although determined not to be stampeded, [Nixon](#) and [Kissinger](#) were sufficiently concerned by their predicament to try once again to break the stalemate in Paris. Kissinger expressed repeated fear that the administration might not be able to get through the year without Congress "giving the farm away."<sup>45</sup> Nixon recognized that he would probably need a peace settlement in order to win re-election, but he hoped to get it far enough in advance to avoid the appearance of an act of desperation or a blatant political maneuver. As a consequence, in May Kissinger secretly presented to the North Vietnamese the most comprehensive peace offer yet advanced by the United States. In exchange for release of the American [prisoners of war](#), he pledged to withdraw all troops within seven months after an agreement had been signed. The United States also abandoned the concept of mutual [withdrawal](#), insisting only that [North Vietnam](#) stop further [infiltration](#) in return for the removal of American forces.

This offer initiated the most intensive peace discussions since the war had begun. The North Vietnamese quickly rejected Kissinger's proposal, perceiving that it would require them to give up the prisoners of war (their major bargaining weapon), to stop fighting, and to accept the Thieu regime in advance of any political settlement. [Hanoi's](#) delegate, [Le Duc Tho](#), promptly made a counteroffer, however, agreeing to release the POWs simultaneous with the withdrawal of American forces, provided that the United States dropped its support for [Thieu](#) prior to a political settlement. Kissinger found the North Vietnamese offer unacceptable, but he was deeply impressed by Tho's serious and conciliatory demeanor and sensed "the shape of a deal" between the two offers. He could "almost taste peace," he remarked excitedly to friends.<sup>46</sup>

The discussions eventually broke down over the issue of the

<sup>44</sup> Ridgway to [Westmoreland](#), April 25, 1970, Ridgway Papers, Box 34B. For a good brief account of the breakdown, see Karnow, *Vietnam*, pp. 631-632. For a more detailed, if polemical, study, see Cincinnatus, *Self-Destruction* (New York, 1978).

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Vernon A. Waiters, *Silent Missions* (New York, 1978), p. 516.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Marvin and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston, 1974), p. 180.

Thieu regime. From the start of the secret talks, the North Vietnamese had insisted that Thieu's removal was an essential precondition to any peace agreement, and on several occasions they even hinted that the United States might assassinate him. Elections were scheduled to be held in [South Vietnam](#) in September, and [Tho](#) now proposed that if the United States would withdraw its support from [Thieu](#), permitting an open election, it could take the first step toward a settlement without losing face. Perhaps sensing just such a deal, Thieu vastly complicated matters by forcing the removal of the two opposition candidates, [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) and [Duong Van Minh](#). Thieu's blatant interference in the political process so enraged the American Embassy that Ambassador [Ellsworth Bunker](#) urged Nixon to publicly disassociate himself from Thieu and privately force him to accept a contested election. [Nixon](#) and [Kissinger](#) were unwilling to run the risk of abandoning Thieu at this critical juncture, however, and so rejected both the North Vietnamese proposal and Bunker's advice. The administration would only declare its "[neutrality](#)," a position that was meaningless while Thieu was running unopposed.

After Thieu had been safely reelected, Kissinger attempted to keep the secret talks alive, offering a new proposal calling for elections to be held within sixty days after a cease-fire and providing that Thieu would withdraw one month in advance of the elections. From [Hanoi](#)'s standpoint, this offer was undoubtedly an improvement over earlier ones, but it did not guarantee that Thieu would not be a candidate or prevent him from using the machinery of the government to rig the election. North Vietnam promptly rejected the American proposal. The secret talks once again broke off in late November, leaving a frustrated and discouraged Kissinger to ponder the thought of building a dam across the [Mekong](#) River and flooding all of Vietnam.<sup>47</sup>

Although the negotiations of late 1971 were the most serious yet undertaken, they eventually broke down for the same reason earlier efforts had failed. Having invested so much blood, treasure, and prestige in a struggle of more than ten years' duration, neither side was yet willing to make the sort of concessions necessary to produce peace. Perhaps more important, each side still felt that it could get what it wanted by means other than compromise. Since

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

1968, [North Vietnam](#) had remained on the defensive, carefully husbanding its resources and manpower for a final military offensive it hoped would topple the [Thieu](#) regime and force the United States out of Vietnam. While attempting, without much success, to keep Vietnam on the back burner in 1971, [Nixon](#) and [Kissinger](#) had focused their attention and energy on negotiations designed to achieve a dramatic reversal in American relations with the [Soviet Union](#) and [China](#), thus making good their promises of a "generation of peace." By the end of 1971, summit meetings had been scheduled for both Peking and Moscow, giving Nixon and Kissinger renewed hope that they could salvage the administration, ensure the President's reelection, and leave North Vietnam isolated with no choice but to come to terms. Neither side would achieve what it hoped with the dramatic military and diplomatic moves of 1972 and each would pay a high price trying, but they did bring the war into a final, devastating phase which would ultimately lead to a compromise peace.

In March 1972, North Vietnam launched a massive, conventional invasion of the south. At that time there were only 95,000 American forces there, of whom only 6,000 were combat troops, and [Hanoi](#) correctly assumed that domestic pressures would prevent Nixon from putting new forces into Vietnam. The invasion was probably timed to coincide with the beginning of the American presidential campaign in hopes that, as in 1968, a major escalation of the fighting would produce irresistible pressures for peace in the United States. The North Vietnamese aimed the offensive directly at the [ARVN](#)'s main force units, hoping to discredit the [Vietnamization](#) policy and to tie down as many regular forces as possible, enabling the [Vietcong](#) to resume the offensive in the countryside, disrupt the pacification program, and strengthen its position prior to the final peace negotiations.

In its first stages, the offensive was an unqualified success. Spearheaded by Soviet tanks, 120,000 North Vietnamese troops struck across the [demilitarized zone](#), in the [Central Highlands](#), and across the Cambodian border northwest of [Saigon](#). American intelligence completely misjudged the timing, magnitude, and location of the invasion. Achieving almost complete surprise, the North Vietnamese routed the thin lines of defending ARVN forces and quickly advanced toward the towns of [Quang Tri](#) in the north, Kontum in the highlands, and [An Loc](#) just sixty miles north of Saigon. Thieu was

forced to commit most of his reserves to defend the threatened towns, thus freeing the [Vietcong](#) to mount an offensive in the [Mekong Delta](#) and in the heavily populated regions around [Saigon](#).

Although stunned by the swiftness and magnitude of the invasion, Washington responded quickly and vigorously. [Nixon](#) refused to sit back and permit [South Vietnam](#) to fall. He was unwilling to send American ground forces back to Vietnam, but he was determined at the very least to give [North Vietnam](#) a "bloody nose," and he appears to have seen in the North Vietnamese invasion an opportunity to revive the end-the-war strategy he had been forced to discard in 1969.<sup>48</sup> He quickly approved [B-52](#) strikes across the [demilitarized zone](#) and followed up with massive air attacks on fuel depots in the [Hanoi](#)-Haiphong area. In the meantime, [Kissinger](#) met secretly with Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev. For the first time Kissinger made explicit American willingness to permit North Vietnamese forces to remain in South Vietnam after a cease-fire. He also stated emphatically that the United States held the [Soviet Union](#) responsible for the invasion, and he warned that a continuation of the war could severely damage Soviet-American relations and have grave consequences for North Vietnam. The offer and the threats were repeated to [Le Duc Tho](#) on May 1.

Still confident of victory, the North Vietnamese flatly rejected Kissinger's offer, leaving Nixon a set of difficult choices. Warning that [Hue](#) and Kontum might soon fall and the "whole thing may be lost," [Abrams](#) on May 8 pressed for intensification of the bombing of North Vietnam and for the mining of Haiphong harbor.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, Secretaries [Laird](#) and [Rogers](#) warned that drastic countermeasures could have disastrous domestic consequences, and Kissinger expressed concern that the Soviets might cancel Nixon's impending visit to Moscow, undoing months of tedious negotiations on strategic arms limitations and other major issues. Unwilling to risk defeat in South Vietnam and enraged by the North Vietnamese challenge, Nixon was determined to strike back. "The bastards have never been bombed like they're going to be bombed this time," he affirmed.<sup>50</sup> A number of Washington officials speculated that the Russians had too much at stake in their negotiations with

48\_ Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., *On Watch* (New York, 1976), p. 379.

49\_ Nixon, RN, p. 594.

50\_ Nixon transcript, June 29, 1972, *New York Times*, June 30, 1974.

the United States to cancel the summit. Even should they decide to do so, [Nixon](#) was ready to take the risk for the sake of his credibility. "If we were to lose in [Vietnam](#)," he observed, "there would have been no respect for the American President ... because we had the power and didn't use it.... We must be credible."<sup>51</sup> Thus on May 8, the President announced to a startled nation the most drastic escalation of the war since 1968: the [mining of Haiphong harbor](#), a naval blockade of [North Vietnam](#), and massive, sustained bombing attacks.

Nixon's gamble succeeded, at least up to a point. The Soviet leadership was unwilling to permit the war to interfere with détente, and the summit was not canceled. During Nixon's visit to Moscow in late May, Brezhnev and his colleagues went through the motions of protesting, complaining that American actions in Vietnam constituted "sheer aggression" and even comparing them to the policies of Nazi Germany.<sup>52</sup> But the negotiations proceeded in a cordial and businesslike manner, and major agreements were concluded. The [Soviet Union](#) continued to send economic assistance to North Vietnam, but it also sent a top-level diplomat to urge [Hanoi](#) to make peace. The [Chinese](#) issued perfunctory protests against Nixon's escalation of the war, but behind the scenes they also exerted pressure on Hanoi to settle with the United States. Both major Communist powers had apparently come to regard Vietnam as a sideshow which must not be allowed to jeopardize the major realignment of power then taking place in the world.

The domestic reaction was also manageable. A new round of protests and demonstrations erupted. Senate doves were "shocked," "mad," and "depressed," according to George [Aiken](#) of Vermont, and another flurry of end-the-war resolutions went into the Congressional hopper.<sup>53</sup> The American public had always considered bombing a more acceptable alternative than the use of ground forces, however, and many Americans felt that the North Vietnamese invasion justified Nixon's response. As on earlier occasions, both the public and Congress rallied around decisive presidential initiatives, and the success of the summit cut the ground from beneath those who argued that Nixon's rash action would undermine

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Raymond Price, *With Nixon* (New York, 1977), p. 112.

<sup>52</sup> [Kissinger](#), *White House Years*, pp. 1226-1227.

<sup>53</sup> [George Aiken](#), *Senate Diary* (Brattleboro, Vt., 1976), pp. 55-57.

détente. Unwilling to leave anything to chance, zealous operatives in the Committee for the Re-election of the President forged thousands of letters and telegrams to the White House expressing approval of [Nixon's](#) policies, but even without such antics the President enjoyed broad support. His public approval rating shot up dramatically, Congress did nothing, and he emerged in a much stronger position at home than he had been before the North Vietnamese invasion.<sup>54</sup>

Nixon's decisive response appears also to have averted defeat in [South Vietnam](#). Code-named [LINEBACKER](#), the May operation vastly exceeded all previous attacks on [North Vietnam](#). In June alone, American planes dropped 112,000 tons of bombs on North Vietnam, including new "smart" bombs precisely guided to their targets by computers receiving signals from television cameras and laser beams. The conventional military tactics employed by the North Vietnamese in the summer of 1972 depended heavily on vast quantities of fuel and ammunition, and the intensive bombing attacks, along with the blockade, made resupply extremely difficult. In South Vietnam itself, American bombers flew round-the-clock missions, pummeling North Vietnamese supply lines and encampments. With the vital assistance of American airpower, the [ARVN](#) managed to stabilize the lines in front of [Saigon](#) and [Hue](#) and even mounted a small counteroffensive.

In the final analysis, however, the furious campaigns of the summer of 1972 merely raised the stalemate to a new level of violence. Both sides suffered heavily, the North Vietnamese losing an estimated 100,000 men and the South Vietnamese 25,000, but neither emerged appreciably stronger than before. North Vietnam had demonstrated the continued vulnerability of the ARVN, and the [Vietcong](#) had scored some gains in the Delta, but Thieu remained in power and Nixon had not given in. Despite the heavy [casualties](#) suffered and the massive damage sustained from the American air attacks, the North Vietnamese retained significant forces in the south, and intelligence reports coming into Washington in late summer indicated that they had the capacity to fight on for at least two more years.<sup>55</sup>

Frustrated in their hopes of breaking the diplomatic stalemate

<sup>54</sup> Harris, *Anguish of Change*, p. 74.

<sup>55</sup> Szulc, *Illusion of Peace*, pp. 618-619.



by military means, by the fall of 1972 each side found compelling reasons to attempt to break the military deadlock by diplomacy. The [Nixon](#) administration was by no means desperate to get a settlement before the election. The Democrats had nominated [George McGovern](#), an outspoken dove whose extreme views appeared to make him the easiest of the Democratic contenders to defeat and left Nixon a great deal of room to maneuver. Nonetheless, Nixon and [Kissinger](#) recognized that an indefinite continuation of the air war could cause problems at home. They were increasingly frustrated, moreover, by the persistence of a war they had come to regard as a major obstruction to their grand design for a generation of peace. They were eager to uphold their earlier promises to end the war, and they wanted a settlement before the election if it could be attained without embarrassment.

For [North Vietnam](#), the pressures were equally, if not more, compelling. The policy of playing off Russia against [China](#) to secure aid and diplomatic support had exceeded the point of diminishing returns. The nation had suffered terribly from the latest round of American bombing, and although it was prepared to continue the war if necessary, it was anxious for peace if that could be accomplished without sacrificing its long-range goals. The North Vietnamese leaders had been disappointed in their hope that the offensive would force Nixon to compromise. They had at one time placed faith in the McGovern candidacy, but by September it seemed clear that Nixon would win in a landslide. Battered, exhausted, and isolated, the North Vietnamese appear to have concluded that they might get better terms from Nixon before the election.

From late summer on, the two nations began inching toward a compromise. Having already indicated its willingness to allow North Vietnamese troops to remain in the south after a cease-fire, the United States took a major step away from its absolute commitment to Thieu by agreeing to accept a tripartite electoral commission. This body, composed of the [Saigon](#) government, the [Vietcong](#), and the neutralists, would be responsible for arranging a settlement after the cease-fire went into effect. In the meantime, the North Vietnamese dropped their insistence on the ouster of [Thieu](#), accepting the principle of a cease-fire that would leave Thieu in control temporarily but would grant the PRG (the Provisional Revolutionary Government, the formal title assumed by the

National Liberation Front in 1969) status as a political entity in the south.

Serious discussions of a settlement along these lines began in late September, and during three weeks of intensive, sometimes frantic negotiations, [Kissinger](#) and [Le Duc Tho](#) hammered out the fundamentals of an agreement. Within sixty days after a cease-fire, the United States would withdraw its remaining troops, and [North Vietnam](#) would return the American [POWs](#). A political settlement would then be arranged by the tripartite [National Council of Reconciliation and Concord](#), which would administer elections and assume responsibility for implementing the agreement. By October 11, all but two issues had been resolved. Eager to wrap up the matter as quickly as possible, Kissinger and Tho agreed that these items could be left until later, and that after consulting with [Nixon](#) and [Thieu](#), Kissinger would proceed on to [Hanoi](#) to initial the treaty on October 22.

In his haste to get an agreement, Kissinger badly miscalculated Thieu's willingness to do what the United States told him and Nixon's willingness to support Thieu. Kissinger spent five days in [Saigon](#), going over the treaty item by item, patiently explaining its advantages for [South Vietnam](#) and issuing only slightly veiled warnings that a refusal to go along could mean the end of American support. Of all the parties concerned, however, Thieu had the least interest in an agreement providing for an American [withdrawal](#), and he found the terms totally unacceptable. He bitterly protested that he had not been consulted in advance of the negotiations. He insisted that he would never accept an agreement which permitted North Vietnamese troops to remain in the south and accorded the [Vietcong](#) sovereignty. He brought to Kissinger's attention some notably careless phraseology in the text which accorded the tripartite commission the status of a coalition government. Demanding wholesale changes in the agreement, including establishment of the [demilitarized zone](#) as a boundary between two sovereign states, Thieu apparently gambled on driving a wedge between the United States and North Vietnam, blocking the treaty indefinitely and permitting a continuation of the war.

Thieu succeeded, at least for the short term. Furious at this unexpected threat to his handiwork, Kissinger urged Nixon to go ahead without Saigon's approval. Concerned primarily with getting the United States out of Vietnam, he seems to have been content

to secure nothing more than a "decent interval" between an American [withdrawal](#) and the resolution of the conflict in Vietnam. [Nixon](#), on the other hand, never abandoned the quest for "peace with honor." He seems to have shared some of [Thieu](#)'s reservations about the October [draft](#), and although he had approved it conditional upon Thieu's acquiescence, he seems to have sensed in [Saigon](#)'s rejection an opportunity to achieve what he had sought from the start. Certain of an "enormous mandate" in the upcoming election, he decided to wait until after he had been reelected, at which point he could demand that [North Vietnam](#) settle or "face the consequences of what we could do to them."<sup>56</sup> He was not willing to let Thieu block an agreement indefinitely, but a brief delay would permit him to provide [South Vietnam](#) additional assistance, to patch up fundamental shortcomings in the treaty, and to weaken North Vietnam's ability to threaten the peace.

Kissinger attempted to keep alive hopes of an early settlement by stating publicly on October 31 that "peace is at hand," but Nixon's support of Thieu ensured the breakdown of the October agreement. When the secret discussions resumed in early November, the United States brought up for reconsideration some sixty points, many of them minor but others central to the compromise. Kissinger asked for at least a token withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from the south and requested changes in the text which would have weakened the political status of the [Vietcong](#), restricted the powers of the tripartite commission, and established the [demilitarized zone](#) as a virtual boundary. He added stern warnings that Nixon, having secured a landslide victory over [McGovern](#), would not hesitate to "take whatever action he considers necessary to protect United States interests."<sup>57</sup> Certain that they had been betrayed and refusing to give way in the face of threats, the North Vietnamese angrily rejected Kissinger's proposals and raised numerous demands of their own, even reviving their old insistence upon the ouster of Thieu.

For weeks, Kissinger and [Le Duc Tho](#) sparred back and forth across the negotiating table in an atmosphere ridden with tension and marked by frequent outbursts of anger. Fearful that the peace that had seemed so close might yet slip away, each side made concessions,

<sup>56</sup> Nixon, RN, p. 701.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 721.

and by mid-December they had returned to the essence of the original compromise with only the status of the [demilitarized zone](#) unresolved. By this time, however, [Kissinger's](#) patience had worn thin. Conveniently forgetting the American role in the breakdown, he complained bitterly that the North Vietnamese had "goaded us beyond endurance" and warned [Nixon](#) that they were deliberately stalling to force a break between the United States and [Thieu](#).<sup>58</sup> Frustrated and impatient for results, the two men decided to break off the talks and resolve the issue by force.

Over the next few weeks, Nixon used every available means to impose a settlement on both South and [North Vietnam](#). He ordered immediate delivery to [South Vietnam](#) of more than \$1 billion worth of military hardware, leaving Thieu, among other things, with the fourth largest air force in the world. He gave the [Saigon](#) government "absolute assurances" that if the North Vietnamese violated a peace agreement he would order "swift and severe retaliatory action," and he ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to begin immediate planning for such a contingency.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, he warned Thieu that if he did not accept the best treaty that could be obtained, the United States would make peace without him. Thieu continued to hold out, refusing to give Nixon carte blanche to negotiate for him and defiantly informing the press that he had rejected an American ultimatum. Although infuriated by Thieu's intransigence, Nixon was not altogether displeased, perceiving that it gave him ample pretext for a break if it should come to that later.

While attempting to bludgeon Thieu into submission, Nixon employed what Kissinger described as "jugular diplomacy" against North Vietnam, ordering yet another massive dose of bombing. The ostensible motive was to force [Hanoi](#) to conclude an agreement, but the decision reflected the accumulated anger and frustration of four years and it may have been intended to weaken North Vietnam to the point where it would be incapable of threatening South Vietnam after a peace settlement had been concluded. Nixon made absolutely clear to the military his determination to inflict maximum damage on North Vietnam. "I don't want any more of this trap about the fact that we couldn't hit this target or that one," he lectured Admiral [Thomas Moorer](#), [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs](#) of

<sup>58</sup> Sulzberger, *Seven Continents*, p. 593; Nixon, RN, pp. 725-726.

<sup>59</sup> Nixon, RN, p. 718; Zumwalt, *On Watch*, pp. 413-414.

Staff. "This is your chance to use military power to win this war, and if you don't, I'll consider you responsible."<sup>60</sup> Over the next twelve days, the United States unleashed the most intensive and devastating attacks of the war, dropping more than 36,000 tons of bombs and exceeding the tonnage during the entire period from 1969 to 1971.

[Nixon](#) and [Kissinger](#)'s later claims that the so-called Christmas bombing compelled the North Vietnamese to accept a settlement satisfactory to the United States seem open to serious question. The bombing did not compare in terms of destructiveness to the bombing of Tokyo, Hiroshima, or Dresden in World War II, as critics charged. American pilots went to extraordinary lengths to avoid civilian [casualties](#), and large numbers of civilians had already been evacuated from the major cities. Still, the destruction in parts of [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong was heavy, and as many as 1,600 civilians were killed. The bombing certainly gave the North Vietnamese reason to resume negotiations, especially since they had exhausted their stock of surface-to-air missiles by December 30.

The bombing may have given Nixon even more compelling reasons to return to the negotiating table. North Vietnamese air defenses exacted a heavy toll, bringing down fifteen [B-52s](#) and eleven other aircraft. The Christmas bombing also evoked cries of outrage across the world; the Soviets and the [Chinese](#) responded angrily, in marked contrast to their restraint of May. The reaction at home was one of shock and anger. Critics denounced Nixon as a "madman" and accused him of waging "war by tantrum."<sup>61</sup> Many of those who had accepted the May bombings questioned both the necessity and the unusual brutality of the December attacks, a "sorry Christmas present" for the American people, in the words of Senator [Aiken](#).<sup>62</sup> Nixon's popular approval rating plummeted to 39 percent overnight, and Congressional doves made clear that when they returned to Washington after the Christmas recess they were ready to do battle with the President. "We took the threats from Congress seriously," one of Nixon's White House aides later observed; "we knew we were racing the clock" and if North Vietnam refused to negotiate "we faced stern action."<sup>63</sup> To keep his options

60\_Sulzberger, *Seven Continents*, p. 593; Nixon, RN, pp. 725-726.

61\_Nixon, RN, p. 738.

62\_Aiken, *Senate Diary*, p. 136.

63\_Colson, *Born Again*, p. 77-79.

open, [Nixon](#) had indicated to the North Vietnamese that he would stop the bombing if they agreed to resume the peace talks. [Hanoi](#) consented, and Nixon got himself off the hook.

Most important, the bombing did not produce a settlement markedly different from the one the United States had earlier rejected. The negotiations resumed in Paris on January 8. The atmosphere was grim and icy, but this time both parties were committed to a settlement, and after six days of marathon sessions, marked by compromise on both sides, [Kissinger](#) and [Le Duc Tho](#) resolved their differences. The changes from the October agreement were largely cosmetic, enabling each side to claim that nothing had been given up. On the major sticking point of December, the [demilitarized zone](#), the North Vietnamese agreed to make explicit reference to it in the treaty, but the United States accepted its description as a "provisional and not a political and territorial boundary," preserving the substance of Hanoi's position. The question of civilian movement across the demilitarized zone was left to be resolved later in negotiations between North and [South Vietnam](#).

This time, the United States imposed the agreement on [Thieu](#). To sweeten the pill, Nixon indicated that if Thieu accepted the treaty he would provide South Vietnam continued support and would "respond with full force" if [North Vietnam](#) violated the agreement. At the same time, he made clear that if Thieu continued to resist he would cut off further assistance and he was prepared to sign the treaty alone, if necessary.<sup>64</sup> Thieu stalled for several days, but when it was apparent that he could do no better, he gave in, remarking with resignation, "I have done all that I can for my country." The [Saigon](#) government never formally endorsed the treaty, but Thieu let it be known in a cryptic way that he would not oppose it.

Only by the most narrow definition can the agreement be said to have constituted "peace with honor." It permitted American extrication from the war and secured the return of the [POWs](#), while leaving the Thieu government intact, at least for the moment. On the other hand, North Vietnamese troops remained in the south and the PRG was accorded a position of status. The major question over which the war had been fought - the political future of South Vietnam - was left to be resolved later. The treaty of January 1973 presumed that it would be resolved by political means,

<sup>64</sup> Nixon, RN, p. 737; New York Times, May 1, 1975.

but the mechanism established for this purpose was vague and inherently unworkable, and all parties involved perceived that it would ultimately be settled by force. Indeed, at the very time [Kissinger](#) and [Le Duc Tho](#) emerged from the Hotel Majestic smiling broadly at their achievement, the combatants in [South Vietnam](#) were busily preparing for the final round. "Peace with honor" represented merely another phase in the thirty-year struggle for the control of Vietnam.

For all concerned, "peace with honor" came at a very high price. Official American estimates place the number of South Vietnamese battle deaths for the years 1969-1973 at 107,504, and North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) at more than a half million. There will probably never be an adequate accounting of civilian battle deaths and [casualties](#). The tonnage of bombs dropped on [Indochina](#) during the [Nixon](#) era exceeded that of the [Johnson](#) years, wreaking untold devastation, causing permanent ecological damage to the countryside, and leaving millions of civilians homeless. The United States suffered much less than Vietnam, but the cost was nevertheless enormous. An additional 20,553 Americans were killed in the last four years of the war, bringing the total to more than 58,000. Continuation of the war fueled an inflation which neither Nixon nor his successors could control. The war polarized the American people and poisoned the political atmosphere as had no issue since slavery a century before. Although Nixon had held out for peace with honor in order to maintain America's position in the world, the United States emerged from the war with its image considerably tarnished abroad and its people weary of international involvement. For Nixon, too, the price was steep. By January 1973, he was exhausted and isolated, his administration reduced to a "small band of tired, dispirited, sometimes mean and petty men, bickering among themselves, wary and jealous of one another."<sup>65</sup> More than any other single issue, Vietnam brought a premature end to the Nixon presidency. The extreme measures he took to defend his Vietnam policy against enemies real and imagined led directly to the [Watergate](#) scandals which would eventually force his resignation. Thus, when the final Vietnam crisis came in 1975, the architect of peace with honor was no longer in the White House and the nation was in no mood to defend the agreement he had constructed at such great cost.

<sup>65</sup> Colson, *Born Again*, p. 80.





## CHAPTER 8

### The "Postwar War" and the Legacy of Vietnam

The "peace" agreements of January 1973 merely established a framework for continuing the war without direct American participation. [North Vietnam](#) still sought unification of the country on its terms; [South Vietnam](#) struggled to survive as an independent nation, and some U.S. officials, including [President Nixon](#), continued to support its aspirations. The cease-fire thus existed only on paper. This last phase of the war was of remarkably short duration, however. Dependent on the United States from its birth, the [Saigon](#) government had great difficulty functioning on its own. Moreover, because of the [Watergate](#) scandals and American war-weariness, Nixon was not able to live up to the commitments he had made to [Thieu](#), and indeed in August 1974 he was forced to resign. Congress drastically cut back aid to South Vietnam, further eroding the Saigon government's already faltering will to resist. When North Vietnam mounted a major offensive in the spring of 1975, South Vietnam collapsed with stunning rapidity, dramatically ending the thirty-year war and leaving the United States, on the eve of its third century, frustrated and bewildered.

The "postwar war" began the instant that peace was proclaimed. The United States had difficulty arranging with the North Vietnamese and [Vietcong](#) the return of its 587 [prisoners of war](#), at one point threatening to delay further [troop](#) withdrawals in the absence of cooperation. By the end of March, the POWs had been released, returning home to receive the only heroes' welcome of the war, and all U.S. troops had been withdrawn. But these were the only tangible accomplishments of the teams assigned to implement the peace accords. From the start, efforts to effect a cease-fire were

unavailing. None of the Vietnamese combatants had abandoned his goals, and each was willing to observe the agreements only to the extent that it suited his interests.<sup>1</sup>

[Thieu](#) took the offensive immediately. The [Vietcong](#) had launched a series of land-grabbing operations, immediately before the cease-fire was to go into effect, and Thieu undoubtedly wanted to retrieve as much of the lost territory as possible. Although he controlled an estimated 75 percent of the land and 85 percent of the people when the agreements were signed, he wanted to further solidify his position while U.S. support was still firm. To secure as much additional territory as possible, he resettled [refugees](#) and built forts in contested areas. [ARVN](#) units and South Vietnamese aircraft attacked North Vietnamese bases and supply lines and villages under PRG control. The ARVN lost more than 6,000 men, killed during the first three months of "peace," among the highest losses it suffered during the entire war.<sup>2</sup>

The North Vietnamese were more cautious but no less purposeful. Battered and exhausted from the bloody campaigns of 1972, short of food, manpower, and ammunition, they desperately needed time to regroup. They were also eager to secure a complete American [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam, and it was expedient to avoid blatant moves that might provoke the United States to reenter the conflict. During the first year after the cease-fire, the PRG sought primarily to consolidate the territory under its control and to undermine Thieu's position through political agitation. Military forces were instructed to attack South Vietnamese units only when they had clear-cut superiority. Meanwhile, the North Vietnamese quietly infiltrated troops and equipment into the south, built a system of modern highways linking staging areas to strategic zones in South Vietnam, and even constructed a pipeline to ensure adequate supplies of petroleum for forces in the field.

Although the Paris agreements provided that the future of South Vietnam would be settled by the Vietnamese, the United

<sup>1</sup> See Walter Scott Dillard, *Sixty Days to Peace: Implementing the Paris Peace Accords, Vietnam 1973* (Washington, D.C., 1982).

<sup>2</sup> The best account of the "postwar war" is Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia* (New York, 1984). See also Maynard Parker, "Vietnam: The War That Won't End," *Foreign Affairs*, 53 (January 1975), especially 365-366; and Gareth Porter, *A Peace Denied: The United States, Vietnam, and the Paris Agreements* (Bloomington, Ind., 1975), pp. 174-184, 188-196.

States persisted in its commitment to [Thieu](#). Deeply frustrated by the months of tortuous negotiations and anxious to get on to other things, [Kissinger](#) appears to have sought nothing more than a "decent interval" between the signing of the agreements and a final settlement in Vietnam. [Nixon](#), on the other hand, was no more willing in 1973 than he had been in 1969 to be the first American President to lose a war. The January accords gave the PRG political status in the south, but the President made clear that the United States would "continue to recognize the government of the [Republic of Vietnam](#) as the sole legitimate government of South Vietnam."<sup>3</sup>

Fully aware of the fragility of the agreements, Nixon and Kissinger used every available means to strengthen the Thieu government. To secure [Saigon](#)'s acquiescence, Nixon had secretly promised to continue "full economic and military aid" and to "respond with full force" should [North Vietnam](#) violate the agreements.<sup>4</sup> In a meeting with Thieu at San Clemente in March, he reaffirmed his commitments and assured the South Vietnamese leader that "you can count on us."<sup>5</sup> Throughout the remainder of 1973, the administration employed various subterfuges to sustain its military aid at a high level without overtly violating the terms of the Paris accords. Instead of dismantling its bases, the United States transferred title to the South Vietnamese before the cease-fire went into effect. Supplies were designated "nonmilitary" and were rendered eligible for transfer. The military advisory group was replaced by a "civilian" team of some 9,000 men, many of them hastily discharged from military service and placed in the employ of the government of Vietnam.<sup>6</sup>

The administration attempted to use the leverage available to it to prevent North Vietnam from upsetting the delicate equilibrium in the south. As part of the Paris package, the United States had agreed to provide [Hanoi](#) \$4.75 billion in aid for reconstruction. On several occasions in the spring of 1973, Nixon threatened to withhold the funds unless North Vietnam adhered to the letter of the

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Porter, *Peace Denied*, p. 186.

<sup>4</sup> Nixon, *RN*, pp. 749-750; *New York Times*, May 1, 1975.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen T. Hosrner et al., *The Fall of South Vietnam* (Santa Monica, Calif., 1978), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Tad Szulc, *The Illusion of Peace: Foreign Policy in the Nixon Years* (New York, 1978), pp. 672-676.

agreements, and he eventually suspended talks on postwar aid in protest against continued [infiltration](#) into [South Vietnam](#) and intensification of the fighting in [Cambodia](#). The President and [Kissinger](#) also sought to keep alive the threat of American military intervention. "The only way we will keep [North Vietnam](#) under control is not to say we are out forever," Kissinger observed. "We don't want to dissipate with them the reputation for fierceness that the President has earned."<sup>7</sup> The last American troops were withdrawn from Vietnam by the end of March, but the United States kept a formidable armada of naval and [air power](#) in the Gulf of Tonkin and in [Thailand](#) and Guam. The bombing of Cambodia was continued, in part to support [Lon Nol](#) against a determined [Khmer Rouge](#) offensive and in part to maintain [Nixon's](#) "reputation for fierceness." Several times, the President issued slightly veiled warnings that he might resume the bombing of North Vietnam, and in April he reinstated reconnaissance flights north of the seventeenth parallel.

The North Vietnamese ignored the American warnings, however, and by early summer Nixon's ability to threaten was severely curtailed by a rebellious Congress. The Congressional challenge of 1973 reflected a war-weariness and a widespread feeling among the American people that once American troops had been safely removed, the nation should extricate itself entirely from the conflict. Mounting evidence of White House involvement in the [Watergate](#) scandal increased Nixon's vulnerability. Congress displayed no enthusiasm for aid to North Vietnam, doves protesting that it would not ensure peace and hawks denouncing it as "reparations." Republicans joined Democrats in condemning the bombing of Cambodia as illegal, and on May 10 the House voted to cut off funds for further air operations.

Perceiving the steady erosion of America's control over events in [Indochina](#), Kissinger journeyed to Paris in May in a futile effort to persuade [Le Duc Tho](#) to observe the cease-fire. The North Vietnamese responded angrily to American charges of violations of the agreements with countercharges that South Vietnam and the United States were not upholding their commitments. More annoying to Kissinger, they dismissed his accusations as "attempts to deceive public opinion, as you have done with Watergate." The

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in William Satire, *Before the Fall* (New York, 1975), p. 673.

diplomats could agree on nothing more than an innocuous communiqué reaffirming the January accords. Upon returning to Washington, a weary [Kissinger](#) informed newsmen that he was going to reduce his involvement in [Indochina](#) affairs "in order to preserve my emotional stability."<sup>8</sup>

Kissinger's remark was more prophetic than he realized, for in June Congress deprived the administration of the little leverage it retained. By this time, the [Watergate](#) investigations had turned up sensational revelations of abuses of presidential power. Long-embittered Democrats were encouraged to take on the President, and Republicans were increasingly reluctant to stand behind him. [Nixon](#) and Kissinger vigorously defended the bombing of [Cambodia](#) as necessary to sustain [Lon Nol](#) and uphold the cease-fire. But an overwhelming majority of Congressmen agreed with Senator George [Aiken](#) that the bombing was "ill-advised and unwarranted," and many accepted Representative Norris Cotton's outspoken affirmation: "As far as I'm concerned, I want to get the hell out."<sup>9</sup> In late June, Congress approved an amendment requiring the immediate cessation of all military operations in and over Indochina. The House upheld Nixon's angry veto, but the President was eventually forced to accept a compromise extending the deadline to August 15. For the first time, Congress had taken decisive steps to curtail American involvement in the war. "It would be idle to say that the authority of the executive has not been impaired," Kissinger remarked with obvious understatement and disappointment.<sup>10</sup>

By the end of 1973, Nixon was virtually powerless. Watergate had reduced his popular approval ratings to an all-time low and left him fighting a desperate rearguard action to save his political life. In November, Congress passed over another veto the so-called [War Powers Act](#), a direct response to the exercise of presidential authority in Vietnam. The legislation required the President to inform Congress within forty-eight hours of the deployment of American military forces abroad and obligated him to withdraw them in sixty days in the absence of explicit Congressional endorsement.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Marvin and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston, 1974), p. 432.

<sup>9</sup> [George Aiken](#), *Senate Diary* (Brattleboro, Vt., 1976), p. 198; Kalb and Kalb, *Kissinger*, p. 432.

<sup>10</sup> Kalb and Kalb, *Kissinger*, p. 434.

Some Congressmen protested that the act conferred upon the President a more direct power to commit American troops to war than he had had before, but the circumstances under which the debate took place, combined with [Watergate](#) and the vote terminating operations in [Indochina](#), made virtually certain the end of direct American involvement in the Vietnam War.

In the meantime, the Paris agreements had become a dead letter. Discussions of a political settlement had begun in early 1973 and continued sporadically throughout the year, but the basic issue the future of [South Vietnam](#) -- was nonnegotiable, and by early 1974 the talks had broken off. Apparently still confident of U.S. support despite Watergate, [Thieu](#) formally proclaimed the start of the "Third Indochina War," and in late 1973 stepped up ground and air attacks on enemy bases and launched a series of land-grabbing operations in PRG-held territories along the eastern seaboard, in the [Iron Triangle](#), and in the delta. This time, the North Vietnamese and PRG counterattacked, and over the next few months they scored success after success, mauling [ARVN](#) units in the Iron Triangle, retaking much of the territory that had been lost, and seizing additional territory formerly under [Saigon](#)'s control.

By the fall of 1974, the military balance had shifted in favor of [North Vietnam](#). More than half of South Vietnam's million-man army was tied down in static defense positions and scattered throughout the northern provinces. By this time, the North Vietnamese and PRG had mobilized large armies in the south. They had stockpiled vast quantities of supplies and built a highly sophisticated logistics system which permitted them to move regulars, along with tanks and [artillery](#), to any battlefield within hours. At least in the [Mekong Delta](#), they had regained most of the territory lost the preceding year.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, South Vietnam's perennial economic and political problems had been sharply aggravated, in part as a result of the American [withdrawal](#). Loss of the \$400 million which the United States spent annually in South Vietnam, the reduction of American military aid from \$2.3 billion in 1973 to about \$1 billion in 1974, and a sharp rise in worldwide inflation combined to produce an annual inflation rate of 90 percent, massive unemployment, a drastic decline in morale in the armed forces and among

<sup>11</sup> Parker, "Vietnam," 366-367.

the urban population, and an increase in the ever present corruption. Scavengers stripped the American-built port at [Camranh Bay](#) to a bare skeleton, and pilots demanded bribes to fly missions in support of ground troops. The economic crisis of 1974 compounded [Thieu's](#) political woes. The [Buddhists](#) became more active than at any time since 1966, agitating for peace and reconciliation with the Communists. The Catholics, the government's most important base of support, organized an anti-corruption campaign, the major target of which was Thieu himself. A spirit of defeatism grew among those fence-sitters who had not supported the government but had not actively opposed it either.

The American abandonment of [South Vietnam](#) was manifest by the end of 1974. [Nixon](#) was forced to resign in August, removing from power the individual who had promised Thieu continued support. Throughout the year, [Kissinger](#) pleaded with an increasingly defiant Congress to expand American military aid to \$1.5 billion, insisting that the United States had a moral obligation to South Vietnam and warning that failure to uphold it would have a "corrosive effect on our interests beyond [Indochina](#)." The arguments that had been accepted without challenge for nearly a quarter of a century now fell flat. Inflation in the United States evoked insistent demands for reducing expenditures, and many members of Congress agreed with Senator [William Proxmire](#) that there was less need for continued military aid to South Vietnam than for "any other single item" in the budget. Critics pointed out that the Thieu government was in no immediate peril and warned that much of the money would line the pockets of [Saigon's](#) corrupt bureaucrats. A continuation of massive American military aid would encourage Thieu to prolong the war, while a reduction might impress upon him the need to seek a political settlement. It was time to terminate America's "endless support for an endless war," Senator [Edward Kennedy](#) insisted. In September 1974, Congress approved an aid program of \$700 million, half of which comprised shipping costs.<sup>12</sup>

The aid cuts of 1974 had a tremendous impact in South Vietnam. Without the continued large infusion of American funds and equipment, the armed forces could not fight the way the Americans had trained them. Air force operations had to be curtailed by as

<sup>12</sup> *Congressional Record*, 93rd Cong., 2d Sess., 29176-29180.

much as 50 percent because of shortages of gasoline and spare parts. Ammunition and other supplies had to be severely rationed. The inescapable signs of waning American support had a devastating effect on morale in an army already reeling under North Vietnamese blows, and desertions reached an all-time high of 240,000 in 1974. The aid cutbacks heightened Thieu's economic and political difficulties, spurring among many Vietnamese a "growing psychology of accommodation and retreat that sometimes approached despair."<sup>13</sup>

In early 1975, Hanoi concluded that the "opportune moment" was at hand. In December 1974, North Vietnamese main units and PRG regional forces attacked Phuoc Long, northeast of Saigon, and within three weeks had killed or captured 3,000 South Vietnamese troops, seized huge quantities of supplies, and "liberated" the entire province. The ease of the victory underscored the relative weakening of the ARVN during the past year and made clear, as North Vietnamese Chief of Staff Van Tien Dung later put it, that Thieu was now forced to fight a "poor-man's war." Aware from intelligence that Saigon was not expecting a major offensive in 1975, the North Vietnamese in January adopted a two-year plan, a series of large-scale offensives in 1975 to create the conditions for a "general offensive, general uprising" in 1976. The United States' failure to respond in any way to the fall of Phuoc Long confirmed what many North Vietnamese strategists had long suspected, that having pulled out of South Vietnam the Americans would not "jump back in." After days of sometimes heated debate, the leadership concluded that even if the United States responded with naval and air power, it could not "rescue the Saigon administration from its disastrous collapse."<sup>14</sup>

The collapse came with a suddenness which appears to have surprised even the North Vietnamese. Massing vastly superior forces against the stretched-out ARVN defenders, Dung attacked Ban Me Thuot in the Central Highlands on March 10 and took it within two days. To secure control of the highlands before the end of the dry season, he quickly moved north against Pleiku and Kontum. A panicky Thieu unwisely ordered his forces to withdraw from the highlands, but no plans had been drawn for retreat and

<sup>13</sup> Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York, 1978), p. 208.

<sup>14</sup> Van Tien Dung, *Our Great Spring Victory* (New York, 1977), pp. 17, 19-20.



the North Vietnamese had cut the major roads. The withdrawal turned into a rout. Hundreds of thousands of [refugees](#) fled with the departing soldiers, clogging the avenues of escape. Much of the army was captured or destroyed, and thousands of civilians died from enemy or [ARVN](#) gunfire and from starvation in what journalists called the "Convoy of Tears." [Pleiku](#) and Kontum fell within a week. The disastrous abandonment of the highlands cost [Thieu](#) six provinces, at least two [divisions](#) of soldiers, and the confidence of his army and people. It opened the way for even greater catastrophe in the coastal cities of [South Vietnam](#).

[Hanoi](#) now sensed for the first time that total victory could be attained in 1975 and immediately put into effect contingency plans for the conquest of all of South Vietnam. When North Vietnamese forces advanced on [Hue](#) and [Danang](#), the defending army along with hundreds of thousands of civilians fled for [Saigon](#), duplicating on an even larger and more tragic scale the debacle in the highlands. Soldiers looted and money-hungry citizens charged refugees up to two dollars for a glass of water. Ten days after the attack had begun and almost ten years to the day after the U.S. Marines had splashed ashore at Danang, the two coastal cities were in North Vietnamese hands. South Vietnam had been cut in two, about half its army lost without putting up any resistance. [Nha Trang](#) and [Camranh Bay](#) were abandoned before they were even threatened by enemy troops. [Dung](#) now threw all his forces into the "[Ho Chi Minh Campaign](#)" to liberate Saigon.

The United States was stunned by the collapse of South Vietnam but was resigned to the outcome. American intelligence had correctly predicted that the major North Vietnamese thrust was not planned until 1976, but the capacity of the South Vietnamese to resist was again overestimated, and Washington was shocked by the sudden fall of the highlands. America's disinclination for further involvement was obvious; on the day [Ban Me Thuot](#) fell, Congress rejected President [Gerald Ford](#)'s request for an additional \$300 million in military aid for South Vietnam. The legislators' vote seems to have reflected the wishes of the American people. A few diehards issued one last appeal to honor the nation's commitments and to defend the cause of freedom, and some Americans raised the specter of a bloodbath in which hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese would be slaughtered by the Communist conquerors. For the most part, however, such appeals fell on deaf ears.

Weary of the seemingly endless involvement in Vietnam and pinched by an economic recession at home, Americans were not in a generous mood. Why throw good money after bad, they asked. At a time when they themselves were in "desperate financial straits," they saw no reason to continue to sacrifice for a government that was "not only corrupt but grossly wasteful and inefficient." It was about time that the South Vietnamese were made to stand on their own feet, one "fed-up taxpayer" exclaimed. "My God, we're all tired of it, we're sick to death of it," an Oregonian wrote. "55,000 dead and \$100 billion spent and for what?"<sup>15</sup>

The fall of [Danang](#) and [Hue](#) and the imminent threat to [Saigon](#) did nothing to change Americans' views. [Ford](#) apparently gave no thought to the use of American naval and [air power](#). To stiffen South Vietnamese morale and perhaps to exculpate the United States (and the executive branch) from responsibility, in early April he asked Congress for \$722 million in emergency military assistance, reiterating the old argument that a failure to assist South Vietnam in its hour of trial would weaken faith in American commitments across the world. Congressmen responded heatedly that the South Vietnamese had abandoned more equipment in the northern provinces than could be purchased with the additional funds, and argued that no amount of money would be enough to save an army that refused to fight. It was time for the United States to end its involvement in "this horrid war."<sup>16</sup> The specter of [Watergate](#) and the Gulf of [Tonkin](#) hung over the debate, and revelations of [Nixon](#)'s secret promises to [Thieu](#) provoked cries of outrage. Congress eventually approved \$300 million to be used for the evacuation of Americans and for "humanitarian" purposes, and endorsed Ford's request to use American troops to evacuate U.S. citizens from South Vietnam. But it would go no further. "The Vietnam debate has run its course," [Kissinger](#) commented with finality on April 17. <sup>17</sup>

The certainty that the United States would not intervene ended whatever slim hope of survival South Vietnam may have had. North Vietnamese forces advanced from Danang to the outskirts of

<sup>15</sup> Mrs. J. S. Mozzanini to James J. Kilpatrick, February 6, 1975, and numerous other letters in James J. Kilpatrick Papers, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va., Box 5.

<sup>16</sup> Congressional Record, 94th Cong., 1st Sess, 10101-10108.

<sup>17</sup> New York Times, April 18, 1975.

the capital in less than a month, meeting strong resistance only at [Xuan Loc](#), where a small contingent of [ARVN](#) forces fought desperately against superior numbers and firepower. With the fall of that town on April 21 and the Congressional rejection of [Ford's](#) request for aid, the intransigent [Thieu](#) finally and reluctantly resigned, bitterly blaming the debacle on the United States. He was replaced by the aged and inept [Tran Van Huong](#), who vainly attempted to negotiate a settlement on the basis of the 1973 accords, and then by the pathetic [Duong Van Minh](#), the architect of the 1963 coup, to whom was left the odious task of surrendering unconditionally. On May 1, 1975, [Vietcong](#) soldiers triumphantly ran up the flag over a renamed [Ho Chi Minh](#) City. Several days earlier, Gerald Ford formally proclaimed what had already become obvious: the Vietnam War is "finished as far as the United States is concerned."

The American [withdrawal](#) revealed in microcosm much of the delusion, the frustration, and the tragedy that had marked the American experience in Vietnam. U.S. officials persisted in the belief that [South Vietnam](#) would mount an effective defense until the North Vietnamese were at the gates of [Saigon](#). Ambassador [Graham Martin](#) stubbornly supported Thieu long after it was evident the President had no backing within his own country: Martin headed off several coup attempts and encouraged Thieu's refusal to resign, resignation perhaps being the only chance of avoiding unconditional surrender. Fearful of spreading panic in Saigon, Martin delayed implementation of evacuation plans until the last minute. The United States managed to get its own people out, as well as 150,000 Vietnamese, but the operation was chaotic and fraught with human suffering. Corruption ran rampant, escape frequently going to the highest bidder, and the U.S. Embassy paid exorbitant fees to get exit visas for some of those seeking to flee. Because of the unavailability of adequate transport, many South Vietnamese who wished to leave could not. The spectacle of U.S. Marines using rifle butts to keep desperate Vietnamese from blocking escape routes and of angry ARVN soldiers firing on the departing Americans provided a tragic epitaph for twenty-five years of American involvement in Vietnam.<sup>18</sup>

The United States shared with the South Vietnamese leadership

<sup>18</sup> For a dramatic account of the fall of South Vietnam, see Alan Dawson, *55 Days* (New York, 1977).

responsibility for the debacle of April 1975. In the two years after the signing of the Paris agreements, the United States gave [Thieu](#) enough support to encourage his defiance but not enough to ensure his survival. [Nixon](#)'s ill-advised promises tempted him to reject the admittedly risky choice of negotiations and to launch a war he could not win. The reduction of American involvement in the war and the cutbacks of American aid weakened [South Vietnam](#)'s capacity and will to resist, and the refusal of the United States to intervene in the final crisis sealed its downfall. On the other hand, Thieu's intransigence, his gross tactical errors, and his desperate attempts to save himself while his nation was dying suggest that the outcome would probably have been the same regardless of what the United States had done. Without leadership from Thieu and the army's high command, the South Vietnamese people gave way to hysteria, each person doing only what he could to save his own skin. The nation simply collapsed.

The fall of South Vietnam just fifty-five days after the onset of the North Vietnamese offensive was symptomatic of the malaise which had afflicted the nation since its birth. Political fragmentation, the lack of able far-sighted leaders, and a tired and corrupt elite which could not adjust to the revolution that swept Vietnam after 1945 afforded a perilously weak basis for nationhood. Given these harsh realities, the American effort to create a bastion of anti-Communism south of the seventeenth parallel was probably doomed from the start. The United States could not effect the needed changes in South Vietnamese society without jeopardizing the order it sought, and there was no long-range hope of stability without revolutionary change. The Americans could provide money and weapons, but they could not furnish the ingredients necessary for political stability and military success. Despairing of the capacity of the South Vietnamese to save themselves, the United States had assumed the burden in 1965, only to toss it back in the laps of its clients when the American people tired of the war. The dependency of the early years persisted long after the United States had shifted to [Vietnamization](#), however. To the very end and despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Thieu and his cohorts clung desperately to the belief that the United States would not abandon them.<sup>19</sup>

With the North Vietnamese victory, the "dominoes" in [Indochina](#)

<sup>19</sup> Hosmer et al., Fall of South Vietnam, pp. 118-120.

quickly toppled. [Cambodia](#) in fact fell before [South Vietnam](#), ending a peculiarly brutal war and initiating a period of unprecedented cruelty. Between 1970 and 1972, the United States had spent over \$400 million in support of [Lon Nol](#)'s government and army, and heavy bombing continued until Congress legislated its end in August 1973. In six months of 1973, the bombing exceeded 250,000 tons, more than was dropped on [Japan](#) in all of World War II. Lon Nol's government and army were ineffectual even by South Vietnamese standards, however, and with extensive support from [North Vietnam](#) and [China](#), the [Khmer Rouge](#) pressed on toward Phnom Penh, using human-wave assaults in some areas. The government collapsed in mid-April, and the Khmer Rouge took over the capital on April 17. Thousands of lives were lost in the war, and over two million people were left [refugees](#). The country as a whole faced starvation for the first time in its history. Upon taking over, the Khmer Rouge imposed the harshest form of totalitarianism and began the forced relocation of much of the population.

The end in [Laos](#) was less convulsive. The Laotian "settlement" of 1962 had been a dead letter from the start. A flimsy coalition government nominally upheld a precarious [neutrality](#), while outsiders waged war up and down the land. The North Vietnamese used Laotian territory for their [infiltration](#) route into South Vietnam, and supported the insurgent [Pathet Lao](#) with supplies and as many as 20,000 "volunteers." While backing the "neutralist" government, the United States from 1962 to 1972 waged a "secret war" against North Vietnamese positions in Laos. When the bombing of North Vietnam was stopped at the end of 1968, Laos became the primary target. By 1973 the United States had dropped more than two million tons of bombs there, leaving many areas resembling a desert. At the same time, the [CIA](#) sponsored an army of [Hmong](#) or [Meo](#) tribesmen, led by General Vang Pao, which waged seasonal guerrilla warfare against the [Ho Chi Minh](#) Trail in Laos at enormous cost: more than 20,000 had been killed by the end of the war. The U.S. [withdrawal](#) from South Vietnam left the government without any chance of survival. An agreement of February 1973 created a coalition government in which the Pathet Lao held the upper hand. With the fall of Cambodia and South Vietnam, the Pathet Lao took over, making no effort to hide its subservience to North Vietnam.

The impact on world politics of America's failure in Vietnam was considerably less than U.S. policymakers had predicted. From

[Thailand](#) to the [Philippines](#), there was obvious nervousness, even demands for the removal of U.S. bases. Outside of [Indochina](#), however, the dominoes did not fall. On the contrary, in the ten years after the end of the war, the non-Communist nations of Southeast Asia prospered and attained an unprecedented level of stability. The [Soviet Union](#) continued to build up its military arsenal. Along with Cuba, it intervened in civil wars in Angola, Zaire, and Ethiopia, and in 1979 it invaded neighboring Afghanistan. The Soviets soon bogged down in Afghanistan themselves, however, and one of the most significant and ironic effects of the end of the Vietnam War was to heighten tension among the various Communist nations, especially in Southeast Asia. The brutal [Pol Pot](#) regime launched a grisly effort to rebuild [Cambodia](#) from the "Year Zero," resulting in the death of as many as two million people. More important from the Vietnamese standpoint, Cambodia established close ties with China. To preserve a "friendly" government next door, Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978, drove out Pol Pot and the [Khmer Rouge](#), and established a puppet regime. China retaliated by invading Vietnam, provoking a short and inconclusive war. Sporadic border conflicts between Vietnam and China have persisted. The United States, which had gone to war in Vietnam in 1965 to contain China, found itself in the mid-1980s indirectly supporting China's efforts to contain Vietnam.

In Vietnam itself, the principal legacy of the war has been continued human suffering. The ultimate losers, of course, were the South Vietnamese. For those who remain in Vietnam there have been poverty, oppression, forced labor, and "reeducation" camps. More than 1.4 million South Vietnamese have fled the country since 1975. As many as 50,000 of these so-called boat people perished in flight, and some still languish in squalid refugee camps scattered throughout Southeast Asia. Nearly a million Vietnamese have resettled in other countries, over 725,000 of them in the United States. Most of them had to give up all their personal possessions merely to escape, and many left family behind.

Even for the ostensible winners, victory has been a bittersweet prize. The [Hanoi](#) regime has achieved what may have been its goal from the outset - hegemony in former French Indochina - but the cost has been enormous. An estimated 180,000 soldiers remain in Cambodia, facing stubborn resistance from a number of different guerrilla groups, a drain on an economy already strained to the breaking point. The task of maintaining hegemony in [Laos](#) and

[Cambodia](#) and defending against a hostile [China](#) requires one of the world's twelve poorest countries to maintain the world's fourth largest army. Vietnam's postwar aggressiveness has cost it much of the international good will it earned in the war against the United States.

Moreover, [Hanoi](#)'s long-standing objective of unifying Vietnam under its control appears still to have been achieved in name only. Historic differences between north and south were sharpened during the war, and even the brutal and heavy-handed methods employed by the Hanoi regime have not forced the south into a northern-made mold. Just as it resisted American influence in the 1960s, southern Vietnam continues to resist outside influence today, making the task of consolidation quite difficult. There are also signs that in the classic tradition of the Far East, the ways of the conquered are rubbing off on the conqueror. The corruption and Western consumer culture that epitomized [Saigon](#) during the American war have carried over to postwar [Ho Chi Minh City](#), where the black market still flourishes and bribery is necessary to accomplish anything. More significant, Saigon's mores appear to have afflicted the northern officials sent south to enforce revolutionary purity and even to have filtered north to Hanoi.

For all Vietnamese, the most pressing legacy has been economic deprivation. Thirty years of war left the country in shambles, and the regime's ill-conceived postwar efforts to promote industry and collectivize agriculture made things worse. The economic growth rate has hovered around 2 percent instead of the 14 percent optimistically projected in the five-year plan of 1975. Per capita income has averaged around \$100. Inflation has run as high as 50 percent and unemployment is chronic, especially in the cities. Record rice crops in recent years have eased a severe postwar food shortage, but the food supply remains far below the needs of the population and most foods are rationed and expensive. The postwar economic crisis has forced Hanoi to abandon its central goal of socialization of southern Vietnam. New economic policies have been designed to increase production by such capitalist gimmicks as bonuses, piecework rates, and limited managerial autonomy. The collectivization of agriculture has been scrapped, at least temporarily.

A central goal of the thirty-year war was to rid Vietnam of foreign domination, and here again victory has been less than complete. Because of its poverty and its forced isolation from the

United States and [China](#), [Hanoi](#) has been forced into a dependence on the [Soviet Union](#) that causes growing uneasiness and resentment. Some 6,000 Russians administer an aid program ranging between \$1 and \$2 billion per year. Russian aid bears a high price tag, moreover. To many Vietnamese, the Soviet presence is increasingly obnoxious, and some appear to regard their new ally as merely another in the long line of foreigners who have exploited their country. To a considerable degree, the legacy of victory for the Vietnamese has been one of disappointed dreams and continuing sacrifice and pain. The goals of the thirty-year war have been achieved only partially, if at all.

Ten years after the fall of [Saigon](#), Vietnam appeared eager to break out of its diplomatic isolation from the West. Hanoi probably bungled an opportunity to establish relations with the United States in 1977 by demanding \$3 billion in war reparations as a pre-condition. Relations 'between the two former enemies thereafter grew steadily worse. Vietnam's seeming indifference to the fate of some 2,500 U.S. servicemen still listed as missing in action in Southeast Asia deeply antagonized Americans. Its increasing closeness to the Soviet Union and its invasion of [Cambodia](#) widened an already large chasm. On the other side, Washington's reconciliation with China in 1979 reinforced Vietnam's already strong hostility toward the United States. The need for Western aid and technology and a wish to secure recognition of its position in Cambodia encouraged Hanoi in 1985 to seek an improvement of relations. It was more cooperative than at any time since the end of the war in dealing with MIA issues, and it eagerly sought a settlement on Cambodia. These approaches provided the United States an opportunity to wean Vietnam from its dependence on the Soviet Union and to resolve a number of issues left from the war, but lingering hostility toward the Vietnamese and fear of China's reaction posed major obstacles to an improvement in relations.

In the United States, the effects of the war have been more in the realm of the spirit than tangible. The fall of Saigon had a profound impact. Some Americans expressed hope that the nation could finally put aside a painful episode from its past and get on with the business of the future. Among a people accustomed to celebrating peace with ticker-tape parades, however, the end of the war left a deep residue of frustration, anger, and disillusionment. Americans generally agreed that the war had been a "senseless tragedy" and a "dark moment" in their nation's history. Some



comforted themselves with the notion that the United States should never have become involved in Vietnam in the first place, but for others, particularly those who had lost loved ones, this was not enough. "Now it's all gone down the drain and it hurts. What did he die for?" asked a Pennsylvanian whose son had been killed in Vietnam. Many Americans expressed anger that the civilians did not permit the military to win the war. Others regarded the failure to win as a betrayal of American ideals and a sign of national weakness which boded poorly for the future. "It was the saddest day of my life when it sank in that we had lost the war," a Virginian lamented.<sup>20</sup> The fall of Vietnam came at the very time the nation was preparing to celebrate the bicentennial of its birth, and the irony was painfully obvious. "The high hopes and wishful idealism with which the American nation had been born had not been destroyed," Newsweek observed, "but they had been chastened by the failure of America to work its will in [Indochina](#)."<sup>21</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the nation experienced a self-conscious, collective amnesia. The angry debate over who lost Vietnam, so feared by [Kennedy](#), [Johnson](#), and [Nixon](#), consisted of nothing more than a few sharp exchanges between the White House and Capitol Hill over responsibility for the April 1975 debacle. Perhaps because both parties were so deeply implicated in the war, Vietnam did not become a partisan political issue; because the memories were so painful, no one cared to dredge them up. On the contrary, many public figures called for restraint. "There is no profit at this time in hashing over the might-have-beens of the past," [Mike Mansfield](#) stated. "Nor is there any value in finger-pointing."<sup>22</sup> Vietnam was all but ignored by the media. It was scarcely mentioned in the presidential campaign of 1976. "Today it is almost as though the war had never happened," the columnist Joseph C. Harsch noted in late 1975. "Americans have somehow blocked it out of their consciousness. They don't talk about it. They don't talk about its consequences."<sup>23</sup>

Resentment and disillusionment nevertheless smoldered beneath the surface, provoking a sharp reaction against nearly three

<sup>20</sup> Jules Low, "The Mood of a Nation," AP Newsfeature, May 5, 1975.

<sup>21</sup> "An Irony of History," Newsweek (April 28, 1975), 17.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Joseph Siracusa, "Lessons of Viet Nam and the Future of American Foreign Policy," Australian Outlook, 30 (August 1976), 236.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph C. Harsch, "Do You Recall Vietnam And What About the Dominoes?," Louisville Courier-Journal, October 2, 1975.

decades of crisis diplomacy and global intervention. Even before the war had ended, the traumatic experience of Vietnam, combined with the apparent improvement of relations with the [Soviet Union](#) and [China](#) and a growing preoccupation with domestic problems, produced a drastic reordering of national priorities. From the late 1940s to the 1960s, foreign policy had consistently headed the list of national concerns, but by the mid-1970s, it ranked well down the list. The public is "almost oblivious to foreign problems and foreign issues," opinion analyst Burns Roper remarked in late 1975.<sup>24</sup> The Vietnam experience also provoked strong opposition to military intervention abroad, even in defense of America's oldest and staunchest allies. Polls taken shortly before the fall of [Saigon](#) indicated that only 36 percent of the American people felt it was important for the United States to make and keep commitments to other nations, and only 34 percent expressed willingness to send troops should the Russians attempt to take over West Berlin. A majority of Americans endorsed military intervention only in defense of [Canada](#). "Vietnam has left a rancid after-taste that clings to almost every mention of direct military intervention," the columnist David Broder observed.<sup>25</sup> The cyclical theory of American foreign relations seemed confirmed. Having passed through a stormy period of global involvement, the United States appeared to be reverting to its more traditional role of abstention.

Those Americans who fought in the war were the primary victims of the nation's desire to forget. Younger on the average by seven years than their World War II counterparts, having endured a war far more complex and confusing, Vietnam veterans by the miracles of the jet age were whisked home virtually overnight to a nation that was hostile to the war or indifferent to their plight. Some were made to feel the guilt for the nation's moral transgressions; others, responsibility for its failure. Most simply met silence. Forced to turn inward, many veterans grew profoundly distrustful of the government that had sent them to war and deeply resentful of the nation's seeming ingratitude for their sacrifices. The great majority adjusted, although often with difficulty, but many veterans

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Charles W. Yost, "Why Americans Seem Disillusioned by Foreign Affairs," Louisville Courier-Journal, October 26, 1975.

<sup>25</sup> David Broder, "Isolationist Sentiment Not Blind to Reality," Washington Post, March 22, 1975.

experienced problems with drugs and alcohol, joblessness, and broken homes. Many also suffered from [post-traumatic stress disorder](#), the modern term for what had earlier been called shell shock or battle fatigue. The popular image of the Vietnam veteran in the immediate postwar years was that of a drug-crazed, gun-toting, and violence-prone individual unable to adjust to civilized society. When America in 1981 gave a lavish welcome home to a group of hostages returned from a long and much-publicized captivity in Iran, Vietnam veterans poured out the rage that had been bottled up for more than half a decade. They themselves constructed a memorial in Washington to honor the memory of the more than 58,000 comrades who did not return.

Within a short time after the end of the war, Vietnam's place in the national consciousness changed dramatically. The amnesia of the immediate postwar years proved no more than a passing phenomenon, and by the mid-1980s the war was being discussed to a degree and in ways that would have once seemed impossible. Vietnam produced a large and in some cases distinguished literature, much of it the work of veterans. Hollywood had all but ignored the war while it was going on, but in its aftermath filmmakers took up the subject in a large way, producing works ranging from the haunting [Deer Hunter](#), to the surreal and spectacular [Apocalypse Now](#), to a series of trashy films in which American superheroes returned to Vietnam to take care of unfinished business. No television leading man was worth his salt unless he had served in Vietnam. The Vietnam veteran, sometimes branded a war criminal in the 1960s, became a popular culture hero in the 1980s, the sturdy and self-sufficient warrior who had prevailed despite being let down by his government and nation. Two million Americans a year visited the stark but moving V-shaped [memorial](#) on Washington's mall, making it the second leading tourist attraction in the nation's capital. The hoopla that accompanied the tenth anniversary of the fall of [Saigon](#) made abundantly clear how deeply embedded Vietnam was in the national psyche.

If they were more willing to talk about Vietnam, Americans remained confused and divided about its meaning, particularly its implications for U.S. foreign policy. The indifference and tendency toward [withdrawal](#) so manifest in 1975 declined sharply over the next ten years. Bitter memories of Vietnam combined with the frustration of the Iranian hostage crisis to produce a growing assertiveness,

a highly nationalistic impulse to defend perceived interests, even a yearning to restore the United States to its old position in the world. The breakdown of détente, the steady growth of Soviet military power, and the use of that power in Afghanistan produced a heightened concern for American security. The defense budget soared to record proportions in the early 1980s, and support for military intervention in defense of traditional allies increased significantly.<sup>26</sup>

The new nationalism was tempered by lingering memories of Vietnam, however. Many Americans remained deeply skeptical of 1960s-style globalism and dubious of such internationalist mechanisms as foreign aid or even the United Nations. Ten years after the end of the war, a whopping majority still believed that intervention in Vietnam had been a mistake. Recollection of Vietnam produced strong opposition to intervention in third-world crises in Lebanon and Central America. Thus, in the aftermath of Vietnam, the public mood consisted of a strange amalgam of nostalgia and realism, assertiveness and caution.

The nation's foreign policy elite has been no more certain in its judgments on Vietnam than the mass public. Indeed, systematic polling of leadership groups makes clear that Vietnam was a "landmark event" that left "deep and profound" divisions. Americans agree that to construct a viable foreign policy they must learn from Vietnam. But they disagree sharply over what they should learn.<sup>27</sup>

The basic issue remains the morality and wisdom of intervention in Vietnam. In the light of [Hanoi's](#) postwar actions, Americans are less likely to openly condemn their nation's intervention as immoral, an important sign of change in itself. Those who continue to feel that intervention was wrong argue that it was unnecessary or impractical or both, and most liberals still contend that at best it represented overcommitment in an area of peripheral national interest, at worst an act of questionable morality.

The conservative point of view has been more vocal in recent years and it takes two forms. Some, including President Ronald Reagan, have found in postwar events in [Indochina](#) reason to speak out anew on what they always felt was a fundamental reality -

26 Adam Clymer, "What Americans Think Now," New York Times Magazine (March 31, 1985), 34.

27 Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, American Leadership in World Affairs: Vietnam and the Breakdown of Consensus (Winchester, 1984).

that, as Reagan has repeatedly stated, Vietnam was "in truth a noble war," a selfless attempt on the part of the United States to save a free nation from outside aggression. Others concede that the United States might have erred in getting involved in Vietnam in the first place, but they go on to insist that over time an important interest was established that had to be defended for the sake of U.S. credibility throughout the world.

The second great issue, on which Americans also sharply disagree, concerns the reasons for U.S. failure in Vietnam. Many of the leading participants in the war have concluded that America's failure was essentially instrumental, a result of the improper use of available tools. General [Westmoreland](#) and others blame the "ill-considered" policy of "graduated response" imposed on the military by civilian leaders, arguing that had the United States employed its military power quickly, decisively, and without limit, the war could have been won.<sup>28</sup> Other critics view the fundamental mistake as the choice of tools rather than how they were used, and they blame an unimaginative military as much as civilians. Instead of trying to fight World War II and [Korea](#) over in Vietnam, these critics argue, the military should have adapted to the unconventional war in which it found itself and shaped an appropriate [counterinsurgency](#) strategy to meet it.<sup>29</sup> Still other commentators, including some military theorists, agree that military leaders were as responsible for the strategic failure as civilians. Critics such as Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., argue that instead of mounting costly and counterproductive search-and-destroy operations against guerrillas in [South Vietnam](#), the United States should have used its own forces against North Vietnamese regulars along the seventeenth parallel to isolate the north from the south. Military leaders should also have insisted on a declaration of war to ensure that the war was not fought in "cold blood" and that popular support could be sustained.<sup>30</sup>

The lessons drawn are as divergent as the arguments advanced. Those who feel that the United States lost because it did not act decisively conclude that if the nation becomes involved in war again,

28 William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, N.Y., 1976), p. 410.

29 Comments by [Robert Komer](#) in W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson Frizzell, *The Lessons of Vietnam* (New York, 1977), p. 223.

30 Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa., 1981).

it must employ its military power with a view to winning quickly before public support erodes. Those who feel that the basic problem was the formulation rather than the execution of strategy insist that military and civilian leaders must think strategically, that they must examine more carefully the nature of the war and formulate more precisely the ways in which American power can best be used to attain clearly defined objectives.

Such lessons depend on the values and belief systems of those who pronounce them, of course, and those who opposed the war have reached quite different conclusions. To some former doves, the fundamental lesson is never to get involved in a land war in Asia; to others, it is to avoid intervention in international trouble spots unless the nation's vital interests are clearly at stake. Some commentators warn that policymakers must be wary of the sort of simplistic reasoning that produced the [domino theory](#) and the Munich analogy. Others point to the weaknesses of [South Vietnam](#) and admonish that "even a superpower can't save allies who are unable or unwilling to save themselves."<sup>31</sup> For still others, the key lessons are that American power has distinct limits and that in order to be effective, American foreign policy must be true to the nation's historic ideals.

The ghost of Vietnam hovered over an increasingly divisive debate on the proper American response to revolutions in Central America. Shortly after taking office in 1981, President Reagan committed U.S. prestige to defending the government of El Salvador against a leftist-led insurgency, in part in the expectation that success there might exorcise the so-called Vietnam syndrome the perceived reluctance of the American public in the wake of Vietnam to take on responsibilities in third-world countries. When the quick victory did not materialize, the administration expanded U.S. military aid to El Salvador, created a huge military base in Honduras, and launched a not-so-covert war to overthrow the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. The administration insisted that the United States must support non-Communist forces to avert in Central America the bloodshed and misery that followed the end of the war in Vietnam. At the same time, the military and the Defense Department have made clear that they will not go to war under the conditions that prevailed in Vietnam. On the other side, dovish

<sup>31</sup> Louisville Courier-Journal, April 28, 1985.

critics ominously warn that U.S. intervention in Central America will lead straight into a quagmire like Vietnam.<sup>32</sup>

The ongoing debate over U.S. involvement in Vietnam leaves many questions unanswered. Whether a more decisive use of military power could have brought a satisfactory conclusion to the war without causing even more disastrous consequences remains highly doubtful. Whether the adoption of a more vigorous and imaginative [counterinsurgency](#) program at an earlier stage could have wrested control of the countryside from the [Vietcong](#) can never be known, and the ability of the United States to develop such a program in an alien environment is dubious. That the United States exaggerated the importance of Vietnam, as the liberals suggest, seems clear. But their argument begs the question of how one determines the significance of a given area and the even more difficult question of assessing the ultimate costs of intervention at an early stage.

The fundamental weakness of many of the lessons learned thus far is that they assume the continued necessity and practicability of the [containment](#) policy, at least in modified form, thereby evading or ignoring altogether the central questions raised by the war. The United States intervened in Vietnam to block the apparent march of a Soviet-directed Communism across Asia, enlarged its commitment to halt a presumably expansionist Communist [China](#), and eventually made Vietnam a test of its determination to uphold world order. By wrongly attributing the Vietnamese conflict to external sources, the United States drastically misjudged its internal dynamics. By intervening in what was essentially a local struggle, it placed itself at the mercy of local forces, a weak client, and a determined adversary. It elevated into a major international conflict what might have remained a localized struggle. By raising the stakes into a test of its own credibility, it perilously narrowed its options. A policy so flawed in its premises cannot help but fail, and in this case the results were disastrous.

Vietnam made clear the inherent unworkability of a policy of global containment. In the 1940s the world seemed dangerous but manageable. The United States enjoyed a position of unprecedented

<sup>32</sup> George C. Herring, "Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Uses of History," in Kenneth M. Coleman and George C. Herring, eds., *The Central American Crisis* (Wilmington, Del., 1985), pp. 97-110.

power and influence, and achieved some notable early successes in Europe. Much of America's power derived from the weakness of other nations rather than from its own intrinsic strength, however, and Vietnam demonstrated conclusively that its power, however great, had limits. The development of significant military capabilities by the [Soviet Union](#) and [China](#) made it extremely risky for the United States to use its military power in Vietnam on a scale necessary to achieve the desired results. Conditions in Vietnam itself and the constraints imposed by domestic opinion made it impossible to reach these goals with limited means. Vietnam makes clear that the United States cannot uphold its own concept of world order in the face of a stubborn and resolute, although much weaker, foe. The war did not bring about the decline of American power, as some have suggested, but was rather symptomatic of the limits of national power in an age of international diversity and nuclear weaponry.

To assume, therefore, that the United States can simply rouse itself from the nightmare of Vietnam and resume its accustomed role in a rapidly changing world would be to invite further disaster. The world of the 1980s is even more dangerous and much less manageable than that of the 1940s and 1950s. The proliferation of nuclear weapons, the emergence of a large number of new nations, the existence of a baffling array of regional and internal conflicts, have combined to produce a more confusing and disorderly world than at any time in the recent past. The ambiguous triangular relationship between the United States, the Soviet Union, and China has had a further destabilizing effect, creating enormous uncertainty and shifting tensions and giving lesser nations increased maneuverability and opportunity for mischief. A successful American adjustment to the new conditions requires the shedding of old approaches, most notably of the traditional oscillation between crusades to reform the world and angry [withdrawal](#) from it. To carry the "Never Again" syndrome to its logical conclusion and turn away from an ungrateful and hostile world could be calamitous. To regard Vietnam as an aberration, a unique experience from which nothing can be learned, would invite further frustration. To adapt to the new era, the United States must recognize its vulnerability, accept the limits to its power, and accommodate itself to many situations it does not like. Americans must understand that they will not be able to dictate solutions to world problems or to achieve all



of their goals. Like it or not, Vietnam marked the end of an era in world history and of American foreign policy, an era marked by constructive achievements but blemished by ultimate, although not irreparable, failure.



## Suggestions for Additional Reading

### GENERAL

The best guide to the already massive literature on Vietnam is Richard Dean Burns and Milton Leitenberg, *The Wars in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, 1945-1982* (Santa Barbara, Calif. 1983), a comprehensive bibliography of more than 6,000 items that is particularly valuable for its extensive list of periodical articles. For the manuscript and archival materials available as of August 1984, see George C. Herring, ed., "Sources for Understanding the Vietnam Conflict," *Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Newsletter*, 16 (March 1985), 8-30. An excellent introduction to research on the war is Ronald H. Spector, *Researching the Vietnam Experience* (Washington, D.C., 1984).

There are numerous valuable collections of documents. William Appleman Williams et al., *America in Vietnam: A Documentary History* (New York, 1984), is a good brief collection. Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions* (2 vols.; Stanfordville, N.Y., 1979), is scarcely definitive, but it contains Vietnamese as well as American documents.

The basic documentary source is the [Pentagon Papers](#), a study prepared by the Department of Defense at the direction of [Robert S. McNamara](#), subsequently leaked to the press by [Daniel Ellsberg](#), and eventually published in several editions. The best introduction to the study is Neil Sheehan et al., *The Pentagon Papers as Published by the New York Times* (New York, 1971), which contains readable and generally reliable synopses of the original Defense Department analyses as well as many of the most important documents.

[U.S. Congress](#), Senate, Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds, The [Pentagon Papers](#) (The [Senator Gravel](#) Edition) (4 vols.; Boston, 1971), is the most orderly and usable of the larger editions, containing much of the original text and a large collection of documents. A fifth volume includes an index and commentaries on the papers by a number of scholars. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: A Study Prepared by the Department of Defense* (12 books; Washington, D.C., 1971), has the largest collection of documents, but it is awkwardly arranged and poorly printed and contains numerous deletions. George C. Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers* (Austin, Tex., 1983), is an annotated edition of the previously unpublished section of the papers dealing with peace initiatives.

Although invaluable, the Pentagon Papers must be used with caution. The essays are of uneven quality and reflect the bias of McNamara's civilian advisers. They rely primarily on Defense Department records and do not always adequately treat the role of the White House and State Department. They emphasize military matters and devote only slight attention to such important things as the operation of the aid program and American involvement in South Vietnamese politics. George McT. Kahin, "The Pentagon Papers: A Critical Evaluation," *American Political Science Review*, LXIX (June 1975), 675-684, elaborates on the value and deficiencies of the various editions as historical sources.

Other useful collections of official documents include Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, still available only through 1957, although those volumes dealing with Vietnam will be published prior to the volumes in the regular series. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* are annual volumes that contain the major speeches and press conferences.

There are a number of valuable studies of Vietnam during the thirty-year war. James Pinckney Harrison, *The Endless War* (New York, 1982), is scholarly and readable but tends to be uncritical of the Communist side. Much more balanced in interpretation and based heavily on Vietnamese sources is William Duiker's excellent study, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colo., 1981). Also of value are Duiker's briefer survey, *Vietnam: Nation in Revolution* (Boulder, Colo., 1983), and Thomas L. Hodgkin, *Vietnam*:

The Revolutionary Path (New York, 1981). Among the older works still useful are Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina* (New York, 1961); [Bernard Fall](#), *The Two Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis* (New York, 1967), and *Last Reflections on a War* (New York, 1967), two invaluable studies by the distinguished French scholar who was killed while reporting on combat in Vietnam; and the several works by Joseph Buttinger: *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam* (New York, 1958), *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled* (2 vols.; New York, 1967), and the survey *A Dragon Defiant: A Short History of Vietnam* (New York, 1972).

The literature on American involvement in Vietnam is already massive and its growth shows no sign of slacking. In a class by itself is Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York, 1983), a balanced and immensely readable account based on the author's own wide-ranging experience as a journalist in Southeast Asia as well as a close reading of the sources. Michael Maclear, *The Ten Thousand Day War Vietnam: 1945-1975* (New York, 1981), is also worth-while. The older surveys by Alexander Kendrick, *The Wound Within: America in the Vietnam Years, 1945-1974* (Boston, 1974), and Chester A. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam* (New York, 1970), are still useful, the latter especially so since it contains many insights from the author's experience as a second-level official in the Kennedy and Johnson years.

The war set off a vigorous and frequently bitter debate which quickly extended beyond Vietnam to the very wellsprings of American foreign policy. A frankly radical point of view is advanced in Gabriel Kolko, *The Roots of American Foreign Policy* (Boston, 1969). Richard J. Barnet, *Roots of War: The Men and Institutions Behind U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York, 1972), places less emphasis on economic factors but nevertheless indicts the "national security managers" whose sweeping definition of the national interest plunged the nation into a disastrous war. An early liberal critique, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy* (Boston, 1966), argues that overly optimistic advisers misled reluctant Presidents step-by-step into the quagmire of Vietnam. [Daniel Ellsberg](#), *Papers on the War* (New York, 1972), and Leslie H. Gelb and Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Washington, D.C., 1978) persuasively rebut the quagmire thesis, contending that Presidents

from [Truman](#) to [Johnson](#) perceived the pitfalls of intervention but felt compelled by the exigencies of domestic politics to perpetuate a bloody stalemate in Vietnam. Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York, 1973), contains perceptive critiques of both arguments as well as a stimulating overall appraisal of American policy and strategy. George McT. Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam* (New York, 1969), an early "dove" study by two specialists in Southeast Asian history, is especially valuable for its analysis of the Vietnamese dimension. Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (Boston, 1972), romanticizes the Vietnamese Communists but properly emphasizes the cultural gap between Americans and all Vietnamese. [David Halberstam](#), *The Best and the Brightest* (New York, 1972), a massive, rambling, undocumented work, sometimes frustrating, frequently insightful, perhaps better than any other work re-creates the mindset of the policymakers and the intellectual milieu in which U.S. policy was made. James Thomson, "How Could Vietnam Happen? An Autopsy," *Atlantic Monthly*, 221 (April 1968), 47-53, is a stimulating analysis by an insider of the bureaucratic factors leading to intervention. Paul [Kattenburg](#), *The Vietnam Trauma in American Foreign Policy, 1945-1975* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1980), is a scholarly study also informed by the insights of one who was involved in policymaking. Michael Charlton and Anthony Moncrief, *Many Reasons Why* (New York, 1978), contains a number of illuminating interviews with key policymakers.

By the end of the 1970s, the dove interpretation of the war was under fire from conservative "revisionists." Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York, 1978), criticized the military for a faulty and counterproductive strategy but argued that the war should have been fought and could have been won and defends the United States against charges of war crimes. Norman Podhoretz, *Why We Were in Vietnam* (New York, 1982), concludes that the war was unwinnable but argues that the cause was just and the effort worth making.

A useful survey of writing on Vietnam in the early 1980s is Fox Butterfield, "The New Vietnam Scholarship," *New York Times Magazine* (February 13, 1983), 26-32, 45-60. Useful compilations of symposia which reflect recent trends in the literature are Peter Braestrup, ed., *Vietnam as History: Ten Years After the [Paris Peace Accords](#)* (Washington, D.C., 1984), which focuses on the instrumental

question of why the United States failed, and [Harrison Salisbury](#), ed., *Vietnam Reconsidered* (New York, 1984), more dovish in tone and more concerned with the wisdom, morality, and consequences of U.S. intervention. A recent study which offers some novel interpretations and is particularly good on Vietnamese policy and strategy is Timothy J. Lomperis, *The War Everyone Lost - and Won* (Baton Rouge, La., 1984).

#### THE FIRST [INDOCHINA](#) WAR, 1945-1954

For the origins of the Vietnamese revolution, there is still no better place to begin than Jean Lacouture, [Ho Chi Minh](#): A Political Biography (New York, 1968), a highly readable and sympathetic account which stresses Ho's nationalism and charismatic personality. Bernard B. Fall, ed., *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966* (New York, 1967), is also useful. John T. McAlister, Jr., *Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution* (New York, 1971), William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1976), and David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism* (Berkeley, Calif., 1971) and *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982), are fine scholarly analyses that cover only the beginnings but do much to explain why the [Vietminh](#) prevailed over other nationalist groups and the French and why [North Vietnam](#) ultimately prevailed against [South Vietnam](#) and the United States. Robert F. Turner, *Vietnamese Communism: Its Origins and Development* (Stanford, Calif., 1975), dismisses the Vietnamese Communists as usurpers. Douglas Pike, *History of Vietnamese Communism* (Stanford, Calif., 1978), is a valuable brief survey that stresses the superiority of the Communists' organizational techniques.

The standard account of the politics and diplomacy of the First Indochina War is Ellen Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1945-1955* (Stanford, Calif., 1966). A more up-to-date study, particularly valuable for its coverage of French politics, is Ronald E. Irving, *The First Indochina War: French and American Policy, 1945-1954* (London, 1975). Bernard B. Fall, *Street Without Joy* (New York, 1972), dramatically depicts military operations and the frustrations encountered by the French. Useful surveys of military operations include Lucien Bodard, *The Quicksand War: Prelude to Vietnam* (Boston, 1967), and Edgar O'Ballance, *The Indochina*

War, 1945-1954: A Study in Guerrilla Warfare (London, 1964). King C. Chen, Vietnam and [China](#), 1938-1954 (Princeton, N.J., 1969), a scholarly study based on [Chinese](#) and Vietnamese sources, documents China's influence on the ideology of the Vietnamese revolution and its important military contributions in the latter stages of the war with [France](#).

The importance Vietnam eventually assumed for the United States and the declassification of American documents for the period up to 1950 have stimulated much interest among scholars in the origins of U.S. involvement. Because his trusteeship scheme seemed in retrospect to have offered an alternative to thirty years of war, [Franklin Roosevelt](#)'s policies have provoked extensive study. Although they differ in emphasis, Gary R. Hess, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and [Indochina](#)," *Journal of American History*, LIX (September 1972), 353-368, Walter LaFeber, "Roosevelt, Churchill and Indochina, 1942-1945," *American Historical Review*, 80 (December 1975), 1277-1295, Christopher Thorne, "Indochina and Anglo-American Relations, 1942-1945," *Pacific Historical Review*, XLV (February 1976), 73-96, Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, [Britain](#), and the War against [Japan](#), 1941-1945* (New York, 1978), and William Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire* (New York, 1978), all make clear that Roosevelt's scheme was more an expression of personal prejudice and intent than a carefully thought-out policy. George C. Herring, "The Truman Administration and the Restoration of French Sovereignty in Indochina," *Diplomatic History*, I (Spring 1977), 97-117, stresses the importance of the Soviet threat in Europe in the reorientation of Indochina policy in 1945. Gary R. Hess, "United States Policy and the Origins of the French-Vietminh War, 1945-1946," *Peace and Change*, III (Summer-Fall 1975), 21-33, also emphasizes European factors in shaping the American response to the outbreak of war in Indochina. The early Office of Strategic Services missions to Indochina are recounted by a scholar in Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years*-(Washington, D.C., 1983), and by a participant in Archimedes L. Patti, *Why Vietnam? Prelude to America's Albatross* (Berkeley, Calif., 1981).

The reorientation of American Far Eastern policy in 1949-1950, of which the commitment to France in Indochina was only one part, has recently received extensive scholarly treatment. The



most comprehensive study is Robert M. Blum, *Drawing the Line: The Origin of the American [Containment](#) Policy in East Asia* (New York, 1982). Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs, *Uncertain Years: [Chinese](#)-American Relations, 1947-1950* (New York, 1980), although it does not deal specifically with [Indochina](#), sheds much light on the broader policy problem. Michael Schaller, "Securing the Great Crescent: Occupied [Japan](#) and the Origins of Containment in Southeast Asia," *Journal of American History*, 69 (September 1982), 392-414, Andrew Rotter, "The Triangular Route to Vietnam: The United States, [Great Britain](#), and Southeast Asia, 1945-1950," *International History Review*, VI (August 1984), 404-423, and William Borden, *The Pacific Alliance: United States Foreign Economic Policy and Japanese Trade Recovery, 1947-1955* (Madison, Wis., 1984), place the decision in the broader framework of American and European political and economic interests in East and Southeast Asia.

The Franco-American partnership in Indochina during the Truman years has not been studied by scholars. Insights into the dilemmas facing U.S. policymakers can be gained from [Dean Acheson](#), *Present at the Creation* (New York, 1969), Gaddis Smith, *Dean Acheson* (New York, 1970), David McLellan, *Dean Acheson: The State Department Years* (New York, 1976), Stephen Jurika, Jr., ed., *From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: The Memoirs of Admiral Arthur W. Radford* (Stanford, Calif., 1980), John Melby, "Vietnam-1950," *Diplomatic History*, 6 (Winter 1982), 97-109, and particularly from Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution: The U.S. in Vietnam, 1946-1966* (New York, 1966). The mood of these years is best captured in Graham Greene's classic novel *The Quiet American* (London, 1955).

The most up-to-date analysis of American diplomacy during the Dienbienphu crisis is George C. Herring and Richard H. Immerman, "[Eisenhower](#), [Dulles](#) and [Dienbienphu](#): The 'Day We Didn't Go to War' Revisited," *Journal of American History*, 72 (September 1985), 343-363. The older work by Melvin Gurtov, *The First Vietnam Crisis: Chinese Communist Strategy and United States Involvement, 1953-1954* (New York, 1967), is still valuable. The French reaction to the crisis can be traced in [Paul Ely](#), *Memoires: l'Indochine dans la Tourmente* (Paris, 1964), and Henri Navarre, *Agonie de l'Indochine, 1953-1954* (Paris, 1956). Bernard B. Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place* (Philadelphia, 1966), and Jules Roy, *The*

Battle of Dienbienphu (New York, 1965), are excellent accounts of an epic battle, and Stewart Menaul, "[Dien Bien Phu](#)," in Noble Frankland and Christopher Dowling, eds., *Decisive Battles of the Twentieth Century* (London, 1976), pp. 305-318, is a good brief study. The Vietnamese perspective can be found in [Vo Nguyen Giap](#), *Dien Bien Phu* ([Hanoi](#), 1962). Robert F. Randle, *Geneva 1954: The Settlement of the Indochinese War* (Princeton, N.J., 1969), is the standard work on the conference that ended one war and laid the basis for another, although it should be supplemented with Francois Joyaux, *La Chine et le reglement du premier conflit d'Indochine* (Geneve 1954) (Paris, 1979), an important study which adds new and important findings from the French archives, and by David Carlton, Anthony Eden (London, 1981), an up-to-date biography of a key figure.

#### THE [DIEM](#) ERA, 1954-1963

Ralph B. Smith, *Revolution Versus [Containment](#)* (New York, 1983), seeks to place the Second [Indochina](#) War in an international perspective. The best overall study of [South Vietnam](#) during the Diem years remains Robert Scigliano, *South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress* (Boston, 1964), a comprehensive analysis, ending in 1962, by a political scientist who worked with the [Michigan State University](#) advisory group. Scigliano and Guy Fox, *Technical Assistance in Vietnam: The Michigan State Experience* (New York, 1965), is a valuable study of a major aspect of the economic aid program. Official histories based on research in military archives are invaluable for coverage of the military assistance program. Spector, *Advice and Support*, authoritatively covers the army's role, while Robert H. Whitlow, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Advisory and Combat Assistance Era, 1954-1964* (Washington, D.C., 1976), and Edwin Hooper et al., *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict: The Setting of the Stage to 1959* (Washington, D.C., 1976), deal with the other services. Jean Lacouture, *Vietnam Between Two Truces* (New York, 1966), is still useful, as are two biographies of Diem: Dents Warner, *The Last Confucian* (New York, 1963), and Anthony Bouscaren, *The Last of the Mandarins: Diem of Vietnam* (Pittsburgh, 1965). [Edward G. Lansdale](#), *In the Midst of Wars* (New York, 1972), recounts his important role in the birth of South Vietnam

and J. Lawton Collins his in *Lightning Joe: An Autobiography* (Baton Rouge, La., 1979). [William Colby](#), *Honorable Men* (New York, 1978), notes some of the activities of the [CIA](#) in the nation-building years.

The origins and evolution of the insurgency in [South Vietnam](#) provide the subject for a sizable literature filled with controversy. FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake*, and Douglas Pike, [Viet Cong: National Liberation Front of South Vietnam](#) (rev. ed.; Cambridge, Mass., 1972), offer conflicting interpretations regarding the success of the front. Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley, Calif., 1972), James Trullinger, *Village at War: An Account of Revolution in Vietnam* (New York, 1980), and William Andrews, *The Village War: Vietnamese Communist Revolutionary Activity in Dinh Truong Province, 1960-1964* (Columbia, Mo., 1973), are all excellent "micro" studies, exploring the origins and evolution of the war at the village and province levels. King C. Chen, "Hanoi's Three Decisions and the Escalation of the Vietnam War," *Political Science Quarterly*, 90 (Summer 1975), 239-259, is an important, scholarly contribution based on North Vietnamese sources. Edwin E. Moise, [Land Reform in China and North Vietnam: Consolidating the Revolution at the Village Level](#) (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1983), provides important information and insights about [North Vietnam](#) immediately after [Geneva](#).

Memoirs and biographies provide one of the best ways to approach the study of U.S. policy in Vietnam during the Kennedy years. Herbert Parmet, *JFK: The Presidency of [John F. Kennedy](#)* (New York, 1983), is the most up-to-date and balanced of the many Kennedy biographies and contains important information on Vietnam policy. Among the numerous memoirs, [Roger Hilsman](#), *To Move a Nation* (New York, 1967), is the most valuable for Vietnam because of the author's role in [counterinsurgency](#) policy and in the overthrow of [Diem](#). [Maxwell D. Taylor](#), *Swords and Ploughshares* (New York, 1972), is also thorough and detailed. [John Kenneth Galbraith](#), *Ambassador's Journal: A Personal Account of the Kennedy Years* (Boston, 1969), [Henry Cabot Lodge](#), *The Storm Has Many Eyes* (New York, 1973), and [Walt W. Rostow](#), *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York, 1972), are all useful. [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.](#)'s two classics, *A Thousand Days* (Boston, 1965) and [Robert Kennedy](#) and His Times (Boston, 1978), offer the

most spirited defense of the [Kennedy](#) policies. John Mecklin, *Mission in Torment: An Intimate Account of the U.S. Role in Vietnam* (Garden City, N.Y., 1965), vividly portrays the turmoil and confusion in the U.S. Embassy in [Saigon](#) during this period, while [David Halberstam](#), *The Making of a Quagmire* (New York, 1964), reveals the anger and disillusionment of the dissident journalists. Richard Tregaskis, *Vietnam Diary* (New York, 1963), is a little-known account by a veteran war correspondent which reveals much about the attitudes of the early U.S. advisers in Vietnam. Stephen Pelz, "John F. Kennedy's 1961 Vietnam War Decisions," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 4 (December 1981), 356-385, is a valuable scholarly article. Geoffrey Warner's articles, "The United States and the Fall of Diem," Part I: "The Coup That Never Was," [Australian Outlook](#), 28 (December 1974), 245-258, and Part II: "The Death of [Diem](#)," *Australian Outlook*, 29 (March 1975), 3-17, although based primarily on the [Pentagon Papers](#), still provide the best study of that subject.

## THE SECOND [INDOCHINA](#) WAR, 1964-1968

An introduction to the literature of the Johnson era is George C. Herring, "The War in Vietnam," in Robert A. Divine, ed., *Exploring the Johnson Years* (Austin, Tex., 1981), pp. 27-62. Gelb and Betts, *Irony of Vietnam*, is the best analysis of the mindset of the policymakers, although it overstates Johnson's willingness to accept a stalemate. [Halberstam](#), *Best and the Brightest*, is also useful. Johnson's memoirs, *The Vantage Point* (New York, 1971), are dull and defensive, but they do contain material from some of the President's personal files not yet available to scholars. Vaughan Bornet, *The Presidency of [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)* (Lawrence, Kans., 1983), the most up-to-date evaluation of the administration, contains several chapters on Vietnam. There is no scholarly biography of Johnson. Doris Kearns, *[Lyndon Johnson](#) and the American Dream* (New York, 1976), is less than successful as psychobiography, but it contains valuable insights into Johnson's personality, leadership style, and Vietnam policies. Henry Graft, *The Tuesday Cabinet* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), a collection of interviews with Johnson and his top advisers spanning the period from 1965 to 1968, graphically reveals the shift from cautious optimism to great frustration. Warren

Cohen, [Dean Rusk](#) (Totawa, N.J., 1980) is an excellent study of [LBJ's Secretary of State](#). There is no comparable volume on [Robert S. McNamara](#), but [Alain C. Enthoven](#) and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough?* (New York, 1971), Henry Trehitt, *McNamara* (New York, 1971), Lawrence Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Bloomington, Ind., 1976), and the highly critical Gregory Palmer, *The McNamara Strategy and the Vietnam War* (Westport, Conn., 1978), help explain the Pentagon's response to Vietnam. Larry Berman, *Planning a Tragedy* (New York, 1982), covers in depth the crucial decisions of July 1965.

The [Gulf of Tonkin incident](#) produced a spate of books. All were of the expose variety and were based on the Congressional hearings of 1968, but their principal findings have held up very well. These include Anthony Austin, *The President's War* (Philadelphia, 1971), John Galloway, *The [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#)* (Rutherford, N.J., 1970), Joseph C. Goulden, *Truth Is the First [Casualty](#): The Gulf of Tonkin Affair Illusion and Reality* (New York, 1969), and Eugene C. Windchy, *Tonkin Gulf* (Garden City, N.Y., 1971).

The literature on American military operations has mushroomed in recent years, and the subject has remained highly controversial. For an introduction to the controversy, see George C. Herring, "American Strategy in Vietnam: The Postwar Debate," *Military Affairs*, 46 (April 1982), 57-63. Dave Richard Palmer, *Summons of the Trumpet* (San Rafael, Calif., 1978), a readable survey by a senior Army officer, criticizes the [attrition](#) strategy as no strategy at all but accepts [Westmoreland's](#) argument that the conditions he faced left him no choice. Westmoreland also blames the civilians for losing a war that could have been won in his bland and defensive memoirs, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, N.Y., 1976), a view advanced more emotionally in U.S. Grant Sharp, *Strategy for Defeat* (San Rafael, Calif., 1978). Robert L. Gallucci, *Neither Peace Nor Honor: The Politics of American Military Policy in Vietnam* (Baltimore, Md. 1975), analyzes the decision-making process and finds military professionalism and a closed bureaucratic system primarily responsible for a strategy flawed in its premises and methods. Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, is also highly critical of the military for its strategic failure and suggests that a strategy based on [counterinsurgency](#) doctrine might have worked. Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa., 1981), and Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-Year War*:

America's Military Role in Vietnam (Lexington, KY., 1984), criticize civilian and military leaders for failing to think strategically and argue that a conventional-war strategy isolating [North](#) from [South Vietnam](#) might have succeeded. Douglas Kinnard, *The War Managers* (Hanover, N.H., 1977), surveys the postwar opinions of senior U.S. Army officers as to what went wrong and finds remarkable diversity. Wallace J. Thies, *When Governments Collide: Coercion and Diplomacy in the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1968* (Berkeley, Calif., 1980), analyzes the Johnson administration's strategy and diplomacy in terms of coercion theory and offers some persuasive explanations for its failure. Richard A. Hunt and Richard H. Shultz, Jr., *Lessons from an Unconventional War* (Elmsford, N.Y., 1981), contains a series of scholarly essays dealing with numerous topics related to strategy.

Various specific aspects of the war have received extensive treatment. Raphael Littauer and Normal Uphoff, eds., *The Air War in [Indochina](#)* (Boston, 1972), remains the best study of that subject, although the more recent Drew Middleton, *Air War - Vietnam* (New York, 1978), and James Clay Thompson, *Rolling Thunder: Understanding Policy and Program Failure* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1980), are also useful. [Marine Corps](#) operations are well covered in Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York, 1980), and in the official histories. The Army's official histories dealing with combat operations are yet to be published. In the meantime, its monograph series is useful. Of these volumes, Bernard W. Rogers, *Cedar Falls-Junction City: A Turning Point* (Washington, D.C., 1974), and Joseph A. McChristian, *The Role of Military Intelligence, 1965-1967* (Washington, D.C., 1974) are worthwhile. The important battle of the Ia Drang is analyzed in Harry G. Summers, Jr., "The Bitter Triumph of Ia Drang," *American Heritage*, 35 (February-March 1984), 50-58.

The war produced a huge volume of personal accounts of combat by GIs and a distinguished fiction literature. Among the best are Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War* (New York, 1977), Robert Mason, *Chickenhawk* (New York, 1983), Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York, 1977), James Webb, *Fields of Fire* (New York, 1978), Tim O'Brien, *Going After Cacciato* (New York, 1978), and John DeVecchio, *The Thirteenth Valley* (New York, 1982). A1 Santoli, *Everything We Had* (New York, 1981), Mark Baker, *Nam* (New York, 1982), and Wallace Terry, *Bloods: An Oral History of the*

War by Black Veterans (New York, 1984), are valuable collections of oral histories. Dale Reich, "One Year in Vietnam: A Young Soldier Remembers," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 64 (Spring 1981), 163-180, is excellent. The legal, moral, and ethical issues raised by combat in Vietnam are explored in Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, and in Richard A. Falk, ed., *The Vietnam War and International Law* (4 vols.; Princeton, N.J., 1967-1976).

The best study of the various pacification programs is Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrines and Performance* (New York, 1977), a broad evaluation of the American experience with counterinsurgency after World War II. Lawrence E. Grinter, "[South Vietnam](#): Pacification Denied," *Southeast Asia Spectrum*, 3 (July 1975), 49-78, is well researched and balanced in its appraisal. J. K. McCallum, "[CORDS](#) Pacification Organization in Vietnam: A Civilian-Military Effort," *Armed Forces and Society*, 10 (Fall 1983), 105-122, studies the organizational aspect of the pacification program. Important studies of specific pacification programs include William D. Parker, U.S. [Marine Corps](#) Civil Affairs in [I Corps](#), Republic of South Vietnam (Washington, D.C., 1970), an official history, and Francis J. West, *The Village* (New York, 1972), a firsthand account of pacification in the village of Binh Nghia.

For politics in South Vietnam, the most valuable studies remain the older works by Kahin and Lewis and FitzGerald cited above. Also useful is Robert Shaplen, *The Road from War: Vietnam, 1965-1970* (New York, 1970), a collection of perceptive reports by one of America's most knowledgeable journalists. [Nguyen Cao Ky](#), *Twenty Years and Twenty Days* (New York, 1976), and [Tran Van Don](#), *Our Endless War: Inside South Vietnam* (San Rafael, Calif., 1978), two memoirs by top South Vietnamese officials, offer insights into the problems that vexed the [Saigon](#) government throughout the war. Allan E. Goodman, *Politics in War: The Bases of Political Community in South Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), is a scholarly analysis of the political structure of South Vietnam after the 1967 elections. Samuel L. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant* (Berkeley, Calif. 1979), studies the political economy of rural Vietnam and reaches some surprising conclusions. Lawrence E. Grinter, "Bargaining Between Saigon and Washington: Dilemmas of Linkage Politics During War," *Orbis*, 18 (Fall 1974), 837-867, argues persuasively that the United States had little leverage over the Saigon

government once it made a substantial commitment to South Vietnam.

The best analysis of [North Vietnam](#)'s response to war remains Jon M. Van Dyke, *North Vietnam's Strategy for Survival* (Palo Alto, Calif., 1972), a sympathetic but scholarly account based primarily on published North Vietnamese sources. Also useful is Patrick J. McGarvey, ed., *Visions of Victory: Selected Vietnamese Communist Military Writings, 1964-1968* (Stanford, Calif., 1969). General [Tran Van Tra](#), *Ending the Thirty Years' War (Ho Chi Minh City, 1982)*, focuses primarily on the final campaign of 1975 but also offers important insights into North Vietnamese strategy and tactics in the earlier stages of the war. Vietnam: The Anti-U.S. Resistance for National Salvation 1954-1975: Military Events ([Hanoi](#), 1980), is a useful official history. John Mueller, "The Search for the Breaking Point in Vietnam," *Strategic Studies*, 24 (December 1980), 497-519, analyzes on a comparative basis North Vietnam's willingness to absorb enormous losses.

For North Vietnam's relations with its allies, the older study by Donald Zagoria, *Vietnam Triangle: Moscow, Peking, Hanoi* (Indianapolis, 1967), is still useful. W. R. Smyser, *The Independent Vietnamese: Vietnamese Communism Between Russia and [China](#), 1956-1969* (Athens, Ohio, 1980), is more up to date, as is Daniel S. Papp, *Vietnam: The View from Moscow, Peking, Washington* (Salisbury, N.C., 1981). V. C. Funnell, "Vietnam and the Sino-Soviet Conflict," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 11 (Spring-Summer 1978), 142-199, and J. W. Garver, "Sino-Vietnamese Conflict and Sino-American Rapprochement," *Political Science Quarterly*, 96 (Fall 1981), 445-461, are two excellent articles.

The international aspects of the war have not received the treatment they deserve. On peace negotiations, the older account by David Kraslow and Stuart Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam* (New York, 1968), although remarkably accurate on many points, should be supplemented by the more recent and scholarly Allan E. Goodman, *The Lost Peace: America's Search for a Negotiated Settlement of the Vietnam War* (Stanford, Calif., 1978), a balanced appraisal that makes good use of interviews with U.S. diplomats. Gareth Porter, *A Peace Denied: The United States, Vietnam, and the Paris Agreements* (Bloomington, Ind., 1975), focuses on the 1973 negotiations, but contains several valuable background chapters. Porter is especially good on North Vietnamese motives



and strategies, although he is uncritical of [Hanoi](#). Janos Radvanyi, *Delusion and Reality: Gambits, Hoaxes, and Diplomatic One-Upmanship in Vietnam* (South Bend, Ind., 1978), raises serious questions about the sincerity of various East European peace initiatives. Ramesh Thakur, *Peacekeeping in Vietnam: [Canada](#), India, Poland, and the International Commission* (Edmonton, Alberta, 1984), discusses the generally ineffectual role of the peacekeeping commission created at Geneva in 1954.

The best introduction to American public opinion and the war can be found in several general studies of public attitudes by leading analysts: Louis Harris, *The Anguish of Change* (New York, 1973), and Samuel Lubell, *The Hidden Crisis in American Politics* (New York, 1971). Important studies dealing specifically with Vietnam are Sidney Verba et al., "Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam," *American Political Science Review*, 61 (June 1967), 317-333, and Peter W. Sperlich and William L. Lurch, "American Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam," *Western Political Quarterly*, 32 (March 1979), 21-44. John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion* (New York, 1973), is a valuable, scholarly analysis focusing on [Korea](#) and Vietnam.

The [antiwar movement](#) has been the subject of extensive analysis. Fred Halstead, *Out Now* (New York, 1978), is an insightful account written by a participant, particularly good on the internal politics of the movement. Thomas Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home* (New York, 1973), is still good for the period up to 1968. Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975* (New York, 1984), covers the entire war and contains a wealth of detail but is encyclopedic rather than analytical. The relevant chapters in Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington, Ind., 1980), comprise the best introduction to the role and impact of antiwar protest. DeBenedetti, "On the Significance of Citizen Peace Activism: America, 1961-1975," *Peace and Change*, IX (Summer 1983), 6-20, Paul Burstein and William Fredenberg, "Changing Public Policy: The Impact of Public Opinion, Anti-War Demonstrations, and War Costs on Senate Voting on Vietnam War Motions," *American Journal of Sociology*, 84 (1978), 99-122, and Melvin Small, "The Impact of the Antiwar Movement on [Lyndon Johnson](#), 1965-1968," *Peace and Change*, X (Spring 1984), 1-22, attempt to weigh the impact of antiwar protest on policy. Todd Gitlin,

The Whole World Is Watching (Berkeley, Calif., 1980), explores the influence of the media in the rise and fall of the New Left. Little has been done to date on the erosion of Congressional support for the war. Mark A. Stoler, "What Did He Really Say? The 'Aiken Formula' for Vietnam Revisited," Vermont History, 46 (Spring 1978), 100-108, and David Turner, "[Mike Mansfield](#) and the Vietnam War" (doctoral dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1984), make clear the limitations of the critique of the war by Senate doves. Congressional Research Service, The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part I (Washington, 1984), and Part II (Washington, 1984), is a superbly researched project that now carries the story to 1964 and will eventually fill a major void in the literature.

The domestic impact of Vietnam can best be studied in Lawrence A. Baskir and William A. Strauss, Chance and Circumstance (New York, 1978), a detailed analysis of the effects of the [draft](#) on the lives of the "Vietnam generation," and in Gloria Emerson, Winners and Losers: Battles, Retreats, Gains, Losses and Ruins from a Long War (New York, 1976), and Myra McPherson, Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation (New York, 1984). Robert M. Stevens, Vain Hopes, Grim Realities: The Economic Consequences of the Vietnam War (New York, 1976), and J. F. Walter and H. G. Valter, Jr., "Princess and the Pea; or the Alleged Vietnam War Origins of the Current Inflation," Journal of Economic Issues, 16 (June 1982), 597-608, analyze the economic impact of the war.

Not surprisingly, the [Tet Offensive](#) of 1968 and the policy debate that followed have attracted a great deal of attention. The best brief appraisal is Bernard Brodie, "The Tet Offensive," in Noble Frankland and Christopher Dowling, eds., Decisive Battles of the Twentieth Century (London, 1976), pp. 321-334, an incisive account by a noted student of strategy. Don Oberdorfer, Tet! (Garden City, N.Y., 1971), is a highly readable narrative by a distinguished journalist. [Clark M. Clifford](#), "A Viet Nam Reappraisal," Foreign Affairs, 47 (July 1969), 601-622, and [Townsend Hoopes](#), The Limits of Intervention (New York, 1970), recount the efforts of two top Defense Department officials to turn the war around, although they probably exaggerate the extent to which they actually succeeded. Herbert Y. Schandler, The Unmaking of a President: [Lyndon Johnson](#) and Vietnam (Princeton, N.J., 1977), a meticulously detailed scholarly study based on extensive interviews with

top administration officials, supersedes all previous work on the policy debates after [Tet](#). Robert Pisor, *The End of the Line: The Siege of [Khe Sanh](#)* (New York, 1982), is a highly readable account of that famous battle.

The role of media coverage of the war, particularly at Tet, has been one of the most controversial issues to emerge from a war filled with controversy. The charge that the media and especially [television](#) lost the war is issued in Robert Elegant, "How to Lose a War," *Encounter*, LVII (August 1981), 73-90. A more persuasive critique of journalists' performance at Tet is the massively detailed study by Peter Braestrup, *Big Story!* (2 vols.; Boulder, Colo., 1977), which argues that the reporting, especially in the early stages, was impressionistic and misleading. Major scholarly analyses of the role of the media include Lawrence W. Lichty, "The War We Watched on Television," *American Film Institute Report*, 4 (Winter 1973), 30-37, George Bailey, "Television War: Trends in Network Coverage of Vietnam 1965-1970," *Journal of Broadcasting*, 20 (Spring 1976), 147-158, Michael Mandelbaum, "Vietnam: The Television War," *Daedalus*, 111 (Fall 1982), 157-168, and Daniel C. Hallin, "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media," *Journal of Politics*, 46 (1984), 2-24. Michael Arlen, *The Living Room War* (New York, 1969), persuasively challenges the widely accepted notion that nightly exposure to violence soured Americans on Vietnam. Clarence R. Wyatt, "'Truth from the Snares of Crisis': The American Press in Vietnam" (M.A. thesis, University of Kentucky, 1984), assesses the performance of the press in covering three major battles.

Seymour Hersh, [My Lai](#) 4 (New York, 1970), is the standard journalistic account of that infamous incident. The best introduction to the My Lai controversy is Joseph Goldstein, Burke Marshall, and Jack Schwartz, *The My Lai Massacre and Its Cover-Up: Beyond the Reach of Law?* (New York, 1976), which includes the Army's investigation of the incident as well as commentary by several noted lawyers.

## THE END OF THE WAR AND THE AFTERMATH

[Nixon](#) and [Kissinger](#)'s views of the crisis they inherited can be found in Richard M. Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs*, 46 (October 1967), 111-125, and Henry A. Kissinger, "The Vietnam

Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs*, 47 (January 1969), 211-234. Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York, 1978), is defensive and apologetic but quite valuable for the excerpts from the author's diaries and private papers. [Henry Kissinger](#), *White House Years* (Boston, 1979), and *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, 1983), despite the sometimes querulous tone, will probably stand as one of America's classic political memoirs and are especially full on Vietnam-related issues. Among the numerous other memoirs by Nixon aides, the most useful are William Satire, *Before the Fall* (New York, 1975), and U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1984).

Kissingerology became a veritable rage in the mid-1970s, re-suited in a number of useful studies. Marvin and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston, 1974), is a sympathetic and semi-authorized account by two journalists. John Stoessinger, *Kissinger: The Anguish of Power* (New York, 1976), and Roger Morris, *An Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1977), are early critical appraisals. Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York, 1983), is an often vicious indictment of the man and his policies based on extensive interviews.

Among the handful of specialized studies, a few stand out. William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York, 1979), as the title implies, accuses the administration of destroying a nation for reasons peripheral to Cambodia itself. Martin F. Herz, *The Prestige Press and the Christmas Bombing* (Washington, D.C., 1980) is highly critical of the major newspapers' response to Nixon's policies. C. Stuart Callison, *The Land-to-the-Tiller Program and Rural Resource Mobilization in the Mekong Delta of South Vietnam* (Athens, Ohio, 1974), is a good brief analysis of [land reform](#) in the last stages of direct U.S. involvement.

The Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy produced a number of valuable contemporary studies. Among the best are Henry Brandon, *The Retreat of American Power* (New York, 1974), and Robert E. Osgood, *Retreat from Empire? The First Nixon Administration* (Baltimore, 1973). Jonathan Schell, *The Time of Illusion* (New York, 1975), is a frequently brilliant critique of Nixon's image-making in domestic and foreign policy, and Tad Szulc, *The Illusion of Peace: Foreign Policy in the Nixon Kissinger Years* (New York, 1978), is also highly critical.

The best analysis of the postwar war is Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia* (Baltimore, 1983), a thoroughly researched and highly critical study by a journalist who was in [Indochina](#) at the time. William E. LeGro, *Vietnam from Cease-Fire to Capitulation* (Washington, D.C., 1981), a volume in the Center of Military History's monograph series, is also useful. Tra, *Ending the Thirty Years' War*, provides insights into North Vietnamese planning, as does [Van Tien Dung](#), *Our Great Spring Victory* (New York, 1977), a frankly exuberant memoir by the architect of the North Vietnamese triumph. Stuart A. Herrington, *Peace with Honor? An American Reports on Vietnam* (San Rafael, Calif, 1983), is a valuable analysis that is part memoir, part history. P. Edward Haley, *Congress and the Fall of [South Vietnam](#) and Cambodia* (Rutherford, N.J., 1982), is highly critical of the Congressional role. Stephen T. Hosmer et al., *The Fall of South Vietnam* (New York, 1980), is based on interviews with South Vietnamese leaders and provides valuable insights into South Vietnamese thinking and policies.

The fall of South Vietnam is treated with great drama in a number of accounts by journalists: John Pilzer, *The Last Day* (New York, 1976), Alan Dawson, *55 Days: The Fall of South Vietnam* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1977), Tiziano Terzani, *Giai Phong! The Fall and Liberation of South Vietnam* (New York, 1976), and David Butler, *The Fall of [Saigon](#)* (New York, 1985). Frank Snepp, *Decent Interval: An Insider's Account of Saigon's Indecent End* (New York, 1977), a memoir by an official who served in the U.S. Embassy, indicts Ambassador Martin and the Washington policymakers for failure to anticipate and prepare for the fall of Saigon.

The legacy of the war must be studied from the perspective of individual topics. There is no comprehensive analysis of postwar Vietnam, but yearly developments can be followed in the issues of *Asian Survey*. William Shawcross, *The Quality of Mercy: Cambodia, Holocaust, and Modern Conscience* (New York, 1984), indicts, among others, the various charitable agencies for Cambodia's plight. For the problems of American veterans, Robert J. Lifton, *Home from the War* (New York, 1973), is still valuable, and Peter Goldman, *Charlie Company: What Vietnam Did to Us* (New York, 1983), and John Wheeler, *Touched with Fire: The Future of the Vietnam Generation* (New York, 1984), are good.

The debate on lessons of Vietnam began before the war ended and continues unabated. For an introduction to the topic, see the

Herring article in *Military Affairs* cited above. Earl C. Ravenal, *Never Again: Learning from America's Foreign Policy Failures* (Philadelphia, 1978), is an early and perceptive critique of the lessons and the lesson-makers. Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, *American Leadership in World Affairs: Vietnam and the Breakdown of Consensus* (Winchester, Mass., 1984), is a searching analysis of elite views toward Vietnam and general foreign policy issues based on extensive polling data. Walter H. Capps, *The Unfinished War: Vietnam and the American Conscience* (New York, 1982), is a less-than-successful effort to combat Vietnam "revisionism."





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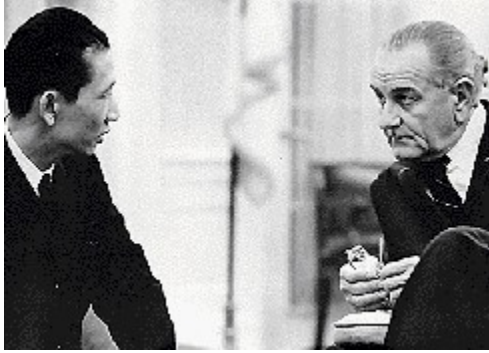
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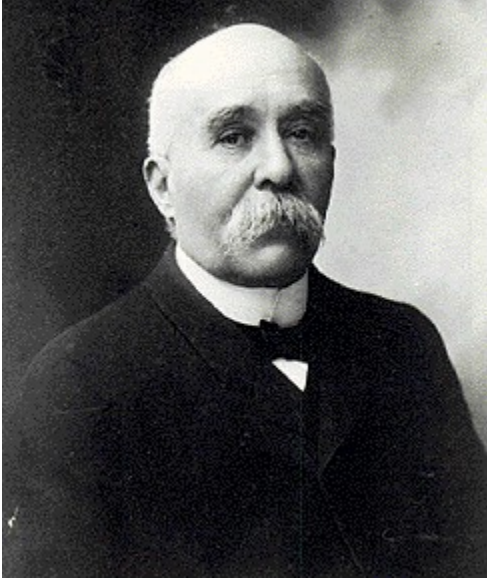


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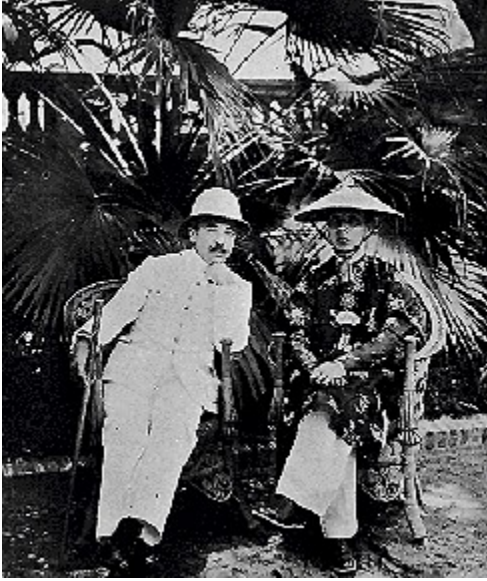
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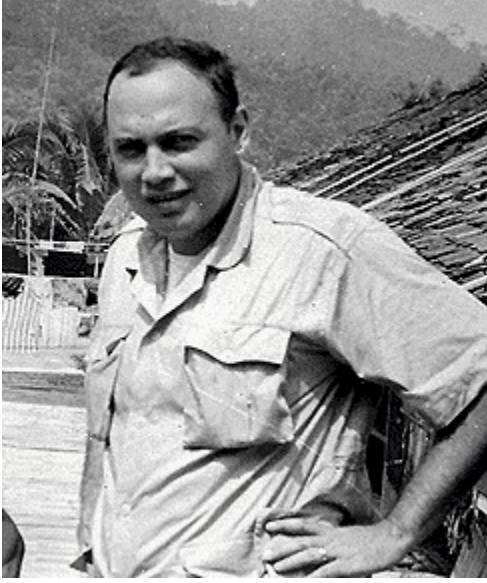


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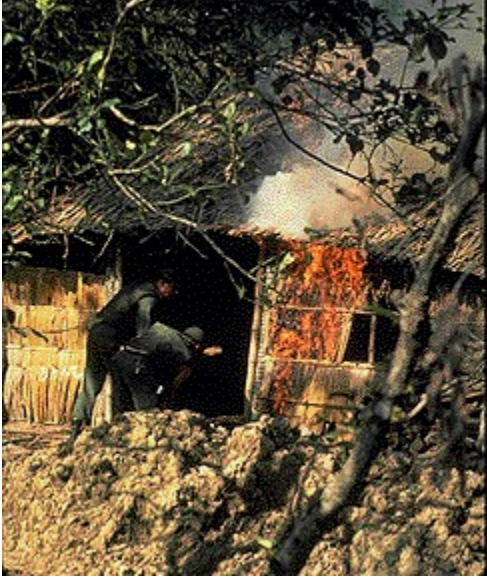
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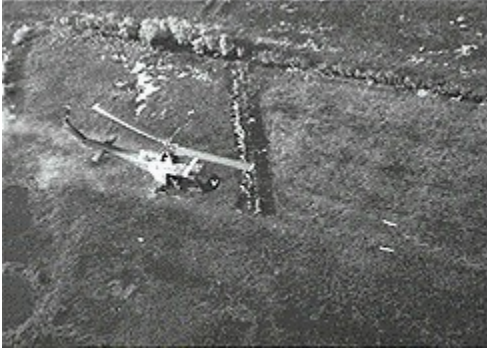
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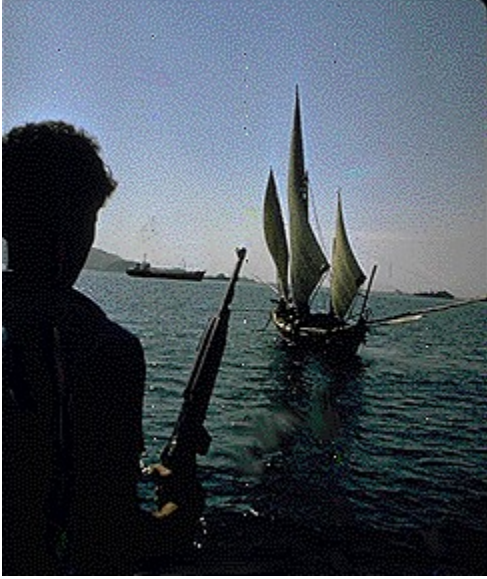




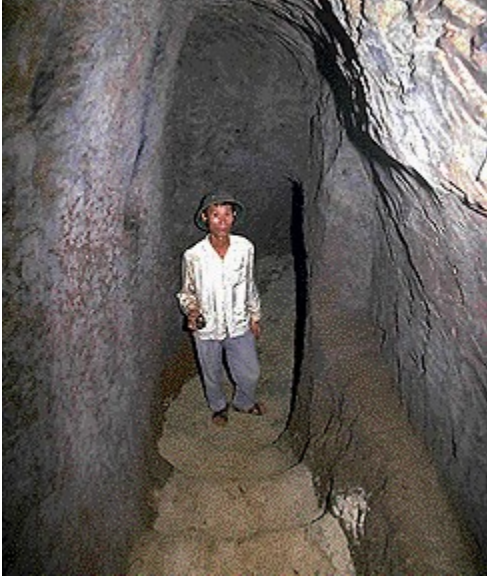
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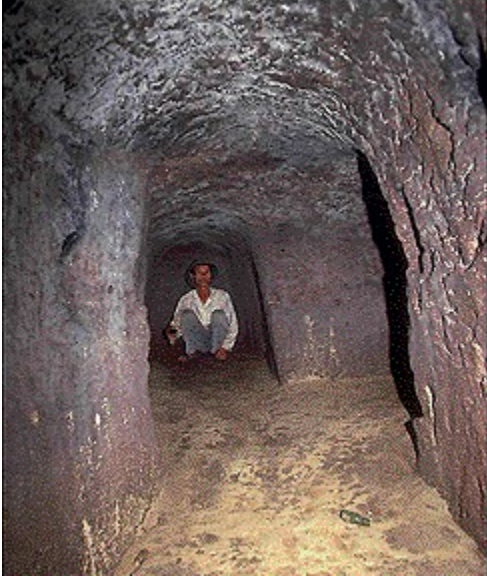
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[Ho Chi Minh inspects an anti-aircraft gun.](#)  
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President Richard Nixon with Lt. Gary Tucker after awarding him the Distinguished Service Cross. July, 1969.

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[Vietnam Servicemen's Memorial, Washington, D.C.](#)  
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Vietnam Women's Memorial, Washington, D.C.  
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A doctor treats a VC prisoner wounded in a fire fight near Bon Son, 1967.  
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Captain Gillespie's First Air Cavalry artillery unit.  
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Captain Gillespie receiving the Bronze Star  
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Combat in the village areas often traps civilians in the crossfire.  
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North Vietnamese fill in craters left by American bombs.  
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A Buddhist Temple in Free-Fire Zone.  
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A South Vietnamese air assault operation.  
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Operation Quiet Thang, Hoc Mon, Sp4 Glen Shue, Co."A", 2nd Batallion, 27th Infantry, 25th Inf. Division, gives gum to Vietnamese children. March, 1968.

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The U.S. Med Cap team treated 624 villagers from Thai Hung. Sgt. Dale Winnie tries to diagnose an ailment. 1966.

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Ron Serrizzi next to his reconnaissance chopper.  
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Operation Cedar Falls. Company "B", 2nd Bn., 28th Inf., 1st Inf. Div. uncovered a cache of rifles, machine guns and grenade launchers from the U.S., U.S.S.R., and China. June, 1967.

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Operation Oregon. An infantryman is lowered into a tunnel by a reconnaissance patrol. April, 1967.

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Sp4 Manuel Martinez gives a penicillin shot to a farmer during Operation Oregon. May, 1967.

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Operation Crazy Horse. Evacuation of dead and wounded under heavy fire. May, 1966.

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The woman was a VC prisoner for 12 months. She was freed with others by elements of the 1st Bn., 327th Inf. of the 101st Air Div. 1966.

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Carl Baden, Arcadio Carrion lie in the mud waiting for artillery to knock out the 50mm machine gun that has them pinned down.  
1968.

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Vietnamese schoolgirls in front of a "Long live U.S.-V.N. friendship" banner before the dedication of a deepwater pier complex for Naval support activity in Danang, October, 1966.

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Members of the 4th Psyop group pack leaflets into a leaflet bomb. 1968.  
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Playing records at field headquarters.  
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A group of VC prisoners sit blindfolded under the watch of their South Vietnamese captors. 1965.

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An American official punching Vietnamese trying to get on an overcrowded evacuation plane as North Vietnam takes over the South.

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A Viet Minh soldier and sentry died in an attack outpost. North Vietnam, 1950.  
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Interrogating a villager for information about the Viet Cong. Central Coast, 1966.

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U.S. Marines were among the first ground troops to arrive in South Vietnam. They are welcomed at Da Nang, 1965.

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Medics helped villagers in government controlled areas.  
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A rifleman during combat with North Vietnamese troops.  
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Handing out candy.  
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Villagers are often in the midst of military operations.

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A religious service in the field.  
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Buddhists protest the Saigon government.  
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American military advisors review cadets at South Vietnamese Military Academy.  
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Viet Cong guerillas captured by South Vietnamese troops.  
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A tank on perimeter guard.  
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A wounded child being treated at an American field hospital.  
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Lynda Van Devanter at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.  
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Volunteers train for duty in Vietnam's amphibious forces.  
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Orphans in Saigon.

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Official in the Royal Court at Hue.  
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Pfc Jerry Keeney, 458th Trans. Co. questions a fisherman about his wife's ID, which is burned to obscure the name. They are in the inner harbor of Qui Nhon. 1970.

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French forces under attack at Dien Bien Phu.  
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A French veteran of the war against the Viet Minh.  
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French pilots before bombing mission against the Viet Minh.  
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French forces against the Viet Minh.  
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A soldier of Laotian Light Infantry and a French civilian stand guard after Thakkek, Laos was re-taken from Viet Minh rebels.

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Ambassador Bui Diem with President Lyndon Johnson.  
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A politician who opposed colonialism in Asia.  
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Stanley Karnow with North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap after the war.  
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Emperor Khai-Dinh.

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Albert Sarraut, Governor General of Indo-China.  
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A Vietnamese woman and baby.  
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Governor Albert Sarraut and Emperor Khai-Dinh.  
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A local market in Savannakhet, Laos. Most of the food at the market is shipped across the Mekong River from neighboring Thailand.

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Sandy, a student in Paris, with his wife Gladys and friends.  
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New roads.

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The Perfume River at Hue.  
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Two French Legionnaires shown leaving a trench in the Dien Bien Phu defense perimeter. February, 1954.

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Platoon Sgt. Herman L. Thompson Co. "B", 1st Plt. brings a VC sniper from the bush where he'd been hiding. 1966.

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Motorized junks leave Saigon on a shake-down cruise. 1962.

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Dummies of General Charles de Gaul and Ho Chi Minh hang in effigy on National Shame Day during a demonstration in Saigon.  
The day marks the July 20, 1954 Geneva agreement which divided the nation, as well as the war dead. 1964.

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Captain Donald T. Elledge, U.S. advisor with Vietnamese Regional forces, on a sweep operation in Long An province, talks with a village child. 1965.

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A VC prisoner is held by "A" Co., 1st Bn., 8th Cav., 1st Bde. until transport can be provided to rear for interrogation. 1966.

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Marine rifleman Bill Ehrhart, cooling off with a cold beer.  
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Civic Action in Operation Birmingham. 1st Inf. Div. at Ap Ninh Hung. Sp5 George Gentry shows his camera to a child. May, 1966.

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A North Vietnamese soldier in the Viet Minh, captured by the French at the battle of Dien Bien Phu. 1954.

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Vietnam Rangers train at Duc My Ranger training center. 1st Sgt. Victor G. Cote, Administrative Advisor, RTC, and Lt. Ho Dzon, chief of survival area, with a boa constrictor. September, 1965.

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A North Vietnamese soldier hands in his "Open Arms" pass in surrender to U.S. Marines at a Marine Camp just south of the DMZ, 1968.

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Soldiers' frustrations with the guerilla-style village war in which it was impossible to tell who was "the enemy" led them to feel that all Vietnamese were dangerous to their survival. As infantrymen sometimes put it, "If they're dead, they're the enemy."

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Vietnamese women fill sand bags to protect the base camp of 25th Inf. Div. at Cu Chi. 1966. (By Virgilio Rodriguez.)

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Operation Moseby II. Captain William E. Taylor questions a village chief about punji stakes found in a hut. 1966.

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Stanley Karnow in Southeast Asia during the early 1960s.

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Many women served in combat for the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong).  
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Lynda Van Devanter.

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Sanford Gottlieb (second from right), at 1965 peace march in Washington, D.C.  
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A class at the Agricultural College in Saigon.  
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Don Luce teaching agriculture in Saigon.  
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Marines at base camp near Da Nang, 1965.  
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A trainee in the Civil Defense Group training camp in Thua Thien Province is assisted with his camouflage by one of the Vietnamese Cadre, prior to a mock ambush. 1963.

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Bill Ehrhart, posing with a captured Viet Cong weapon.  
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Ngo Dinh Diem.

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Ho Chi Minh became the undisputed leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party in its fight against French colonialism and later, the American attempt to establish a non-Communist South Vietnam.

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Henry Cabot Lodge with President John F. Kennedy  
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President John F. Kennedy with his Cabinet at the White House. 1961.  
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John Beitzel with a friend, the South China Sea in the background.  
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Ho Chi Minh plants trees.  
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Base Camp Operations, Phu Bai, 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Div. Sp4 Charles Rein, MOPIC cameraman, DASPO, films women filling sandbags, 1968.

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Nguyen Cao Ky

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Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara talks with South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem at Gia Long Palace. September, 1963.

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Nguyen Cao Ky

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Bill Colby touring areas under government control.  
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Bob Hope brings his stars to entertain the troops.  
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Vice President Hubert Humphrey, General Creighton W. Adams, President Johnson and General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, March, 1968

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Army rifleman John Beitzel, Americal Division.  
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Army rifleman John Beitzel, Americal Division, with friends at firebase.  
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Soldiers distribute leaflets while another broadcasts over loudspeaker to villagers.

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General William Westmoreland, U.S. Commander in Vietnam, talks with a soldier wounded in a VC rocket attack on Tan Son Nhut Airbase, 1966.

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A Vietnamese man.

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Vietnam War Memorial, Washington, D.C.  
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Vietnam War Memorial, Washington, D.C.  
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Vietnam War Memorial, Washington, D.C.  
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Richard Nixon.

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Vietnam's Servicemen's Memorial, Washington, D.C.  
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Republic of South Vietnam's Ambassador to Washington, Bui Diem, with General Westmoreland.  
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A Vietnamese woman and child.  
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A Vietnamese woman.  
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After generations of war, Vietnamese everywhere look forward to putting their lives and country back together.

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Vietnamese children.  
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A Vietnamese woman.  
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A Vietnamese woman.  
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Ho Chi Minh became the undisputed leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party in its fight against French colonialism and later, the American attempt to establish a non-Communist South Vietnam.

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Vietnam War Memorial, Washington, D.C.  
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A 60-year-old Vietnamese man is brought by helicopter aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli for medical treatment. 1967.

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A boy in Saigon shines an American soldier's combat boot.  
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A village in the area where Bill Ehrhart served.  
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An American captured in North Vietnam.  
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Sp4 Mack Hassler pours water on Pfc Lee Bilbrey in his first bath in 10 days during Operation Masher.

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Operation Kanuala by the 2nd Bn., 14th Inf., 25th Inf. Div., netted 400 tons of rice captured or destroyed in Boi Loi woods. A VC family gets into a helicopter. September, 1966.

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Operaton Meridian by 2nd Bn., 503rd ABNINF, 173rd ABNBDE. Member of the "B" Company, 3rd Plt., walks through a stream in search of VC. November, 1966.

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Ho Chi Minh.

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A member of Co. "C", 75th Ranger BN walks point during an operation in Tuyen Duc Province IICTZ, near Duc Lat. It was often impossible to see ahead in areas that were mined and booby trapped. 1970.

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Orphans in Saigon.

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USN river patrolboat crewmen burn a VC hut during Operation Plaques Mine. 1967.  
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A U.S. river patrol boat crewman near a burning VC hut. 1967.  
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Operation Pershing. Soldiers search fishing baskets.  
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Captain Donald Ostroot helps bathe children during the Medical Operation aspect of the Vietnamese Pacification Program in Phuoc Hiap.

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Operation Pershing. Pfc Sevaro Rievera eats a coconut on a break.  
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Operation Pershing. A grenadier checks the ID card of a biker.  
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Soldiers distribute leaflets while one broadcasts over the PA during Psy Ops in the village of Phuoc Vinh.  
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Attack--making a low fast pass, an armed Iroquois helicopter fires two rockets at a VC sampan. 1966.

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A wounded marine is carried in a poncho through a rice paddy for Medevac helicopter evacuation.  
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Casualty who triggered a booby trap rests on buddies back while waiting for a Sampan to ferry them across a canal. 1968.

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USN Lt. Eugene McFadden examines a cave in the jungle. The VC used such caves as hiding places for food and supplies, and to launch ambushes. 1964.

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Bob Hope brings his stars to entertain the troops.  
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Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara testifying.  
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Emporer Bao Dai returns to Indochina and is seen here speaking with General Navarre. November, 1953.

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President John F. Kennedy meets with defense chiefs. Vice President Lyndon Johnson on his right.  
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The South China Sea. A Vietnamese fisherman on a sampan offers ID papers to crewman on a USN fast coastal patrol boat. 1968.

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An American pilot back home.  
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Bombs from an A-4C Skyhawk fall towards oil storage tankers at Vinh in North Vietnam. 1966.

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Veterans for Peace demonstrate.Washington, D.C., 1971.  
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The South China Sea. A Vietnamese junk is inspected by a search party from the USS Forster. 1966.

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A Navy rifleman eyes a junk from a 45-foot picket boat.

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Part of the underground tunnel system near Saigon built by the Viet Cong for protection from military operations and for equipment storage.

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Giving candy to children on the Central Coast. 1965.

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U.S. Marines after a military operation with civilians suspected of being Viet Cong. Da Nang area, 1966.

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An anti-war demonstrator at the University of Wisconsin. 1967.  
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Part of the underground tunnel system near Saigon built by the Viet Cong for protection from military operations and for equipment storage.

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Anti-war demonstrators. Boston. 1970.  
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A Viet Cong soldier along the Coastal Plain after capture by First Air Cavalry Division soldiers. 1966.

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A wounded marine is led to a helicopter by Ervin Bostic, navy corpsman assigned to 3rd Bat., 9th Reg. of the Marines. 1966.

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## "Peace in Vietnam and Southeast Asia" Address to the Nation March 31, 1968

President [Lyndon Baines Johnson](#)

Source: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 1968-1969* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), pp. 468-76.

Good evening, my fellow Americans:

Tonight I want to speak to you of peace in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

No other question so preoccupies our people. No other dream so absorbs the 250 million human beings who live in that part of the world. No other goal motivates American policy in Southeast Asia.

For years, representatives of our Government and others have traveled the world--seeking to find a basis for peace talks.

Since last September, they have carried the offer that I made public at San Antonio.

The offer was:

That the United States would stop its bombardment of [North Vietnam](#) when that would lead promptly to productive discussions -- and that we would assume that North Vietnam would not take military advantage of our restraint.

Hanoi denounced this offer, both privately and publicly. Even while the search for peace was going on, North Vietnam rushed their preparations for a savage assault on the people, the government, and the allies of [South Vietnam](#).

Their attack--during the [Tet](#) holidays--failed to achieve its principal objectives.

It did not collapse the elected government of South Vietnam or shatter its army--as the Communists had hoped.

It did not produce a "general uprising" among the people of the cities as they had predicted.

The Communists were unable to maintain control of any of the more than 30 cities that they attacked. And they took very heavy [casualties](#).

But they did compel the South Vietnamese and their allies to move certain forces from the countryside into the cities.

They caused widespread disruption and suffering. Their attacks, and the battles that followed, made [refugees](#) of half a million human beings.

The Communists may renew their attack any day.

They are, it appears, trying to make 1968 the year of decision in South Vietnam--the year that brings, if no final victory or defeat, at least a turning point in the struggle.

This much is clear:

If they do mount another round of heavy attacks, they will not succeed in destroying the fighting power of South Vietnam and its allies.

But tragically, this is also clear: Many men--on both sides of the struggle--will be lost. A nation that has already suffered 20 years of warfare will suffer once again. Armies on both sides will take new casualties. And the war will go on.

There is no need for this to be so.

There is no need to delay the talks that could bring an end to this long and this bloody war.

Tonight, I renew the offer I made last August--to stop the bombardment of North Vietnam. We ask that talks begin promptly, that they be serious talks on the substance of peace. We assume that

during those talks Hanoi will not take advantage of our restraint.

We are prepared to move immediately toward peace through negotiations.

So, tonight, in the hope that this action will lead to early talks, I am taking the first step to de-escalate the conflict. We are reducing--substantially reducing--the present level of hostilities.

And we are doing so unilaterally, and at once.

Tonight, I have ordered our aircraft and our naval vessels to make no attacks on North Vietnam, except in the area north of the [demilitarized zone](#) where the continuing enemy buildup directly threatens allied forward positions and where the movements of their troops and supplies are clearly related to that threat.

Some weeks ago--to help meet the enemy's new offensive--we sent to Vietnam about 11,000 additional [Marine](#) and [airborne](#) troops. They were deployed by air in 48 hours, on an emergency basis. But the [artillery](#), tank, aircraft, medical, and other units that were needed to work with and to support these infantry troops in combat could not then accompany them by air on that short notice.

In order that these forces may reach maximum combat effectiveness, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended to me that we should prepare to send--during the next 5 months--support troops totaling approximately 13,500 men.

A portion of these men will be made available from our active forces. The balance will come from reserve component units which will be called up for service.

The actions that we have taken since the beginning of the year

--to reequip the South Vietnamese forces, --to meet our responsibilities in [Korea](#), as well as our responsibilities in Vietnam, --to meet price increases and the cost of activating and deploying reserve forces, --to replace helicopters and provide the other military supplies we need, all of these actions are going to require additional expenditures.

The tentative estimate of those additional expenditures is \$2.5 billion in this fiscal year, and \$2.6 billion in the next fiscal year.

These projected increases in expenditures for our national security will bring into sharper focus the Nation's need for immediate action: action to protect the prosperity of the American people and to protect the strength and the stability of our American dollar.

On many occasions I have pointed out that, without a tax bill or decreased expenditures, next year's deficit would again be around \$20 billion. I have emphasized the need to set strict priorities in our spending. I have stressed that failure to act and to act promptly and decisively would raise very strong doubts throughout the world about America's willingness to keep its financial house in order.

Yet Congress has not acted. And tonight we face the sharpest financial threat in the postwar era--a threat to the dollar's role as the keystone of international trade and finance in the world.

Last week, at the monetary conference in Stockholm, the major industrial countries decided to take a big step toward creating a new international monetary asset that will strengthen the international monetary system. I am very proud of the very able work done by Secretary Fowler and Chairman Martin of the Federal Reserve Board.

But to make this system work the United States just must bring its balance of payments to--or very close to --equilibrium. We must have a responsible fiscal policy in this country. The passage of a tax bill now, together with expenditure control that the Congress may desire and dictate, is absolutely necessary to protect this Nation's security, to continue our prosperity, and to meet the needs of our people.

What is at stake is 7 years of unparalleled prosperity. In those 7 years, the real income of the

average American, after taxes, rose by almost 30 percent--a gain as large as that of the entire preceding 19 years.

So the steps that we must take to convince the world are exactly the steps we must take to sustain our own economic strength here at home. In the past 8 months, prices and interest rates have risen because of our inaction.

We must, therefore, now do everything we can to move from debate to action--from talking to voting. There is, I believe--I hope there is--in both Houses of the Congress--a growing sense of urgency that this situation just must be acted upon and must be corrected.

My budget in January was, we thought, a tight one. It fully reflected our evaluation of most of the demanding needs of this Nation.

But in these budgetary matters, the President does not decide alone. The Congress has the power and the duty to determine appropriations and taxes.

The Congress is now considering our proposals and they are considering reductions in the budget that we submitted.

As part of a program of fiscal restraint that includes the tax surcharge, I shall approve appropriate reductions in the January budget when and if Congress so decides that that should be done.

One thing is unmistakably clear, however: Our deficit just must be reduced. Failure to act could bring on conditions that would strike hardest at those people that all of us are trying so hard to help.

Our objective in South Vietnam has never been the annihilation of the enemy. It has been to bring about a recognition in Hanoi that its objective--taking over the South by force--could not be achieved.

We think that peace can be based on the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#)--under political conditions that permit the South Vietnamese--all the South Vietnamese--to chart their course free of any outside domination or interference, from us or from anyone else.

So tonight I reaffirm the pledge that we made at Manila--that we are prepared to withdraw our forces from South Vietnam as the other side withdraws its forces to the north, stops the [infiltration](#), and the level of violence thus subsides.

Our goal of peace and self-determination in Vietnam is directly related to the future of all of Southeast Asia--where much has happened to inspire confidence during the past 10 years. We have done all that we knew how to do to contribute and to help build that confidence.

A number of its nations have shown what can be accomplished under conditions of security. Since 1966, Indonesia, the fifth largest nation in all the world, with a population of more than 100 million people, has had a government that is dedicated to peace with its neighbors and improved conditions for its own people. Political and economic cooperation between nations has grown rapidly.

I think every American can take a great deal of pride in the role that we have played in bringing this about in Southeast Asia. We can rightly judge--as responsible Southeast Asians themselves do--that the progress of the past 3 years would have been far less likely--if not completely impossible--if America's sons and others had not made their stand in Vietnam.

At Johns Hopkins University, about 3 years ago, I announced that the United States would take part in the great work of developing Southeast Asia, including the [Mekong](#) Valley, for all the people of that region. Our determination to help build a better land--a better land for men on both sides of the present conflict--has not diminished in the least. Indeed, the ravages of war, I think, have made it more urgent than ever.

So, I repeat on behalf of the United States again tonight what I said at Johns Hopkins--that North

Vietnam could take its place in this common effort just as soon as peace comes.

Finally, my fellow Americans, let me say this:

Of those to whom much is given, much is asked. I cannot say and no man could say that no more will be asked of us.

Yet, I believe that now, no less than when the decade began, this generation of Americans is willing to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

Since those words were spoken by [John F. Kennedy](#), the people of America have kept that compact with mankind's noblest cause.

And we shall continue to keep it.

Yet, I believe that we must always be mindful of this one thing, whatever the trials and the tests ahead. The ultimate strength of our country and our cause will lie not in powerful weapons or infinite resources or boundless wealth, but will lie in the unity of our people.

This I believe very deeply.

Throughout my entire public career I have followed the personal philosophy that I am a free man, an American, a public servant, and a member of my party, in that order always and only.

For 37 years in the service of our nation, first as a Congressman, as a Senator, and as Vice President, and now as your President, I have put the unity of the people first. I have put it ahead of any divisive partisanship.

And in these times as in times before, it is true that a house divided against itself by the spirit of faction, of party, or region, of religion, of race, is a house that cannot stand.

There is division in the American house now. There is divisiveness among us all tonight. And holding the trust that is mine, as President of all the people I cannot disregard the peril to the progress of the American people and the hope and the prospect of peace for all peoples.

So, I would ask all Americans, whatever their personal interests or concern, to guard against divisiveness and all its ugly consequences.

Fifty-two months and 10 days ago, in a moment of tragedy and trauma, the duties of this office fell upon me. I asked then for your help and God's, that we might continue America on its course, binding up our wounds, healing our history, moving forward in new units, to clear the American agenda and to keep the American commitment for all of our people.

United we have kept that commitment. United we have enlarged that commitment.

Through all time to come, I think America will be a stronger nation, a more just society, and a land of greater opportunity and fulfillment because of what we have all done together in these years of unparalleled achievement.

Our reward will come in the life of freedom, peace, and hope that our children will enjoy through ages ahead.

What we won when all of our people united just must not now be lost in suspicion, distrust, selfishness, and politics among any of our people.

Believing this as I do, I have concluded that I should not permit the Presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year.

With America's sons in the fields far away, with America's future under challenge right here at home, with our hopes and the world's hopes for peace in the balance every day, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office--the Presidency of your country.

Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.

But let men everywhere know, however, that a strong, a confident, and a vigilant America stands ready tonight to seek an honorable peace--and stands ready tonight to defend an honored cause--whatever the price, whatever the burden, whatever the sacrifice that duty may require.

Thank you for listening.

Good night and God bless all of you.

## **A Call to All Students to March on Washington to End the War in Vietnam, April 17, 1965**

### Students for a Democratic Society

Source: Collection of George Katsiaficas.

The current war in Vietnam is being waged in behalf of a succession of unpopular South Vietnamese dictatorships, not on behalf of freedom. No American-supported South Vietnamese regime in the past few years has gained the support of its people, for the simple reason that the people overwhelmingly want peace, self-determination, and the opportunity for development. American prosecution of the war has deprived them of all three.

\*The war is fundamentally a civil war, waged by South Vietnamese against their government; it is not a "war of aggression." Military assistance from [North Vietnam](#) and [China](#) has been minimal; most guerrilla weapons are home-made or are captured American arms. The areas of strongest guerrilla control are not the areas adjacent to North Vietnam. And the people could not and cannot be isolated from the guerrillas by forced settlement in "strategic hamlets"; again and again Government military attacks fail because the people tip off the guerrillas; the people and the guerrillas are inseparable. Each repressive Government policy, each [napalm](#) bomb, each instance of torture, creates more guerrillas. Further, what foreign weapons the guerrillas have obtained are small arms, and are no match for the bombers and helicopters operated by the Americans. The U.S. government is the only foreign government that has sent major weapons to Vietnam.

\*It is a losing war. Well over half of the area of [South Vietnam](#) is already governed by the National Liberation Front--the political arm of the "[Viet Cong](#)." In the guerrillas the peasants see relief from dictatorial Government agents; from the United States they get napalm, the jellied gasoline that burns into the flesh. The highly touted "counter-insurgency" the U.S. is applying in its "pilot project war" is only new weaponry, which cannot substitute for popular government. Thousands of Government troops have defected--the traditional signal of a losing counter-guerrilla war. How many more lives must be lost before the Johnson Administration accepts the foregone conclusion?

\*It is a self-defeating war. If the U.S. objective is to guarantee self-determination in South Vietnam, that objective is far better served by allowing the South Vietnamese to choose their own government--something provided for by the [1954 Geneva Agreement](#) but sabotaged in 1956 by the American-supported dictator [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) and never allowed since. The Diem government that invited U.S. intervention was thus illegitimate, having violated the agreement that established it. The Vietnamese, North and South, have no taste for [Chinese](#) domination--these two countries have fought one another for over a thousand years. Moreover, South Vietnam is not a "domino"--the "threat" to it is internal, not Chinese, and the greater threat to stability in other Southeast Asian countries is U.S.-inspired provocation of China, not China's own plans.

\*It is a dangerous war. Every passing month of hostilities increases the risk of America escalating and widening the war. Since the '50s U.S.-trained South Vietnamese commando teams have been penetrating North Vietnam, considerably provoking the North Vietnamese. We all know of the presence of American destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf, a body of water surrounded on three sides by North Vietnamese and Chinese territory. How calm would the United States be if Cuban commandos were being sent into Florida, and Chinese ships were "guarding" Cape Cod Bay?

\*It is a war never declared by Congress, although it costs almost two million dollars a day and has cost billions of dollars since the U.S. began its involvement. The facts of the war have been systematically concealed by the U.S. government for years, making it appear as if those expenditures have been helping the Vietnamese people. These factors erode the honesty and decency of American political life, and make democracy at home impossible. We are outraged that two million dollars a day is expended for a war on the poor in Vietnam, while government financing is so desperately needed to abolish poverty at home. What kind of America is it whose response to poverty and oppression in South Vietnam is napalm and [defoliation](#), whose response to poverty and oppression in Mississippi is . . . silence?



\*It is a hideously immoral war. America is committing pointless murder.

But the signs are plain that Americans are increasingly disaffected by this state of affairs. To draw together, express and enlarge the number of these voices of protest and to make this sentiment visible, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) is calling for a

**MARCH ON WASHINGTON TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM**

We urge the participation of all students who agree with us that the war in Vietnam injures both Vietnamese and Americans, and should be stopped.

The March, to be held on Saturday, April 17, 1965, will include a picketing of the White House, a march down the Mall to the Capitol Building to present a statement to Congress, and a meeting with both student and adult speakers. Senator [Ernest Gruening](#) of Alaska and I. F. Stone have already agreed to address the body.

Thousands of us can be heard. We dare not remain silent.

## Address by President Nixon on Cambodia, April 30, 1970

Source: *U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam* (December 1974), pp. 345-47.

Good evening, my fellow Americans. Ten days ago, in my report to the Nation on Viet-Nam, I announced a decision to withdraw an additional 150,000 Americans from Viet-Nam over the next year. I said then that I was making that decision despite our concern over increased enemy activity in [Laos](#), in [Cambodia](#), and in [South Viet-Nam](#).

At that time, I warned that if I concluded that increased enemy activity in any of these areas endangered the lives of Americans remaining in Viet-Nam I would not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation.

Despite that warning, [North Viet-Nam](#) has increased its military aggression in all these areas, and particularly in Cambodia.

After full consultation with the [National Security Council](#), [Ambassador Bunker](#), General [Abrams](#), and my other advisers, I have concluded that the actions of the enemy in the last 10 days clearly endanger the lives of Americans who are in Viet-Nam now and would constitute an unacceptable risk to those who will be there after [withdrawal](#) of another 150,000.

To protect our men who are in Viet-Nam and to guarantee the continued success of our withdrawal and [Vietnamization](#) programs, I have concluded that the time has come for action.

North Viet-Nam in the last 2 weeks has stripped away all pretense of respecting the sovereignty or the [neutrality](#) of Cambodia. Thousands of their soldiers are invading the country from the [sanctuaries](#); they are encircling the Capital of Phnom Penh. Coming from these sanctuaries, as you see here, they have moved into Cambodia and are encircling the Capital.

Cambodia, as a result of this, has sent out a call to the United States, to a number of other nations, for assistance. Because if this enemy effort succeeds, Cambodia would become a vast enemy staging area and a springboard for attacks on South Viet-Nam along 600 miles of frontier, a refuge where enemy troops could return from combat without fear of retaliation.

North Vietnamese men and supplies could then be poured into that country, jeopardizing not only the lives of our own men but the people of South Viet-Nam as well.

Now, confronted with this situation, we have three options.

First, we can do nothing. Well, the ultimate result of that course of action is clear. Unless we indulge in wishful thinking, the lives of Americans remaining in Viet-Nam after our next withdrawal of 150,000 would be gravely threatened.

Let us go to the map again. Here is South Viet-Nam. Here is North Viet-Nam. North Viet-Nam already occupies this part of Laos. If North Viet-Nam also occupied this whole band in Cambodia, or the entire country, it would mean that South Viet-Nam was completely outflanked and the forces of Americans in this area, as well as the South Vietnamese, would be in an untenable military position.

Our second choice is to provide massive military assistance to Cambodia itself. Now, unfortunately, while we deeply sympathize with the plight of 7 million Cambodians, whose country is being invaded, massive amounts of military assistance could not be rapidly and effectively utilized by the small Cambodian Army against the immediate threat.

With the other nations, we shall do our best to provide the small arms and other equipment which the Cambodian Army of 40,000 needs and can use for its defense. But the aid we will provide will be limited to the purpose of enabling Cambodia to defend its neutrality and not for the purpose of making it an active belligerent on one side or the other.

Our third choice is to go to the heart of the trouble. That means cleaning out major North

Vietnamese and [Viet Cong](#) occupied territories--these sanctuaries which serve as bases for attacks on both Cambodia and American and South Vietnamese forces in South Viet-Nam. Some of these, incidentally, are as close to [Saigon](#) as Baltimore is to Washington. This one, for example [indicating], is called the [Parrot's Beak](#). It is only 33 miles from Saigon.

Now, faced with these three options, this is the decision I have made.

In cooperation with the armed forces of South Viet-Nam, attacks are being launched this week to clean out major enemy sanctuaries on the Cambodian-Viet-Nam border.

A major responsibility for the ground operations is being assumed by South Vietnamese forces. For example, the attacks in several areas, including the Parrot's Beak that I referred to a moment ago, are exclusively South Vietnamese ground operations under South Vietnamese command, with the United States providing air and logistical support.

There is one area, however, immediately above Parrot's Beak, where I have concluded that a combined American and South Vietnamese operation is necessary.

Tonight American and South Vietnamese units will attack the headquarters for the entire Communist military operation in South Viet-Nam. This key control center has been occupied by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong for 5 years in blatant violation of Cambodia's neutrality.

This is not an invasion of Cambodia. The areas in which these attacks will be launched are completely occupied and controlled by North Vietnamese forces. Our purpose is not to occupy the areas. Once enemy forces are driven out of these sanctuaries and once their military supplies are destroyed, we will withdraw.

These actions are in no way directed at the security interests of any nation. Any government that chooses to use these actions as a pretext for harming relations with the United States will be doing so on its own responsibility and on its own initiative, and we will draw the appropriate conclusions.

## Aggression from the North, released February 1965

U.S. Department of State White Paper

Source: Excerpts from *Department of State Publication 7839*, released February 1965.

The hard core of the Communist forces attacking [South Viet-Nam](#) are men trained in [North Viet-Nam](#). They are ordered into the South and remain under the military discipline of the Military High Command in [Hanoi](#). Special training camps operated by the [North Vietnamese army](#) give political and military training to the infiltrators. Increasingly the forces sent into the South are native North Vietnamese who have never seen South Viet-Nam. A special [infiltration](#) unit, the 70th Transportation Group, is responsible for moving men from North Viet-Nam into the South via infiltration trails through [Laos](#). Another special unit, the maritime infiltration group, sends weapons and supplies and agents by sea into the South.

The infiltration rate has been increasing. From 1959 to 1960, when Hanoi was establishing its infiltration pipeline, at least 1,800 men, and possibly 2,700 more, moved into South Viet-Nam from the North. The flow increased to a minimum of 3,700 in 1961 and at least 5,400 in 1962. There was a modest decrease in 1963 to 4,200 confirmed infiltrators, though later evidence is likely to raise this figure.

For 1964 the evidence is still incomplete. However, it already shows that a minimum of 4,400 infiltrators entered the South, and it is estimated more than 3,000 others were sent in.

There is usually a time lag between the entry of infiltrating troops and the discovery of clear evidence they have entered. This fact, plus collateral evidence of increased use of the infiltration routes, suggests strongly that 1964 was probably the year of greatest infiltration so far.

Thus, since 1959, nearly 20,000 VC officers, soldiers, and technicians are known to have entered South Viet-Nam under orders from Hanoi. Additional information indicates that an estimated 17,000 more infiltrators were dispatched to the South by the regime in Hanoi during the past six years. It can reasonably be assumed that still other infiltration groups have entered the South for which there is no evidence yet available.

To some the level of infiltration from the North may seem modest in comparison with the total size of the [Armed Forces of the Republic of Viet-Nam](#). But one-for-one calculations are totally misleading in the kind of warfare going on in Viet-Nam. First, a high proportion of infiltrators from the North are well-trained officers, cadres, and specialists. Second, it has long been realized that in guerrilla combat the burdens of defense are vastly heavier than those of attack. In Malaya, the [Philippines](#), and elsewhere a ratio of at least 10-to-1 in favor of the forces of order was required to meet successfully the threat of the guerrillas' hit-and-run tactics.

In the calculus of guerrilla warfare the scale of North Vietnamese infiltration into the South takes on a very different meaning. For the infiltration of 5,000 guerrilla fighters in a given year is the equivalent of marching perhaps 50,000 regular troops, across the border, in terms of the burden placed on the defenders.

Above all, the number of proved and probable infiltrators from the North should be seen in relation to the size of the VC forces. It is now estimated that the [Viet-Cong](#) number approximately 35,000 so-called hard-core forces, and another 60,000-80,000 local forces. It is thus apparent that infiltrators from the North--allowing for [casualties](#)--make up the majority of the so-called hard-core Viet-Cong. Personnel from the North, in short, are now and have always been the backbone of the entire VC operation.

It is true that many of the lower-level elements of the VC forces are recruited within South Viet-Nam. However, the thousands of reported cases of VC kidnappings and terrorism make it abundantly clear that threats and other pressures by the Viet-Cong play a major part in such recruitment.

When Hanoi launched the VC campaign of terror, violence, and subversion in earnest in 1959, the

Communist forces relied mainly on stocks of weapons and ammunition left over from the war against the French. Supplies sent in from North Viet-Nam came largely from the same source. As the military campaign progressed, the Viet-Cong depended heavily on weapons captured from the Armed Forces in South Viet-Nam. This remains an important source of weapons and ammunition for the Viet-Cong. But as the pace of the war has quickened, requirements for up-to-date arms and special types of weapons have risen to a point where the Viet-Cong cannot rely on captured stocks. Hanoi has undertaken a program to re-equip its forces in the South with Communist-produced weapons. Large and increasing quantities of military supplies are entering South Viet-Nam from outside the country. The principal supply point is North Viet-Nam, which provides a convenient channel for materiel that originates in Communist [China](#) and other Communist countries.

An increasing number of weapons from external Communist sources have been seized in the South. These include such weapons as 57 mm. and 75 mm. recoilless rifles, dual-purpose machine guns, rocket launchers, large [mortars](#), and antitank mines.

A new group of [Chinese](#) Communist-manufactured weapons has recently appeared in VC hands. These include the 7.62 semiautomatic carbine, 7.62 light machine gun, and the 7.62 [assault rifle](#). These weapons and ammunition for them, manufactured in Communist China in 1962, were first captured in December, 1964, in Chuong Thien Province. Similar weapons have since been seized in each of the four [Corps](#) areas of South Viet-Nam. Also captured have been Chinese Communist antitank grenade launchers and ammunition made in China in 1963.

One captured Viet-Cong told his captors that his entire [company](#) had been supplied recently with modern Chinese weapons. The re-equipping of VC units with a type of weapons that require ammunition and parts from outside South Viet-Nam indicates the growing confidence of the authorities in Hanoi in the effectiveness of their supply lines into the South.

Incontrovertible evidence of Hanoi's elaborate program to supply its forces in the South with weapons, ammunition, and other supplies has accumulated over the years. Dramatic new proof was exposed just as this report was being completed.

On February 16, 1965, an American helicopter pilot flying along the South Vietnamese coast sighted a suspicious vessel. It was a cargo ship of an estimated 100-ton capacity, carefully camouflaged and moored just offshore along the coast of Phu Yen Province. Fighter planes that approached the vessel met machine-gun fire from guns on the deck of the ship and from the shore as well. A [Vietnamese Air Force](#) strike was launched against the vessel, and Vietnamese Government troops moved into the area. They seized the ship after a bitter fight with the Viet-Cong.

The ship, which had been sunk in shallow water, had discharged a huge cargo of arms, ammunition, and other supplies. Documents found on the ship and on the bodies of several Viet-Cong aboard identified the vessel as having come from North Viet-Nam. A newspaper in the cabin was from Haiphong and was dated January 23, 1965. The supplies delivered by the ship--thousands of weapons and more than a million rounds of ammunition--were almost all of Communist origin, largely from Communist China and Czechoslovakia, as well as North Viet-Nam. At least 100 tons of military supplies were discovered near the ship.

A preliminary survey of the cache near the sunken vessel from Hanoi listed the following supplies and weapons:

\*approximately 1 million rounds of small-arms ammunition; \*more than 1,000 stick grenades; \*500 pounds of TNT in prepared charges; \*2,000 rounds of 82 mm mortar ammunition; \*500 antitank grenades; \*500 rounds of 57 mm recoilless rifle ammunition; \*more than 1,000 rounds of 75 mm recoilless rifle ammunition; \*one 57 mm recoilless rifle; \*2 heavy machine-guns; \*2,000 7.95 Mauser rifles; \*more than 100 7.62 carbines; \*1,000 submachine guns; \*15 light machine-guns; \*500 rifles; \*500 pounds of medical supplies (with labels from North Viet-Nam, Communist China,

Czechoslovakia, East Germany, The [Soviet Union](#). and other sources)....

The Third [Lao Dong Party](#) Congress in Hanoi in September, 1960, set forth two tasks for its members: "to carry out the socialist revolution in North Viet-Nam" and "to liberate South Viet-Nam."

The resolutions of the congress described the effort to destroy the legal Government in South Viet-Nam as follows: "The revolution in the South is a protracted, hard, and complex process of struggle, combining many forms of struggle of great activity and flexibility, ranging from low to higher, and taking as its basis the building, consolidation, and development of the revolutionary power of the masses."

At the September meeting the Communist leaders in the North called for formation of "a broad national united front." Three months later Hanoi announced creation of the "Front for Liberation of the South." This is the organization that Communist propaganda now credits with guiding the forces of subversion in the South; it is pictured as an organization established and run by the people in the South themselves. At the 1960 Lao Dong Party Congress the tone was different. Then, even before the front existed, the Communist leaders were issuing orders for the group that was being organized behind the scenes in Hanoi. "This front must rally . . ."; "The aims of its struggle are . . ."; "The front must carry out . . ."--this is the way Hanoi and the Communist Party addressed the "Liberation Front" even before its founding.

The Liberation Front is Hanoi's creation; it is neither independent nor southern, and what it seeks is not liberation but subjugation of the South....

The VC military and political apparatus in South Viet-Nam is an extension of an elaborate military and political structure in North Viet-Nam which directs and supplies it with the tools for conquest. The [Ho Chi Minh](#) regime has shown that it is ready to allocate every resource that can be spared--whether it be personnel, funds, or equipment--to the cause of overthrowing the legitimate Government in South Viet-Nam and of bringing all Viet-Nam under Communist rule.

Political direction and control of the Viet-Cong is supplied by the Lao Dong Party, i.e., the Communist Party, led by Ho Chi Minh. Party agents are responsible for indoctrination, recruitment, political training, propaganda, anti-Government demonstrations, and other activities of a political nature. The considerable intelligence-gathering facilities of the party are also at the disposal of the Viet-Cong.

Over-all direction of the VC movement is the responsibility of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party. Within the Central Committee a special Reunification Department has been established. This has replaced the "Committee for Supervision of the South" mentioned in intelligence reports two years ago. It lays down broad strategy for the movement to conquer South Viet-Nam.

Until March, 1962, there were two principal administrative divisions in the VC structure in the South. One was the Interzone of South-Central Viet-Nam (sometimes called Interzone 5); the other was the Nambo Region. In a 1962 reorganization these were merged into one, called the Central Office for South Viet-Nam. The Central Committee, through its Reunification Department, issues directives to the Central Office, which translates them into specific orders for the appropriate subordinate command.

Under the Central Office are six regional units (V through IX) plus the special zone of Saigon/Cholon/Gia Dinh. A regional committee responsible to the Central Office directs VC activities in each region. Each regional committee has specialized units responsible for liaison, propaganda, training, personnel, subversive activities, espionage, military bases, and the like.

Below each regional committee are similarly structured units at the province and district levels. At the base of the Communist pyramid are the individual party cells, which may be organized on a geographic base or within social or occupational groups. The elaborateness of the party unit and

the extent to which it operates openly or underground is determined mainly by the extent of VC control over the area concerned....

The evidence presented in this report could be multiplied many times with similar examples of the drive of the Hanoi regime to extend its rule over South Viet-Nam. The record is conclusive. It establishes beyond question that North Viet-Nam is carrying out a carefully conceived plan of aggression against the South. It shows that North Viet-Nam has intensified its efforts in the years since it was condemned by the International Control Commission. It proves that Hanoi continues to press its systematic program of armed aggression into South Viet-Nam. This aggression violates the United Nations Charter. It is directly contrary to the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#) and of 1962 to which North Viet-Nam is a party. It shatters the peace of Southeast Asia. It is a fundamental threat to the freedom and security of South Viet-Nam.

The people of South Viet-Nam have chosen to resist this threat. At their request, the United States has taken its place beside them in their defensive struggle.

The United States seeks no territory, no military bases, no favored position. But we have learned the meaning of aggression elsewhere in the postwar world, and we have met it.

If peace can be restored in South Viet-Nam, the United States will be ready at once to reduce its military involvement. But it will not abandon friends who want to remain free. It will do what must be done to help them. The choice now between peace and continued and increasingly destructive conflict is one for the authorities in Hanoi to make.

## Bring the War Home!

### Students for a Democratic Society

Source: Collection of George Katsiaficas.

It has been almost a year since the [Democratic Convention](#) when thousands of young people came together in Chicago and tore up pig city for five days. The action was a response to the crisis this system is facing as a result of the war, the demand by black people for liberation and the ever-growing reality that this system just can't make it.

This fall people are coming back to Chicago: more powerful, better organized, and more together than we were last August.

SDS is calling for a National Action in Chicago on October 11. We are coming back to Chicago and we are going to bring those we left behind last year.

Look At It: America, 1969: The war goes on, despite the jive double-talk about [troop](#) withdrawals and peace talks. Black people continue to be murdered by agents of the fat cats who run this country, if not in one way, then in another: by the pigs or the courts, by the boss or the welfare department. Working people face higher taxes, inflation, speed-ups, and the sure knowledge--if it hasn't happened already--that their sons may be shipped off to Vietnam and shipped home in a box. And young people all over the country go to prisons that are called schools, are trained for jobs that don't exist or serve no one's real interest but the boss's, and, to top it all off, get told that Vietnam is the place to defend their "freedom."

None of this is very new. The cities have been falling apart, the schools have been bullshit, the jobs have been rotten and unfulfilling for a long time.

What's new is that today not quite so many people are confused, and a lot more people are angry: angry about the fact that the promises we have heard since first grade are all jive; angry that, when you get down to it, this system is nothing but the total economic and military put-down of the oppressed peoples of the world.

And more: it's a system that steals the goods, the resources, and the labor of poor and working people all over the world in order to fill the pockets and bank accounts of a tiny capitalist class. (Call it imperialism.) It's a system that divides white workers from blacks by offering whites crumbs off the table, and telling them that if they don't stay cool the blacks will move in on their jobs, their homes, and their schools. (Call it white supremacy.) It's a system that divides men from women, forcing women to be subservient to men from childhood, to be slave labor in the home and cheap labor in the factory. (Call it male supremacy.) And it's a system that has colonized whole nations within this country--the nation of black people, the nation of brown people--to enslave, oppress, and ultimately murder the people on whose backs this country was built. (Call it fascism.)

But the lies are catching up to America--and the slick rich people and their agents in the government bureaucracies, the courts, the schools, and the pig stations just can't cut it anymore.

Black and brown people know it.

Young people know it.

More and more white working people know it.

And you know it.

The press made it look like a massacre. All you could see on TV were shots of the horrors and blood of pig brutality. That was the line that the bald-headed businessmen were trying to run down--"If you mess with us, we'll let you have it." But those who were there tell a different story. We were together and our power was felt. It's true that some of us got hurt, but last summer was a victory for the people in a thousand ways.

Our actions showed the Vietnamese that there were masses of young people in this country facing



the same enemy that they faced.

We showed that white people would no longer sit by passively while black communities were being invaded by occupation troops every day.

We showed that the "democratic process" of choosing candidates for a presidential election was nothing more than a hoax, pulled off by the businessmen who really run this country.

And we showed the whole world that in the face of the oppressive and exploitative rulers--and the military might to back them up--thousands of people are willing to fight back.

But it will be a different action. An action not only against a single war or a "foreign policy," but against the whole imperialist system that made that war a necessity. An action not only for immediate withdrawal of all U.S. occupation troops, but in support of the heroic fight of the Vietnamese people and the National Liberation Front for freedom and independence. An action not only to bring "peace to Vietnam," but beginning to establish another front against imperialism right here in America--to "bring the war home."

We are demanding that all occupational troops get out of Vietnam and every other place they don't belong. This includes the black and brown communities, the workers' picket lines, the high schools, and the streets of Berkeley. No longer will we tolerate "law and order" backed up by soldiers in Vietnam and pigs in the communities and schools; a "law and order" that serves only the interests of those in power and tries to smash the people down whenever they rise up.

We are demanding the release of all political prisoners who have been victimized by the ever-growing attacks on the black liberation struggle and the people in general. Especially the leaders of the black liberation struggle like Huey P. Newton, Ahmed Evans, Fred Hampton, and Martin Sostre.

We are expressing total support for the National Liberation Front and the newly formed [Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam](#). Throughout the history of the war, the NLF has provided the political and military leadership to the people of South Vietnam. The Provisional Revolutionary Government, recently formed by the NLF and other groups, has pledged to "mobilize the south Vietnamese armed forces and people" in order to continue the struggle for independence. The PRG also has expressed solidarity with "the just struggle of the Afro-American people for their fundamental national rights," and has pledged to "actively support the national independence movements of Asia, Africa, and Latin America."

We are also expressing total support for the black liberation struggle, part of the same struggle that the Vietnamese are fighting, against the same enemy.

We are demanding independence for Puerto Rico, and an end to the colonial oppression that the Puerto Rican nation faces at the hands of U.S. imperialism.

We are demanding an end to the surtax, a tax taken from the working people of this country and used to kill working people in Vietnam and other places for fun and profit.

We are expressing solidarity with the Conspiracy 8 who led the struggle last summer in Chicago. Our action is planned to roughly coincide with the beginning of their trial.

And we are expressing support for GIs in Vietnam and throughout the world who are being made to fight the battles of the rich, like poor and working people have always been made to do. We support those GIs at Fort Hood, Fort Jackson, and many other army bases who have refused to be cannon fodder in a war against the people of Vietnam.

But, after years of peace marches, petitions, and the gradual realization that this war was no "mistake" at all, one critical fact remains: the war is not just happening in Vietnam.

It is happening in the jungles of Guatemala, Bolivia, [Thailand](#), and all oppressed nations throughout the world.

And it is happening here. In black communities throughout the country. On college campuses. And in the high schools, in the shops, and on the streets.

It is a war in which there are only two sides; a war not for domination but for an end to domination, not for destruction, but for liberation and the unchaining of human freedom.

And it is a war in which we cannot "resist"; it is a war in which we must fight.

On October 11, tens of thousands of people will come to Chicago to bring the war home. Join us.

All power to the people!

## **Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, September 2, 1945**

### [Ho Chi Minh](#)

Source: Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977).

"All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: "All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights." Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.

In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty. They have enforced inhuman laws; they have set up three distinct political regimes in the North, the Center, and the South of Vietnam in order to wreck our national unity and prevent our people from being united. They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots; they have drowned our uprisings in rivers of blood. They have fettered public opinion; they have practiced obscurantism against our people. To weaken our race they have forced us to use opium and alcohol.

In the field of economics, they have fleeced us to the backbone, impoverished our people and devastated our land. They have robbed us of our rice fields, our mines, our forests, and our raw materials. They have monopolized the issuing of bank notes and the export trade. They have invented numerous unjustifiable taxes and reduced our people, especially our peasantry, to a state of extreme poverty. They have hampered the prospering of our national bourgeoisie; they have mercilessly exploited our workers.

In the autumn of 1940, when the Japanese fascists violated [Indochina](#)'s territory to establish new bases in their fight against the Allies, the French imperialists went down on their bended knees and handed over our country to them. Thus, from that date, our people were subjected to the double yoke of the French and the Japanese. Their sufferings and miseries increased. The result was that, from the end of last year to the beginning of this year, from [Quang Tri](#) Province to the North of Vietnam, more than two million of our fellow citizens died from starvation.

On March 9 [1945], the French troops were disarmed by the Japanese. The French colonialists either fled or surrendered, showing that not only were they incapable of "protecting" us, but that, in the span of five years, they had twice sold our country to the Japanese.

On several occasions before March 9, the [Viet Minh](#) League urged the French to ally themselves with it against the Japanese. Instead of agreeing to this proposal, the French colonialists so intensified their terrorist activities against the Viet Minh members that before fleeing they massacred a great number of our political prisoners detained at Yen Bay and Cao Bang.

Notwithstanding all this, our fellow citizens have always manifested toward the French a tolerant and humane attitude. Even after the Japanese Putsch of March, 1945, the Viet Minh League helped many Frenchmen to cross the frontier, rescued some of them from Japanese jails, and protected French lives and property.

From the autumn of 1940, our country had in fact ceased to be a French colony and had become a Japanese possession. After the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies, our whole people rose to regain our national sovereignty and to found the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#). The truth is

that we have wrested our independence from the Japanese and not from the French.

The French have fled, the Japanese have capitulated, Emperor [Bao Dai](#) has abdicated. Our people have broken the chains which for nearly a century have fettered them and have won independence for the Fatherland. Our people at the same time have overthrown the monarchic regime that has reigned supreme for dozens of centuries. In its place has been established the present Democratic Republic.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government, representing the whole Vietnamese people, declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with [France](#); we repeal all the international obligations that France has so far subscribed to on behalf of Vietnam, and we abolish all the special rights the French have unlawfully acquired in our Fatherland.

The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country.

We are convinced that the Allied nations, which at Teheran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam. A people who have courageously opposed French domination for more than eighty years, a people who have fought side by side with the Allies against the fascists during these last years; such a people must be free and independent.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, solemnly declare to the world that Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country--and in fact it is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty.

## Hanoi's Statement on "Tonkin Gulf Incident," September 1964

Source: *The Pentagon's Secrets and Half-Secrets* (Hanoi, 1971), pp. 90-96 (excerpt).

On August 4, President [L. Johnson](#) summoned two meetings of the [National Security Council](#), conferred with his Cabinet and General [Earle Wheeler](#), [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff](#), and then with Congressional leaders of both the Democratic and Republican parties.

At 18:00 (local time), U.S. Assistant Defense Secretary Arthur Sylvester issued to the press an announcement which read in part:

"A second deliberate attack was made during darkness by an undetermined number of North Vietnamese PT-boats on the [USS Maddox](#) and the [USS Turner Joy](#) while the two destroyers were cruising in company on routine patrol in the Tonkin gulf international waters about 65 miles from the nearest land. The attack came at 10:30 P.M. local time (10:30 A.M. August 4, Washington time, or 14:30 GMT).

At 23:40 (local time), President L. Johnson announced to the American people: "The initial attack on the destroyer Maddox, on August 2, was repeated today by a number of hostile vessels attacking two US destroyers with torpedoes)."

At about midnight, Defense Secretary [McNamara](#) affirmed in a press conference in Washington that these were "North Vietnamese surface vessels." The truth was totally different from the contentions made by the US President and the US Defense Secretary in their solemn statements to the American people and the world.

First and foremost, this is an impudent fabrication in as much as in the day and night of August 4, 1964, no naval craft of the [Democratic Republic of Viet Nam](#) was present in the area where the US destroyers were allegedly "attacked for a second time by North Vietnamese PT-boats."

The alleged "attack" was deliberately staged by the United States to have a pretext for carrying out its criminal designs against the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

According to reports from various sources, a task [group](#) of the [Seventh Fleet](#) including the aircraft-carrier [Ticonderoga](#) and the destroyers Berkeley, Edison, Harry Hubbard, and Samuel More, was cruising on a permanent basis in the South China Sea off [Da Nang](#).

On August 4, 1964, the Harry Hubbard met with the HQ. 609 and HQ. 11 of the South Viet Nam Navy 60 kilometers off Da Nang. Thereafter, the South Vietnamese ships did not return to their base Tien Sa (Da Nang) as usual. On the same night, from 20:00 to 22:00 at about the time when "North Vietnamese PT-boards" allegedly "attacked the Maddox and the Turner Joy" gun shelling was heard, and flares and planes were seen off the shores of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam on international waters.

That is what the Pentagon termed "the second deliberate attack" on the destroyers Maddox and Turner Joy or "the second [Tonkin Gulf incident](#)."

## Henry A. Kissinger Appeals to Congress for Emergency Aid April 15, 1975

Source: [Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger](#). April 15, 1975, testimony before Congress.

The long and agonizing conflict in [Indochina](#) has reached a tragic stage. The events of the past month have been discussed at great length before the Congress and require little additional elaboration. In Viet-Nam, President [Thieu](#) ordered a strategic [withdrawal](#) from a number of areas he regarded as militarily untenable. However, the withdrawal took place in great haste, without adequate advance planning, and with insufficient coordination. It was further complicated by a massive flow of civilian [refugees](#) seeking to escape the advancing [North Vietnamese Army](#). Disorganization engendered confusion; fear led to panic. The results, as we all know, were tragic losses--of territory, of population, of material, and of morale.

But to fully understand what has happened, it is necessary to have an appreciation of all that went before. The North Vietnamese offensive, and the South Vietnamese response, did not come about by chance--although chance is always an element in warfare. The origins of these events are complex, and I believe it would be useful to review them briefly.

Since January 1973, [Hanoi](#) has violated--continuously, systematically, and energetically--the most fundamental provisions of the Paris agreement. It steadily increased the numbers of its troops in the South. It improved and expanded its logistics systems in the South. It increased the armaments and ammunition of its forces in the South. And as you know, it blocked all efforts to account for personnel missing in action. These are facts, and they are indisputable. All of these actions were of course in total violation of the agreement. Parallel to these efforts, Hanoi attempted--with considerable success--to immobilize the various mechanisms established by the agreement to monitor and curtail violations of the cease-fire. Thus, it assiduously prepared the way for further military actions.

[South Viet-Nam](#)'s record of adherence to the agreement has not been perfect. It is, however, qualitatively and quantitatively far better than Hanoi's. South Viet-Nam did not build up its armed forces. It undertook no major offensive actions--although it traded thrusts and probes with the Communists. It cooperated fully in establishing and supporting the cease-fire control mechanisms provided for in the agreement. And it sought, as did the United States, full implementation of those provisions of the agreement calling for an accounting of soldiers missing in action.

But perhaps more relevant to an understanding of recent events are the following factors.

While [North Viet-Nam](#) had available several reserve [divisions](#) which it could commit to battle at times and places of its choosing, the South had no strategic reserves. Its forces were stretched thin, defending lines of communication and population centers throughout the country.

While North Viet-Nam, by early this year, had accumulated in South Viet-Nam enough ammunition for two years of intensive combat, South Vietnamese commanders had to ration ammunition as their stocks declined and were not replenished.

While North Viet-Nam had enough fuel in the South to operate its tanks and armored vehicles for at least 18 months, South Viet-Nam faced stringent shortages.

In sum, while Hanoi was strengthening its army in the South, the combat effectiveness of South Viet-Nam's army gradually grew weaker. While Hanoi built up its reserve divisions and accumulated ammunition, fuel, and other military supplies, U.S. aid levels to Viet-Nam were cut--first by half in 1973 and then by another third in 1974. This coincided with a worldwide inflation and a fourfold increase in fuel prices. As a result almost all of our military aid had to be devoted to ammunition and fuel. Very little was available for spare parts, and none for new equipment.

These imbalances became painfully evident when the offensive broke full force, and they contributed to the tragedy which unfolded. Moreover, the steady diminution in the resources available to the Army of South Viet-Nam unquestionably affected the morale of its officers and men. South Vietnamese units in the northern and central provinces knew full well that they faced

an enemy superior both in numbers and in firepower. They knew that reinforcements and resupply would not be forthcoming. When the fighting began they also knew, as they had begun to suspect, that the United States would not respond. I would suggest that all of these factors added significantly to the sense of helplessness, despair, and, eventually, panic which we witnessed in late March and early April.

I would add that it is both inaccurate and unfair to hold South Viet-Nam responsible for blocking progress toward a political solution to the conflict. [Saigon's](#) proposals in its conversations with PRG [Provisional Revolutionary Government] representatives in Paris were in general constructive and conciliatory. There was no progress toward a compromise political settlement because Hanoi intended that there should not be. Instead, North Viet-Nam's strategy was to lay the groundwork for an eventual military offensive, one which would either bring outright victory or at least allow Hanoi to dictate the terms of a political solution.

Neither the United States nor South Viet-Nam entered into the Paris agreement with the expectation that Hanoi would abide by it in every respect. We did believe, however, that the agreement was sufficiently equitable to both sides that its major provisions could be accepted and acted upon by Hanoi and that the contest could be shifted thereby from a military to a political track. However, our two governments also recognized that, since the agreement manifestly was not self-enforcing, Hanoi's adherence depended heavily on maintaining a military parity in South Viet-Nam. So long as North Viet-Nam confronted a strong South Vietnamese army and so long as the possibility existed of U.S. intervention to offset the strategic advantages of the North, Hanoi could be expected to forgo major military action. Both of those essential conditions were dissipated over the past two years. Hanoi attained a clear military superiority, and it became increasingly convinced that U.S. intervention could be ruled out. It therefore returned to a military course, with the results we have seen.

The present situation in Viet-Nam is ominous. North Viet-Nam's combat forces far outnumber those of the South, and they are better armed. Perhaps more important, they enjoy a psychological momentum which can be as decisive as armaments in battle. South Viet-Nam must reorganize and reequip its forces, and it must restore the morale of its army and its people. These tasks will be difficult, and they can be performed only by the South Vietnamese. However, a successful defense will also require resources--arms, fuel, ammunition, and medical supplies--and these can come only from the United States.

Large quantities of equipment and supplies, totaling perhaps \$800 million, were lost in South Viet-Nam's precipitous retreat from the northern and central areas. Much of this should not have been lost, and we regret that it happened. But South Viet-Nam is now faced with a different strategic and tactical situation and different military requirements. Although the amount of military assistance the President has requested is of the same general magnitude as the value of the equipment lost, we are not attempting simply to replace those losses. The President's request, based on General Weyand's [Gen. [Frederick C. Weyand](#), Chief of Staff, United States Army] assessment, represents our best judgment as to what is needed now, in this new situation, to defend what is left of South Viet-Nam. Weapons, ammunition, and supplies to reequip four divisions, to form a number of ranger groups into divisional units, and to upgrade some [territorial forces](#) into infantry regiments will require some \$326 million. The balance of our request is for ammunition, fuel, spare parts, and medical supplies to sustain up to 60 days of intensive combat and to pay for the cost of transporting those items. These are minimum requirements, and they are needed urgently.

The human tragedy of Viet-Nam has never been more acute than it now is. Hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese have sought to flee Communist control and are homeless refugees. They have our compassion, and they must also have our help. Despite commendable efforts by the South Vietnamese Government, the burden of caring for these innocent victims is beyond its capacity. The United States has already done much to assist these people, but many remain without adequate food, shelter, or medical care. The President has asked that additional efforts and additional resources be devoted to this humanitarian effort. I ask that the Congress

respond generously and quickly.

The objectives of the United States in this immensely difficult situation remain as they were when the Paris agreement was signed--to end the military conflict and establish conditions which will allow a fair political solution to be achieved. We believe that despite the tragic experience to date, the Paris agreement remains a valid framework within which to proceed toward such a solution. However, today, as in 1973, battlefield conditions will affect political perceptions and the outcome of negotiations. We therefore believe that in order for a political settlement to be reached which preserves any degree of self-determination for the people of South Viet-Nam, the present military situation must be stabilized. It is for these reasons that the President has asked Congress to appropriate urgently additional funds for military assistance for Viet-Nam.

I am acutely aware of the emotions aroused in this country by our long and difficult involvement in Viet-Nam. I understand what the cost has been for this nation and why frustration and anger continue to dominate our national debate. Many will argue that we have done more than enough for the Government and the people of South Viet-Nam. I do not agree with that proposition, however, nor do I believe that to review endlessly the wisdom of our original involvement serves a useful purpose now. For despite the agony of this nation's experience in Indochina and the substantial reappraisal which has taken place concerning our proper role there, few would deny that we are still involved or that what we do--or fail to do--will still weigh heavily in the outcome. We cannot by our actions alone insure the survival of South Viet-Nam. But we can, alone, by our inaction assure its demise.

The United States has no legal obligation to the Government and the people of South Viet-Nam of which the Congress is not aware. But we do have a deep moral obligation--rooted in the history of our involvement and sustained by the continuing efforts of our friends. We cannot easily set it aside. In addition to the obvious consequences for the people of Viet-Nam, our failure to act in accordance with that obligation would inevitably influence other nations' perceptions of our constancy and our determination.



## History of the Organization "Vietnam Veterans Against the War"

### [Vietnam Veterans Against the War](#)

Source: Collection of George Katsiaficas.

With a membership now approaching 20,000 and with chapters chartered or forming in all 50 states and Vietnam, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War has come a long way in the four years since it was founded in the spring of 1967 by six young veterans living in New York City.

By the beginning of 1968 the VVAW had established chapters in states as far flung as Alabama and California, Ohio and Oregon. Actually there were dozens, if not hundreds, of Nam veterans across the country speaking out as concerned individuals, just waiting for something organized to happen.

With a base of 500-600 members, the fledgling veterans' organization opened a national office in New York, began publishing a serviceman's newspaper from Chicago, "Vietnam GI" and filling speaking engagements across the country.

By the summer of 1968, through the fall-off of public support for the peace movement after [President Johnson's](#) April 1 abdication speech and the draining of energies by the political campaigns, the VVAW was nearly broke and had to close its New York office. We sent 50 veterans to the [Democratic National Convention](#)--one from each state--to lobby with the delegates in support of an anti-war platform, and instead of being listened to, the vets were tear gassed along with everyone else.

With the renewed activity of the peace movement and the popular response to the first two Moratoriums, the VVAW found itself back together again. As it had before, the revived organization concentrated on speaking and debating engagements, newspaper advertisements and radio and television talk show appearances. By the beginning of 1970 the national membership was approaching 1500 members. However, with the slump in peace activities and public support through the winter, the VVAW was again at low ebb by early spring.

A new direction, which would presently bear fruit, had been taken during the winter by a small group within the VVAW. Following the press expose of the [My Lai](#) massacre in November 1969, and the Administration's contentions that the shootings at Song My had been an "isolated incident," a number of Vietnam veterans who knew otherwise from their own experience, helped form a series of war crimes hearings that brought forth Vietnam veterans to testify to American [atrocities](#) they had witnessed. The first of these hearings was held in Annapolis, Maryland in February 1970; the second, six weeks later in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Then in May came the invasion of [Cambodia](#), the shootings at Jackson and [Kent State](#), and the national student strikes. Once again the VVAW was revived by fresh energies and new applications for membership. Members of the VVAW led student strikes on major campuses throughout the country. And, for the first time, Vietnam veteran patients in VA hospitals got involved in the peace movement in large numbers. Some of them also got into trouble with hospital authorities, and the VVAW national office found itself in a new role of pressuring and lobbying for veterans rights.

Over the summer of 1970 the VVAW gradually grew in membership to the 2000 mark. Then over Labor Day weekend the Vietnam veterans group staged an action that catapulted it toward national recognition. The action was "Operation Rapid American Withdrawal (RAW)"; a four-day, 86-mile simulated search-and-destroy mission from Morristown, New Jersey to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Conducted by actual combat veterans wearing their old jungle battle gear and carrying plastic toy [M-16s](#), "Operation RAW" was a mixture of peace march, mobile speak-out and guerrilla theater. Sweeping through the rural back counties of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania, the 150 veterans on the march (who held 110 Purple Hearts among them) distributed leaflets, "cordoned" villages and small towns, "interrogated" and "shot" local civilians

(pre-arranged groups of actors), and, in general, tried to recreate the brutal realities of the war.

At the rally at Valley Forge on Labor Day, 1500 local supporters watched the vets sweep "on line" down a long, grassy slope--the last three hundred yards chanting "Peace . . . Now"--and carrying five body bags with numbers of US and Vietnamese dead and wounded on them. After an afternoon of speeches, the veterans massed in [company](#) formation and, on command, broke their plastic weapons to symbolize their determination for peace.

Then, through the fall, the growing veterans group planned its most ambitious effort yet. After having held hearings into war crimes in a dozen cities on the East Coast and Mid- West, VVAW decided to hold national hearings involving over one hundred Nam vets. The name chosen for the national hearings was the "Winter Soldier Investigation"; a reference to Tom Paine's 1776 remark about the "summer soldiers and sunshine patriots" who shrink from the service of their country in times of crisis. As Vietnam veterans we know the Administration is cynically seeking to shift its own guilt to the lower grade field officers, the noncoms, and the enlisted men, for war crimes that originate in Washington, D.C.

The [Winter Soldier Investigation](#) was held in Detroit, Michigan on January 31, February 1 and 2, 1971. This, coupled with a free full-page ad published in the February issue of Playboy, increased our membership considerably.

The next action planned by VVAW was "[Operation Dewey Canyon III](#)"; a five-day operation in Washington, D.C. from April 19 to 23, 1971. Veterans of all wars were invited to join us to protest not only U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, but also the domestic, social, political and economic conditions that have caused and permitted the continuance of the war, the deplorable conditions in VA and military hospitals, the inadequacy of the GI benefits, and the extraordinary rate of unemployment among Vietnam veterans.

Some 2000 veterans participated in what was regarded by most of the press and public as the most important event to have occurred in the peace movement in a long while. The frustrations, however, were many. During the week prior to VVAW's arrival in Washington, government attorneys appeared before a Federal judge where they requested, and were granted, an injunction to forbid the vets from camping on the Mall. The injunction was rescinded three days later by the US Court of Appeals. The next day the government took its case to the Supreme Court and got an order restraining the original injunction. Veterans expected to be arrested at any time, but when no move was made to enforce the injunction Justice Department attorneys appeared before the Federal judge and got him to dismiss the earlier order. Earlier in the week the gates of Arlington Cemetery had been slammed shut in the face of veterans and Gold Star mothers when they attempted to lay two wreaths. The following day the gates were opened. The response of the Washington community and the nation to America's veterans was overwhelmingly sympathetic. Food, clothing, legal help and money for bail were freely given. Lobbying, guerrilla theater and testimony were presented daily to the Congress. It was a great week.

Since [Dewey Canyon III](#) VVAW has expanded its services to veterans on a national basis. We have formed both a Veterans Action Group and a lobbying office in Washington, D.C. The Action Group is involved in research and the drafting of legislation relative to veterans' services and benefits. The lobbying office is doing the advance work and mapping the strategy for maneuvering the legislation through the Congress....

In keeping with the objectives of our organization, VVAW has started a "Lifeline to Cairo." We have moved to the offensive against the forces of racism and economic exploitation in this country. Our continuing convoys of food and clothing to Cairo, Illinois will enable our brothers and sisters to continue their struggle against the racist power structure that seeks to exploit poor and third-world people throughout the country.

Winter Soldier Investigations are being conducted by our chapters across the country (with some twenty-eight planned in the next two months) as a part of our continuing effort to bring the truth to

the U.S.

Our members are regularly appearing on radio and TV shows and speaking at gatherings, large and small, throughout this country and around the world.

We have sent delegates to the World Peace Council Conferences in Budapest and Stockholm, the Seventeenth World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs in Hiroshima and to [Hanoi](#) and Paris to meet with our Indochinese brothers and sisters. Domestically we have participated in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in New Orleans, the National Student Association Congress in Ft. Collins, Colorado, the National Welfare Rights Organization's convention in Providence, Rhode Island and the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice Convention in Milwaukee, to name a few.

In August 1971 we published the first edition of the new VVAW newspaper, "The 1st Casualty." "The New Soldier," a book about Dewey Canyon III, published by Macmillan, will be released in September 1971. Another book, "The Winter Soldier Investigation" (testimony from the Detroit hearings), published by Beacon Press, was released in February 1972. The WSI film opened in February 1972 at the Whitney Museum in New York. The 90-minute feature film has received outstanding reviews from all the major critics in New York. We are looking forward to national distribution in the near future. September and October of 1971 saw VVAW in the communities of America, marching and rapping with the people on the street. Veterans Day 1971 saw over 300 Vietnam veterans arrested for exercising their right of free speech. Their "crime"? attempting to change the traditional glorification of militarism now emphasized by the establishment veterans organizations.

Thanksgiving was non-celebrated by VVAWs presence at state capitols across the country. Fasts and memorial services were on the schedule as the veterans were joined by members of the communities for this day of un-thanks.

Operation Peace on Earth, with encampments in Berkeley, Ca.; Killeen, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; and Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, saw VVAW participating in "[protective reaction strikes](#)" around the country:

--The Statue of Liberty in New York --The Travis Air Force Base Drug War --St. Patrick's Cathedral on Christmas Eve --The Betsy Ross House in Philadelphia --The South Vietnamese Consulate in San Francisco --The Chicago Stock Exchange --The Air Force Recruiting Station in Dorchester, Mass. --The Connecticut National Guard Headquarters in Hartford, Conn. --The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC --Fort Hood, Texas --Times Square on New Year's Eve --Visits to VA and Military Hospitals around the country

VVAW reacted to the Administration's latest evidence of their low regard for human life. VVAW will continue to bring the realities of the everyday atrocities of the air war and the continuing ground war home.

Guided by a national steering committee of 26 regional coordinators, the VVAW is run day-to-day by a five-member national coordinating committee, under a charter of incorporation from the State of New York as a non-profit, educational organization.

Never, in the history of American warfare, have veterans of that war protested it while the war they participated in was still in progress. Another, and greater precedent has now been set: VVAW currently has 2500 members on active duty in Vietnam. The membership is increasing at the rate of 50 to 75 each day. The Nam members are from every service and every job classification, from Grunts to Doctor, from Battery Commander to Nurse, from [IV Corps](#) to [I Corps](#), from [Laos](#) to Cambodia to [Thailand](#) to the South China Sea.

"When the spoils are worth the victory, the battle must be fought."

Objectives of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

1. To demand an immediate cessation of fighting and the withdrawal of all American troops from [Indochina](#). We cannot allow one more human being to be killed in Indochina.
2. To demand Congress enact legislation for the immediate termination of all funds being utilized by the United States government, its allies and the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) to support their illegal operations in Latin America, Africa, China, Europe and the countries of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand.
3. To demonstrate that our military tactics dehumanize soldiers and civilians, and to make clear the United States government is prosecuting an illegal, unjust and immoral war in Indochina.
4. To show Americans that their society is structured by a racism which lets us view all non-whites as less than human. This racism pushes our minorities through inferior schools and into the combat arms. Thus, we send our minorities off to die in disproportionately high numbers while we kill Asians indiscriminately. We demand that the military recognize its complicity in America's domestic and international racism.
5. To make clear that the United States has never undertaken an extensive open investigation of American war crimes in Indochina. We demand that the United States government, in its war in Indochina, affirm the principles of Nuremberg. As former GIs, we recognize the responsibility of the individual soldier to refrain from committing war crimes. We also recognize the responsibility and guilt of war crimes committed in the name of America lies with our policy-makers at all levels.
6. To demand that all active-duty servicemen and women be afforded the rights as citizens that are guaranteed by the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights that are presently denied them by the Uniform Code of Military Justice. We are appalled that servicemen and women are treated as less than first-class citizens. We endorse the efforts of our active duty sisters and brothers in their struggle to democratize the military.
7. To support all military personnel refusing to serve in wars of aggression at home and abroad. We demand Congress enact legislation for the immediate repatriation with full amnesty to those brothers and sisters who are in prison or in self-exile by reason of their refusal to serve in the military. We support all persons refusing to be [drafted](#).
8. To demand immediate legislation to provide proper care and services for all veterans in VA hospitals; to make available job training and placement for every returning veteran; and to provide the funds and means necessary for their educational and vocational endeavors.
9. To affirm that the membership is not only concerned with ending this war, but changing the domestic social, political and economic institutions that have caused and permitted the continuance of war.

## Ho Chi Minh: Message to the American People, December 23, 1966

### [Ho Chi Minh](#)

Source: Ho Chi Minh, *Against U.S. Aggression for National Salvation* (Hanoi, 1967), pp. 137-38.

On the occasion of the New Year, I would like to convey to the American people cordial wishes for peace and happiness.

The Vietnamese and American peoples should have lived in peace and friendship. But the U.S. Government has brazenly sent over 400,000 troops along with thousands of aircraft and hundreds of warships to wage aggression on Vietnam. Night and day it has used [napalm](#) bombs, toxic gas, fragmentation bombs and other modern weapons to massacre our people, not sparing even old persons, women and children; it has burnt down or destroyed villages and towns and perpetrated extremely savage crimes. Of late, U.S. aircraft have repeatedly bombed Hanoi, our beloved capital.

It is because of the criminal war unleashed by the U.S. Government that hundreds of thousands of young Americans have been [drafted](#) and sent to a useless death far from their homeland, on the Vietnamese battlefield. In hundreds of thousands of American families, parents have lost their sons, and wives their husbands.

Nevertheless, the U.S. Government has continually clamored about "peace negotiations" in an attempt to deceive the American and world peoples. In fact, it is daily expanding the war.

The U.S. Government wrongly believes that with brutal force it could compel our people to surrender. But the Vietnamese people will never submit. We love peace, but it must be genuine peace in independence and freedom. For independence and freedom, the Vietnamese people are determined to fight the U.S. aggressors through to complete victory, whatever the hardships and sacrifices may be.

Who has caused these sufferings and mournings to the Vietnamese and American people? It is the U.S. rulers. The American people have realized this truth. More and more Americans are valiantly standing up in a vigorous struggle, demanding that the American Government respect the Constitution and the honour of the United States, stop the war of aggression in Vietnam and bring home all U.S. troops.

I warmly welcome your just struggle and thank you for your support to the Vietnamese people's patriotic fight.

I sincerely wish the American people many big successes in their struggle for peace, democracy and happiness.

## **Joint Treaty of Peace between the People of the United States, South Vietnam, and North Vietnam**

People's Peace Treaty

Source: Collection of George Katsiaficas

### PREAMBLE

Be it known that the American and Vietnamese people are not enemies. The war is carried out in the names of the people of the United States and [South Vietnam](#), but without our consent. It destroys the land and people of Vietnam. It drains America of its resources, its youth, and its honor.

We hereby agree to end the war on the following terms, so that both peoples can live under the joy of independence and can devote themselves to building a society based on human equality and respect for the earth. In rejecting the war we also reject all forms of racism and discrimination against people based on color, class, sex, national origin, and ethnic grouping which form the basis of the war policies, past and present, of the United States government.

### TERMS OF THE PEACE TREATY

1. THE AMERICANS AGREE TO IMMEDIATE AND TOTAL [WITHDRAWAL](#) FROM VIETNAM, AND PUBLICLY SET THE DATE BY WHICH ALL U.S. MILITARY FORCES WILL BE REMOVED.
2. The Vietnamese pledge that as soon as the U.S. government sets a date for total withdrawal: They will enter discussions to secure the release of all American prisoners, including pilots captured while bombing [North Vietnam](#).
3. There will be an immediate cease-fire between U.S. forces and those led by the [Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam](#).
4. They will enter discussions on the procedures to guarantee the safety of all withdrawing troops.
5. THE AMERICANS PLEDGE TO END THE IMPOSITION OF THIEUKY-KHIEM ON THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM IN ORDER TO INSURE THEIR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND SO THAT ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS CAN BE RELEASED.
6. The Vietnamese pledge to form a provisional coalition government to organize democratic elections. All parties agree to respect the results of elections in which all South Vietnamese can participate freely without the presence of any foreign troops.
7. The South Vietnamese pledge to enter discussions of procedures to guarantee the safety and political freedom of those South Vietnamese who have collaborated with the U.S. or with the U.S.-supported regime.
8. The Americans agree to respect the independence, peace, and [neutrality](#) of [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#) in accord with the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Conventions and not to interfere in the internal affairs of these two countries.
9. Upon these points of agreement, we pledge to end the war and resolve all other questions in the spirit of self-determination and mutual respect for the independence and political freedom of the people of Vietnam and the United States.

### PLEDGE

BY RATIFYING THIS AGREEMENT, WE PLEDGE TO TAKE WHATEVER ACTIONS ARE APPROPRIATE TO IMPLEMENT THE TERMS OF THIS JOINT TREATY AND TO INSURE ITS ACCEPTANCE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

## LBJ at Johns Hopkins: Pattern for Peace in Southeast Asia

[Lyndon B. Johnson](#)

Source: *Department of State Bulletin* (April 26, 1965), pp. 606-10.

. . . Tonight Americans and Asians are dying for a world where each people may choose its own path to change.

This is the principle for which our ancestors fought in the valleys of Pennsylvania. It is the principle for which our sons fight in the jungles of Vietnam.

Vietnam is far from this quiet campus. We have no territory there, nor do we seek any. The war is dirty and brutal and difficult. And some 400 young men, born into an America bursting with opportunity and promise, have ended their lives on Vietnam's steaming soil.

Why must we take this painful road?

Why must this nation hazard its ease, its interest, and its power for the sake of a people so far away?

We fight because we must fight if we are to live in a world where every country can shape its own destiny. And only in such a world will our own freedom be finally secure.

This kind of a world will never be built by bombs or bullets. Yet the infirmities of man are such that force must often precede reason, and the waste of war, the works of peace.

We wish this were not so. But we must deal with the world as it is, if it is ever to be as we wish.

The world as it is in Asia is not a serene or peaceful place. The first reality is that [North Vietnam](#) has attacked the independent nation of [South Vietnam](#). Its object is total conquest.

Of course, some of the people of South Vietnam are participating in this attack on their own government. But trained men and supplies, orders and arms, flow in a constant stream from North to South.

This support is the heartbeat of the war.

And it is a war of unparalleled brutality. Simple farmers are the targets of assassination and kidnapping. Women and children are strangled in the night because their men are loyal to their Government. Small and helpless villages are ravaged by sneak attacks. Large-scale raids are conducted on towns, and terror strikes in the hearts of cities.

The confused nature of this conflict cannot mask the fact it is the new face of an old enemy. It is an attack by one country upon another. And the object of that attack is a friend to which we are pledged.

Over this war, and all Asia, is another reality: the deepening shadow of Communist [China](#). The rulers in [Hanoi](#) are urged on by Peking. This is a regime which has destroyed freedom in Tibet, attacked India, and been condemned by the United Nations for aggression in [Korea](#). It is a nation which is helping the forces of violence in almost every continent. The contest in Vietnam is part of a wider pattern of aggressive purpose.

Why are these realities our concern? Why are we in South Vietnam? We are there because we have a promise to keep. Since 1954 every American President has offered support to the people of South Vietnam. We have helped to build, and we have helped to defend. Thus, over many years, we have made a national pledge to help South Vietnam defend its independence. And I intend to keep our promise.

To dishonor that pledge, to abandon this small and brave nation to its enemy, and to the terror that must follow, would be an unforgivable wrong.

We are also there to strengthen world order. Around the globe, from Berlin to [Thailand](#), are people

whose well-being rests, in part, on the belief that they can count on us if they are attacked. To leave Vietnam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these people in the value of American commitment, the value of America's word. The result would be increased unrest and instability, and even wider war.

We are also there because there are great stakes in the balance. Let no one think for a moment that retreat from Vietnam would bring an end to conflict. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another. The central lesson of our time is that the appetite of aggression is never satisfied. To withdraw from one battlefield means only to prepare for the next. We must say in Southeast Asia, as we did in Europe, in the words of the Bible: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further."

There are those who say that all our effort there will be futile, that China's power is such it is bound to dominate all Southeast Asia. But there is no end to that argument until all the nations of Asia are swallowed up.

There are those who wonder why we have a responsibility there. We have it for the same reason we have a responsibility for the defense of freedom in Europe. World War II was fought in both Europe and Asia, and when it ended we found ourselves with continued responsibility for the defense of freedom.

Our objective is the independence of South Vietnam, and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves, only that the people of South Vietnam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way.

We will do everything necessary to reach that objective. And we will do only what is absolutely necessary.

In recent months, attacks on South Vietnam were stepped up. Thus it became necessary to increase our response and to make attacks by air. This is not a change of purpose. It is a change in what we believe that purpose requires.

We do this in order to slow down aggression.

We do this to increase the confidence of the brave people of South Vietnam who have bravely borne this brutal battle for so many years and with so many [casualties](#).

And we do this to convince the leaders of North Vietnam, and all who seek to share their conquest, of a very simple fact:

We will not be defeated.

We will not grow tired.

We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement.

We know that air attacks alone will not accomplish all these purposes. But it is our best and prayerful judgment that they are a necessary part of the surest road to peace.

We hope that peace will come swiftly. But that is in the hands of others besides ourselves. And we must be prepared for a long, continued conflict. It will require patience as well as bravery, the will to endure as well as the will to resist.

I wish it were possible to convince others with words of what we now find it necessary to say with guns and planes: Armed hostility is futile. Our resources are equal to any challenge because we fight for values and we fight for principles, rather than territory or colonies. Our patience and determination are unending.

Once this is clear, then it should also be clear that the only path for reasonable men is the path of peaceful settlement.

Such peace demands an independent South Vietnam securely guaranteed and able to shape its



own relationships to all others, free from outside interference, tied to no alliance, a military base for no other country.

These are the essentials of any final settlement.

We will never be second in the search for such a peaceful settlement in Vietnam.

There may be many ways to this kind of peace: in discussion or negotiation with the governments concerned; in large groups or in small ones; on the reaffirmation of old agreements or their strengthening with new ones.

We have stated this position over and over again fifty times and more, to friend and foe alike. And we remain ready with this purpose, for unconditional discussions.

And until that bright and necessary day of peace we will try to keep conflict from spreading. We have no desire to see thousands die in battle, Asians or Americans. We have no desire to devastate that which the people of North Vietnam have built with toil and sacrifice. We will use our power with restraint and with all the wisdom we can command. But we will use it.

This war, like most wars, is filled with terrible irony. For what do the people of North Vietnam want? They want what their neighbors also desire: food for their hunger, health for their bodies, and a chance to learn, progress for their country, and an end to the bondage of material misery. And they would find all these things far more readily in peaceful association with others than in the endless course of battle.

These countries of Southeast Asia are homes for millions of impoverished people. Each day these people rise at dawn and struggle until the night to wrest existence from the soil. They are often wracked by disease, plagued by hunger, and death comes at the early age of 40.

Stability and peace do not come easily in such a land. Neither independence nor human dignity will ever be won by arms alone. It also requires the works of peace.

The American people have helped generously in times past in these works.

Now there must be a much more massive effort to improve the life of man in the conflict-torn corner of our world.

The first step is for the countries of Southeast Asia to associate themselves in a greatly expanded cooperative effort for development. We would hope that North Vietnam will take its place in the common effort just as soon as peaceful cooperation is possible.

The United Nations is already actively engaged in development in this area, and as far back as 1961 I conferred with our authorities in Vietnam in connection with their work there.

I would hope that the Secretary-General of the United Nations could use the prestige of his great office, and his deep knowledge of Asia, to initiate, as soon as possible, with the countries of the area, a plan for cooperation in increased development.

For our part I will ask the Congress to join in a billion-dollar American investment in this effort as soon as it is under way. And I hope all other industrialized countries, including the [Soviet Union](#), will join in this effort to replace despair with hope, and terror with progress.

The task is nothing less than to enrich the hopes and existence of more than a hundred million people. And there is much to be done.

The vast [Mekong River](#) can provide food and water and power on a scale to dwarf even our own TVA.

The wonders of modern medicine can be spread through villages where thousands die every year from lack of care. Schools can be established to train people in the skills that are needed to manage the process of development.

And these objectives, and more, are within the reach of a cooperative and determined effort.

I also intend to expand and speed up a program to make available our farm surplus to assist in feeding and clothing the needy in Asia. We should not allow people to go hungry and wear rags while our own warehouses overflow with an abundance of wheat and corn, rice and cotton.

I will very shortly name a special team of patriotic and distinguished Americans to inaugurate our participation in these programs. This team will be headed by Mr. Eugene Black, the very able former president of the World Bank.

In areas still ripped by conflict, of course, development will not be easy. Peace will be necessary for final success. But we cannot wait for peace to begin the job.

This will be a disorderly planet for a long time. In Asia, as elsewhere, the forces of the modern world are shaking old ways and uprooting ancient civilizations. There will be turbulence and struggle and even violence. Great social change, as we see in our own country, does not always come without conflict.

We must also expect that nations will on occasion be in dispute with us. It may be because we are rich, or powerful, or because we have made mistakes, or because they honestly fear our intentions. However, no nation need ever fear that we desire their land, or to impose our will, or to dictate their institutions.

But we will always oppose the effort of one nation to conquer another nation.

We will do this because our own security is at stake.

But there is more to it than that. For our generation has a dream. It is a very old dream. But we have the power and now we have the opportunity to make it come true.

For centuries, nations have struggled among each other. But we dream of a world where disputes are settled by law and reason. And we will try to make it so.

For most of history men have hated and killed one another in battle. But we dream of an end to war. And we will try to make it so.

For all existence most men have lived in poverty, threatened by hunger. But we dream of a world where all are fed and charged with hope. And we will help to make it so.

The ordinary men and women of North Vietnam and South Vietnam--of China and India--of Russia and America--are brave people. They are filled with the same proportions of hate and fear, of love and hope. Most of them want the same things for themselves and their families. Most of them do not want their sons ever to die in battle, or see the homes of others destroyed....

Every night before I turn out the lights to sleep, I ask myself this question:

Have I done everything that I can do to unite this country? Have I done everything I can to help unite the world, to try to bring peace and hope to all the peoples of the world? Have I done enough?

Ask yourselves that question in your homes and in this hall tonight. Have we done all we could? Have we done enough?

We may well be living in the time foretold many years ago when it was said: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

This generation of the world must choose: destroy or build, kill or aid, hate or understand.

We can do all these things on a scale never dreamed of before.

We will choose life. And so doing we will prevail over the enemies within man, and over the natural enemies of all mankind.

## Letter from President Nixon to Premier Pham Van Dong February 1, 1973

Source: *Aid to North Vietnam*. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asia and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 95th Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1979). Appendix 2, p. 25.

The President wishes to inform the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) of the principles which will govern United States participation in the postwar reconstruction of North Vietnam. As indicated in Article 21 of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam signed in Paris on Jan. 27, 1973, the United States undertakes this participation in accordance with its traditional policies. These principles are as follows:

1. The Government of the United States of America will contribute to postwar reconstruction in North Vietnam without any political conditions.
2. Preliminary United States studies indicate that the appropriate programs for the United States contribution to postwar reconstruction will fall in the range of \$3.25 billion of grant aid over five years. Other forms of aid will be agreed upon between the two parties. This estimate is subject to revision and to detailed discussion between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Democratic Republic [of] Vietnam.
3. The United States will propose to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam the establishment of a United States-North Vietnamese Joint Economic Commission within 30 days from the date of this message.
4. The function of the commission will be to develop programs for the United States contribution to reconstruction of North Vietnam. This United States contribution will be based upon such factors as:
  - (a) The needs of North Vietnam arising from the dislocation of war;
  - (b) The requirements for postwar reconstruction in the agricultural and industrial sectors of North Vietnam's economy.
5. The Joint Economic Commission will have an equal number of representatives from each side. It will agree upon a mechanism to administer the program which will constitute the United States contribution to the reconstruction of North Vietnam. The commission will attempt to complete this agreement within 60 days after its establishment.
6. The two members of the commission will function on the principle of respect for each other's sovereignty, noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit. The offices of the commission will be located at a place to be agreed upon by the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
7. The United States considers that the implementation of the foregoing principles will prompt economic, trade and other relations between the United States of America and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and will contribute to the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam which was signed in Paris on Jan. 27, 1973.

It is understood that the recommendations of the Joint Economic Commission mentioned in the President's note to the Prime Minister will be implemented by each member in accordance with its own constitutional provisions.

In regard to other forms of aid, United States studies indicate that the appropriate programs could fall in the range of \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion, depending on food and other commodity needs of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

## **Manifesto of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation**

Source: *South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation, Documents* (Giai Phong Publishing House, December 1968), pp. 11-18.

Compatriots in the country and abroad!

Over the past hundred years the Vietnamese people repeatedly rose up to fight against foreign aggression for the independence and freedom of their fatherland. In 1945, the people throughout the country surged up in an armed uprising, overthrew the Japanese and French domination, and seized power. When the French colonialists invaded our country for the second time, our compatriots, determined not to be enslaved again, shed much blood and laid down many lives to defend their national sovereignty and independence. Their solidarity and heroic struggle during nine years led the resistance war to victory. The [1954 Geneva Agreements](#) restored peace in our country and recognized "the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Viet Nam."

Our compatriots in South Viet Nam would have been able to live in peace, to earn their livelihood in security and to build a decent and happy life.

However, the American imperialists, who had in the past helped the French colonialists to massacre our people, have now replaced the French in enslaving the southern part of our country through a disguised colonial regime. They have been using their stooge--the [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) administration--in their downright repression and exploitation of our compatriots, in their maneuvers to permanently divide our country and to turn its Southern part into a military base in preparation for war in Southeast Asia.

The aggressors and traitors, working hand in glove with each other, have set up an extremely cruel dictatorial rule. They persecute and massacre democratic and patriotic people, and abolish all human liberties. They ruthlessly exploit the workers, peasants and other laboring people, strangle the local industry and trade, poison the minds of our people with a depraved foreign culture, thus degrading our national culture, traditions and ethics. They feverishly increase their military forces, build military bases, use the army as an instrument for repressing the people and serving the U.S. imperialists' scheme to prepare an aggressive war.

Never, over the past six years, have gun shots massacring our compatriots ceased to resound throughout [South Viet Nam](#). Tens of thousands of patriots here have been murdered and hundreds of thousands thrown into jail. All sections of the people have been living in a stifling atmosphere under the iron heel of the U.S.-Diem clique. Countless families have been torn away and scenes of mourning are seen everywhere as a result of unemployment, poverty, exacting taxes, terror, massacre, drafting of manpower and press ganging, usurpation of land, forcible house removal, and herding of the people into "prosperity zones," "resettlement centres," and other forms of concentration camps.

High anger with the present tyrannical regime is boiling among all strata of the people. Undaunted in the face of barbarous persecution, our compatriots are determined to unite and struggle unflinchingly against the U.S. imperialists' policy of aggression and the dictatorial and nepotistic regime of the Ngo Dinh Diem clique. Among workers, peasants and other toiling people, among intellectuals, students and pupils, industrialists and traders, religious sects and national minorities, patriotic activities are gaining in scope and strength, seriously shaking the U.S.-Diem dictatorial regime.

The attempted coup d'etat of November 11, 1960 in [Saigon](#) in some respects reflected the seething anger among the people and army men, and the rottenness and decline of the U.S.-Diem regime. However, there were among the leaders of this coup political speculators who, misusing the patriotism of the army men, preferred negotiation and compromise rather than to overthrow Ngo Dinh Diem. Like Ngo Dinh Diem, they persisted in following the pro-American and traitorous path, and also used the anti-Communist signboard to oppose the people. That is why the coup was not supported by the people and large numbers of army men and, consequently, ended in

failure.

At present, our people are urgently demanding an end to the cruel dictatorial rule; they are demanding independence and democracy, enough food and clothing, and peaceful reunification of the country.

To meet the aspirations of our compatriots, the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation came into being, pledging itself to shoulder the historic task of liberating our people from the present yoke of slavery.

The South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation undertakes to unite all sections of the people, all social classes, nationalities, political parties, organizations, religious communities and patriotic personalities, without distinction of their political tendencies, in order to struggle for the overthrow of the rule of the U.S. imperialists and their stooges--the Ngo Dinh Diem clique--and for the realization of independence, democracy, peace and [neutrality](#) pending the peaceful reunification of the fatherland.

The South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation calls on the entire people to unite and heroically rise up as one man to fight along the line of a program of action summarized as follows:

1. To overthrow the disguised colonial regime of the U.S. imperialists and the dictatorial Ngo Dinh Diem administration--lackey of the United States--and to form a national democratic coalition administration.
2. To bring into being a broad and progressive democracy, promulgate freedom of expression, of the press, of belief, of assembly, of association, of movement and other democratic freedoms. To grant general amnesty to all political detainees, dissolve all concentration camps dubbed "prosperity zones" and "resettlement centres," abolish the fascist 10-59 law and other anti-democratic laws.
3. To abolish the economic monopoly of the United States and its henchmen, to protect home-made products, encourage home industry and trade, expand agriculture and build an independent and sovereign economy. To provide jobs for the unemployed, increase wages for workers, army men and office employees. To abolish arbitrary fines and apply an equitable and rational tax system. To help those who have gone South to return to their native places if they so desire, and to provide jobs for those among them who want to remain in the South.
4. To carry out land rent reduction, guarantee the peasants' right to till their present plots of land, redistribute communal land and advance toward [land reform](#).
5. To do away with enslaving and depraved U.S.-style culture, build a national and progressive culture and education. To wipe out illiteracy, open more schools, carry out reforms in the educational and examination system.
6. To abolish the system of American military advisers, eliminate foreign military bases in Viet Nam and build a national army for the defense of the fatherland and the people.
7. To guarantee equality between men and women and among different nationalities, and the right to autonomy of the national minorities; to protect the legitimate interests of foreign residents in Viet Nam; to protect and take care of the interests of Vietnamese living abroad.
8. To carry out a foreign policy of peace and neutrality, to establish diplomatic relations with all countries which respect the independence and sovereignty of Viet Nam.
9. To re-establish normal relations between the two zones, pending the peaceful reunification of the fatherland.
10. To oppose aggressive war; to actively defend world peace.

Compatriots!

Ours are a heroic people with a tradition of unity and indomitable struggle. We cannot let our country be plunged into darkness and mourning. We are determined to shatter the fetters of slavery, and wrest back independence and freedom.

Let us all rise up and unite!

Let us close our ranks and fight under the banner of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation to overthrow the rule of the U.S. imperialists and Ngo Dinh Diem--their henchman.

Workers, peasants and other toiling people! The oppression and misery which are now heavily weighting on you must be ended. You have the strength of tens of millions of people. Stand up enthusiastically to save your families and our fatherland.

Intellectuals! The dictatorial rulers have stripped us of the most elementary human rights. You are living in humiliation and misery. For our great cause, stand up resolutely!

Industrialists and traders! A country under the sway of foreign sharks cannot have an independent and sovereign economy. You should join in the people's struggle.

Compatriots of all national minorities! Compatriots of all religious communities! Unity is life, disunity is death. Smash all U.S.-Diem schemes of division. Side with the entire people in the struggle for independence, freedom and equality among all nationalities.

Notables! The interests of the nation are above all else. Support actively the struggle for the overthrow of the cruel aggressors and traitors.

Patriotic officers and soldiers! You have arms in your hands. Listen to the sacred call of the fatherland. Be definitely on the side of the people. Your compatriots have faith in your patriotism.

Young men and women! You are the future of the nation. You should devote your youthful ardour to serving the fatherland.

Compatriots living abroad! Turn your thoughts toward the beloved fatherland, contribute actively to the sacred struggle for national liberation.

At present the movement for peace, democracy and national independence is surging up throughout the world. Colonialism is irretrievably disintegrating. The time when the imperialists could plunder and subjugate the people at will is over. This situation is extremely favorable for the struggle to free South Viet Nam from the yoke of the U.S. imperialists and their stooges. Peace-loving and progressive people in the world are supporting us. Justice is on our side, and we have the prodigious strength of the unity of our entire people. We will certainly win! The U.S. imperialist aggressors and the Ngo Dinh Diem traitorous clique will certainly be defeated. The cause of liberation of South Viet Nam will certainly triumph.

Compatriots around the country!

Let us unite and march forward confidently and valiantly to score brilliant victories for our people and our fatherland!

## McGovern: Vietnamization will Extend the War

[George S. McGovern](#)

Source: George S. McGovern, statement before [U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations](#), February 4, 1970.

Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, the resolution that I have submitted with the cosponsorship of Senators Church, Cranston, Goodell, Hughes McCarthy, Moss, Nelson, Ribicoff, and Young of Ohio calls for the [withdrawal](#) from Vietnam of all U.S. forces, the pace to be limited only by these three considerations: the safety of our troops during the withdrawal process, the mutual release of [prisoners of war](#), and arrangements for asylum in friendly countries for any Vietnamese who might feel endangered by our disengagement. (I have recently been advised by the Department of Defense that the 484,000 men we now have in Vietnam could be transported to the United States at a total cost of \$144,519,621.)

This process of orderly withdrawal could be completed, I believe, in less than a year's time.

Such a policy of purposeful disengagement is the only appropriate response to the blunt truth that there will be no resolution of the war so long as we cling to the Thieu-Ky regime. That government has no dependable political base other than the American military presence and it will never be accepted either by its challengers in [South Vietnam](#) or in [Hanoi](#).

We can continue to pour our blood and substance into a never ending effort to support the [Saigon](#) hierarchy or we can have peace, but we cannot have both General Thieu and an end to the war.

Our continued military embrace of the Saigon regime is the major barrier, both to peace in Southeast Asia and to the healing of our society. It assures that the South Vietnamese generals will take no action to build a truly representative government which can either compete with the NLF or negotiate a settlement of the war. It deadlocks the Paris negotiations and prevents the scheduling of serious discussions on the release and exchange of prisoners of war. It diverts our energies from critical domestic needs. It sends young Americans to be maimed or killed in a war that we cannot win and that will not end so long as our forces are there in support of General [Thieu](#).

I have long believed that there can be no settlement of the Vietnam struggle until some kind of provisional coalition government assumes control in Saigon. But this is precisely what General Thieu will never consider. After the Midway conference last June he said, "I solemnly declare that there will be no coalition government, no peace cabinet, no transitional government, not even a reconciliatory government."

Although President [Nixon](#) has placed General Thieu as one of the two or three greatest statesmen of our age, Thieu has brushed off the suggestion that he broaden his government and has denounced those who advocate or suggest a negotiated peace as pro-Communist racketeers and traitors. A coalition government means death, he has said.

Mr. Chairman, let us not delude ourselves. This is a clear prescription for an endless war, and changing its name to [Vietnamization](#) still leaves us tied to a regime that cannot successfully wage war or make peace.

When administration officials expressed the view that American combat forces might be out of Vietnam by the end of 1970, General Thieu called a press conference last month and insisted that this was an "impossible and impractical goal" and that instead withdrawal "will take many years."

And yet there is wide currency to the view that America's course in Southeast Asia is no longer an issue, that the policy of Vietnamization promises an early end of hostilities. That is a false hope emphatically contradicted not only by our ally in Saigon but by the tragic lessons of the past decade.

As I understand the proposal, Vietnamization directs the withdrawal of American troops only as the

Saigon armed forces demonstrate their ability to take over the war. Yet a preponderance of evidence indicates that the Vietnamese people do not feel the Saigon regime is worth fighting for. Without local support, "Vietnamization" becomes a plan for the permanent deployment of American combat troops, and not a strategy for disengagement. The President has created a fourth branch of the American Government by giving Saigon a veto over American foreign policy.

If we follow our present policy in Vietnam, there will still be an American Army in my opinion, of 250,000 or 300,000 men in Southeast Asia 15 or 20 years hence or perhaps indefinitely. Meanwhile American firepower and bombardment will have killed more tens of thousands of Vietnamese who want nothing other than an end of the war. All this to save a corrupt, unrepresentative regime in Saigon.

Any military escalation by Hanoi or the [Vietcong](#) would pose a challenge to American forces which would require heavier American military action and, therefore, heavier American [casualties](#), or we would be faced with the possibility of a costly, forced withdrawal.

The Vietnamization policy is based on the same false premises which have doomed to failure our previous military efforts in Vietnam. It assumes that the Thieu-Ky regime in Saigon stands for freedom and a popularly backed regime. Actually, the Saigon regime is an oppressive dictatorship which jails its critics and blocks the development of a broadly based government. Last June 20, the Saigon minister for liaison for parliament, Von Huu Thu, confirmed that 34,540 political prisoners were being held and that many of those people were non-Communists who were guilty of nothing more than advocating a neutral peaceful future for their country. In proportion to population the political prisoners held by Saigon would be the equivalent of a half million political prisoners in the United States.

The Thieu-Ky regime is no closer to American ideals than its challenger, the National Liberation Front. Indeed self-determination and independence are probably far stronger among the Vietnamese guerrillas and their supporters than within the Saigon Government camp.

I have never felt that American interests and ideals were represented by the Saigon generals or their corrupt predecessors. We should cease our embrace of this regime now and cease telling the American people that it stands for freedom.

I should like to make clear that I am opposed to both the principle and the practice of the policy of Vietnamization. I am opposed to the policy, whether it works by the standard of its proponents or does not work. I oppose as immoral and self-defeating a policy which gives either American arms or American blood to perpetuate a corrupt and unrepresentative foreign regime. It is not in the interests of either the American or the Vietnamese people to maintain such a government.

I find it morally and politically repugnant for us to create a client group of Vietnamese generals in Saigon and then give them murderous military technology to turn against their own people.

Vietnamization is basically an effort to tranquilize the conscience of the American people while our Government wages a cruel and needless war by proxy.

An enlightened American foreign policy would cease trying to dictate the outcome of an essentially local struggle involving various groups of Vietnamese. If we are concerned about a future threat to Southeast Asia from [China](#), let us have the common sense to recognize that a strong independent regime even though organized by the National Liberation Front and Hanoi would provide a more dependable barrier to [Chinese](#) imperialism than the weak puppet regime we have kept in power at the cost of 40,000 American lives and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese lives.

Even if we could remove most of our forces from Vietnam, how could we justify before God and man the use of our massive firepower to continue a slaughter that neither serves our interests nor the interests of the Vietnamese.

The policy of Vietnamization is a cruel hoax designed to screen from the American people the bankruptcy of a needless military involvement in the affairs of the Vietnamese people. Instead of



Vietnamizing the war let us encourage the Vietnamization of the government in South Vietnam. We can do that by removing the embrace that now prevents other political groups from assuming a leadership role in Saigon, groups that are capable of expressing the desire for peace of the Vietnamese people.

## Message from General Wheeler to all Pacific Commanders, March 30, 1968

Source: Document declassified by the Department of Defense.

1. The referenced message apprises you that combat air operations against [North Vietnam](#) north of 20° North Latitude will be discontinued effective 0800 hours 1 April 1968, [Saigon](#) time. The purpose of this message is to acquaint you with the reasons for the cessation of air strikes.

2. At 2100 hours, 31 March, Washington time, the President will make an address to the Nation in which he will announce deployment of additional forces to [South Vietnam](#), including forces called to active duty from the Reserve Components. He feels it mandatory that, at the same time, he proclaim another initiative designed to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Southeast Asia in order to blunt accusations of escalation from the opposers of Administration policy in Southeast Asia.

3. The following factors are pertinent to his decision:

a. Since the [Tet offensive](#) support of the American public and the Congress for the war in SEA has decreased at an accelerating rate. Many of the strongest proponents of forceful action in Vietnam have reversed their positions, have moved to neutral ground, or are wavering. If this trend continues unchecked, public support of our objectives in SEA will be too frail to sustain the effort.

b. Weather over the northern portion of North Vietnam will continue unsuitable for air operations during the next 30 days; therefore, if a cessation of air operations is to be undertaken, now is the best time from the military viewpoint.

c. It is hoped that this unilateral initiative to seek peace will reverse the growing dissent and opposition within our society to the war.

d. The initiative will aid in countering foreign criticism.

e. President [Thieu](#) has been consulted and agrees to the cessation.

4. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have been apprised of the unilateral initiative to be taken, understand the reasons therefore, and they enjoin all commanders to support the decision of the President. In this connection, addressees, without citing the source or mentioning the President, should draw on this message in talking to subordinate commanders to solicit their understanding and support. In particular, every effort should be made to discourage military personnel from expressing criticism to news media representatives. I recognize that this is a delicate matter and one which cannot be approached on the basis of issuing fiat; rather, the attitudes of commanders will probably be most influential in guiding the reaction of their subordinates.

5. For Admiral [Sharp](#): Secretary [Rusk](#) has been requested by Secretary [Clifford](#) to discuss fully with you the situation in this country which I have sketched above and to acquaint you fully with the problems we face here.

6. Information contained in paragraphs 1 and 2 is time-sensitive. I request you use it prior to the President's address with utmost discretion. Warm regards to all.

## Nixon: Vietnamization will Shorten the War

[Richard M. Nixon](#)

Source: Richard M. Nixon, speech delivered on national [television](#), November 3, 1969.

Fifteen years ago [North Vietnam](#), with the logistical support of Communist [China](#) and the [Soviet Union](#), launched a campaign to impose a Communist government on [South Vietnam](#) by instigating and supporting a revolution.

In response to the request of the government of [South Vietnam](#), President [Eisenhower](#) sent economic aid and military equipment to assist the people of South Vietnam in their efforts to prevent a Communist takeover. Seven years ago, [President Kennedy](#) sent 16,000 military personnel to Vietnam as combat advisors. Four years ago, President [Johnson](#) sent American combat forces to South Vietnam....

For these reasons, I rejected the recommendation that I should end the war by immediately withdrawing all our forces. I chose instead to change American policy on both the negotiating front and the battlefield....

Obstacle to Peace

It has become clear that the obstacle in negotiating an end to the war is not the President of the United States. And it is not the South Vietnamese.

The obstacle is the other side's absolute refusal to show the least willingness to join us in seeking a just peace. It will not do so while it is convinced that all it has to do is to wait for our next concession, and the next until it gets everything it wants.

There can now be no longer any question that progress in negotiation depends only on [Hanoi's](#) deciding to negotiate, to negotiate seriously.

I realize that this report on our efforts on the diplomatic fronts is discouraging to the American people, but the American people are entitled to know the truth--the bad news as well as the good news, where the lives of our young men are involved.

Now let me turn, however, to a more encouraging report on another front. At the time we launched our search for peace I recognized we might not succeed in bringing an end to the war through negotiation. I, therefore, put into effect another plan to bring peace--a plan which will bring the war to an end regardless of what happens on the negotiating front.

The [Nixon Doctrine](#)

It is in line with a major shift in U.S. foreign policy which I described in my press conference at Guam on July 25. Let me briefly explain what has been described as the Nixon Doctrine--a policy which not only will help end the war in Vietnam. but which is an essential element of our program to prevent future Vietnams.

We Americans are a do-it-yourself-people. We are an impatient people. Instead of teaching someone else to do a job, we like to do it ourselves. And this trait has been carried over into our foreign policy.

In [Korea](#) and again in Vietnam, the United States furnished most of the money, most of the arms, and most of the men to help the people of those countries defend their freedom against the Communist aggression.

Before any American troops were committed to Vietnam, a leader of another Asian country expressed this opinion to me when I was traveling in Asia as a private citizen. He said, "When you are trying to assist another nation defend its freedom, U.S. policy should be to help them fight the war but not to fight the war for them."

Well, in accordance with this wise counsel, I laid down in Guam three principles as guidelines for

future American policy toward Asia:

First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments.

Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security.

Third, in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.

After I announced this policy, I found that the leaders of the [Philippines](#), [Thailand](#), Vietnam, South Korea, and other nations which might be threatened by Communist aggression, welcomed this new direction in American foreign policy.

#### Vietnamization

The defense of freedom is everybody's business--not just America's business. And it is particularly the responsibility of the people whose freedom is threatened. In the previous Administration, we Americanized the war in Vietnam. In this Administration, we are Vietnamizing the search for peace.

The policy of the previous Administration not only resulted in our assuming the primary responsibility for fighting the war but even more significantly did not adequately stress the goal of strengthening the South Vietnamese so that they could defend themselves when we left.

The Vietnamization Plan was launched following Secretary [Laird](#)'s visit to Vietnam in March. Under the plan, I ordered first a substantial increase in the training and equipment of South Vietnamese forces.

In July, on my visit to Vietnam, I changed General [Abrams](#)' orders so that they were consistent with the objectives of our new policies. Under the new orders, the primary mission of our troops is to enable the South Vietnamese forces to assume the full responsibility for the security of South Vietnam.

Our air operations have been reduced by over 20 percent.

And now we have begun to see the results of this long overdue change in American policy in Vietnam.

#### Significant Results

After five years of Americans going into Vietnam, we are finally bringing American men home. By December 15, over 60,000 men will have been withdrawn from South Vietnam--including 20 percent of all of our combat forces.

The South Vietnamese have continued to gain in strength. As a result they have been able to take over combat responsibilities from our American troops.

Two other significant developments have occurred since this Administration took office.

Enemy [infiltration](#), infiltration which is essential if they are to launch a major attack, over the last three months is less than 20 percent of what it was over the same period last year.

Most important--United States [casualties](#) have declined during the last two months to the lowest point in three years.

Let me now turn to our program for the future.

We have adopted a plan which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete [withdrawal](#) of all U.S. combat ground forces, and their replacement by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled timetable. This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness. As South Vietnamese forces become stronger, the rate of American

withdrawal can become greater.

#### No Timetable for Withdrawal

I have not and do not intend to announce the timetable for our program. There are obvious reasons for this decision which I am sure you will understand. As I have indicated on several occasions, the rate of withdrawal will depend on developments on three fronts.

One of these is the progress which can be or might be made in the Paris talks. An announcement of a fixed timetable for our withdrawal would completely remove any incentive for the enemy to negotiate an agreement.

They would simply wait until our forces had withdrawn and then move in.

The other two factors on which we will base our withdrawal decisions are the level of enemy activity and the progress of the training program of the South Vietnamese forces. I am glad to be able to report tonight progress on both of these fronts has been greater than we anticipated when we started the program in June for withdrawal. As a result, our timetable for withdrawal is more optimistic now than when we made our first estimates in June. This clearly demonstrates why it is not wise to be frozen in on a fixed timetable. We must retain the flexibility to base each withdrawal decision on the situation as it is at that time rather than on estimates that are no longer valid.

Along with this optimistic estimate, I must--in all candor--leave one note of caution.

If the level of enemy activity significantly increases we might have to adjust our timetable accordingly.

#### No Misunderstandings

However, I want the record to be completely clear on one point.

At the time of the bombing halt just a year ago, there was some confusion as to whether there was an understanding on the part of the enemy that if we stopped the bombing of North Vietnam they would stop the shelling of cities in South Vietnam. I want to be sure that there is no misunderstanding on the part of the enemy with regard to our withdrawal program.

We have noted the reduced level of infiltration, the reduction of our casualties, and are basing our withdrawal decisions partially on those factors.

If the level of infiltration or our casualties increase while we are trying to scale down the fighting, it will be the result of a conscious decision by the enemy.

Hanoi could make no greater mistake than to assume that an increase in violence will be to its advantage. If I conclude that increased enemy action jeopardizes our remaining forces in Vietnam, I shall not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation.

This is not a threat. This is a statement of policy which as Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces I am making in meeting my responsibility for the protection of American fighting men wherever they may be.

#### Only Two Choices

My fellow Americans, I am sure you recognize from what I have said that we really only have two choices open to us if we want to end this war.

I can order an immediate, precipitate withdrawal of all Americans from Vietnam without regard to the effects of that action.

Or we can persist in our search for a just peace through a negotiated settlement if possible, or through continued implementation of our plan for Vietnamization if necessary--a plan in which we will withdraw all of our forces from Vietnam on a schedule in accordance with our program, as the South Vietnamese become strong enough to defend their own freedom.

I have chosen the second course. It is not the easy way. It is the right way.

It is a plan which will end the war and serve the cause of peace--not just in Vietnam but in the Pacific and in the world.

In speaking of the consequences of a precipitate withdrawal, I mentioned that our allies would lose confidence in America.

Far more dangerous, we would lose confidence in ourselves. The immediate reaction would be a sense of relief that our men were coming home. But as we saw the consequences of what we had done, inevitable remorse and divisive recrimination would scar our spirit as a people.

We have faced other crises in our history and have become stronger by rejecting the easy way out and taking the right way in meeting our challenges. Our greatness as a nation has been our capacity to do what had to be done when we knew our course was right.

## President Eisenhower Explains the Domino Theory, April 7, 1954

Source: Presidential Press Conference, April 7, 1954.

Q: Robert Richards, Copley Press: Mr. President, would you mind commenting on the strategic importance of [Indochina](#) to the free world? I think there has been, across the country, some lack of understanding on just what it means to us.

The President: You have, of course, both the specific and the general when you talk about such things.

First of all, you have the specific value of a locality in its production of materials that the world needs.

Then you have the possibility that many human beings pass under a dictatorship that is inimical to the free world.

Finally, you have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the "[falling domino](#)" principle. You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences.

Now, with respect to the first one, two of the items from this particular area that the world uses are tin and tungsten. They are very important. There are others, of course, the rubber plantations and so on.

Then with respect to more people passing under this domination. Asia, after all, has already lost some 450 million of its peoples to the Communist dictatorship, and we simply can't afford greater losses.

But when we come to the possible sequence of events, the loss of Indochina, of Burma, of [Thailand](#), of the Peninsula, and Indonesia following, now you begin to talk about areas that not only multiply the disadvantages that you would suffer through loss of materials, sources of materials, but now you are talking about millions and millions and millions of people.

Finally, the geographical position achieved thereby does many things. It turns the so-called island defensive chain of [Japan](#), Formosa, of the [Philippines](#) and to the southward; it moves in to threaten [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#).

It takes away, in its economic aspects, that region that Japan must have as a trading area or Japan, in turn, will have only one place in the world to go that is, toward the Communist areas in order to live.

So, the possible consequences of the loss are just incalculable to the free world.

## Report of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Covert Operations Team in Vietnam, 1955

### Central Intelligence Agency

Source: *The Pentagon Papers* as Published by *The New York Times* (Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 53-66 (excerpts).

Towards the end of the month, it was learned that the largest printing establishment in the north intended to remain in [Hanoi](#) and do business with the [Vietminh](#). An attempt was made by SMM [Saigon Military Mission] to destroy the modern presses, but Viet Minh security agents already had moved into the plant and frustrated the attempt. This operation was under a Vietnamese patriot whom we shall call Trieu; his case officer was Capt. Arundel. Earlier in the month they had engineered a black [psywar](#) strike in Hanoi: leaflets signed by the Vietminh instructing Tonkinese on how to behave for the Vietminh takeover of the Hanoi region in early October, including items about property, money reform, and a three-day holiday of workers upon takeover. The day following the distribution of these leaflets, refugee registration tripled. Two days later Vietminh currency was worth half the value prior to the leaflets. The Vietminh took to the radio to denounce the leaflets; the leaflets were so authentic in appearance that even most of the rank and file Vietminh were sure that the radio denunciations were a French trick.

The Hanoi psywar strike had other consequences. Binh had enlisted a high police official of Hanoi as part of his team, to effect the release from jail of any team members if arrested. The official at the last moment decided to assist in the leaflet distribution personally. Police officers spotted him, chased his vehicle through the empty Hanoi streets of early morning, finally opened fire on him and caught him. He was the only member of the group caught. He was held in prison as a Vietminh agent.

Hanoi was evacuated on 9 October. The northern SMM team left with the last French troops, disturbed by what they had seen of the grim efficiency of the Vietminh in their takeover, the contrast between the silent march of the victorious Vietminh troops in their tennis shoes and the clanking armor of the well-equipped French whose Western tactics and equipment had failed against the Communist military-political-economic campaign.

The northern team had spent the last days of Hanoi in contaminating the oil supply of the bus company for a gradual wreckage of engines in the buses, in taking the first actions for delayed sabotage of the railroad (which required teamwork with a CIA special technical team in [Japan](#) who performed their part brilliantly), and in writing detailed notes of potential targets for future paramilitary operations (U.S. adherence to the [Geneva Agreement](#) prevented SMM from carrying out the active sabotage it desired to do against the power plant, water facilities, harbor, and bridge). The team had a bad moment when contaminating the oil. They had to work quickly at night, in an enclosed storage room. Fumes from the contaminant came close to knocking them out. Dizzy and weak-kneed, they masked their faces with handkerchiefs and completed the job.

Meanwhile, Polish and Russian ships had arrived in the south to transport southern Vietminh to Tonkin under the Geneva Agreement. This offered the opportunity for another black psywar strike. A leaflet was developed by Binh with the help of Capt. Arundel, attributed to the Vietminh Resistance Committee. Among other items, it reassured the Vietminh they would be kept safe below decks from imperialist air and submarine attacks, and requested that warm clothing be brought; the warm clothing item would be coupled with a verbal rumor campaign that Vietminh were being sent into [China](#) as railroad laborers.

SMM had been busily developing G-5 of the Vietnamese Army for such psywar efforts. Under Arundel's direction, the First Armed Propaganda Company printed the leaflets and distributed them, by soldiers in civilian clothes who penetrated into Southern Vietminh zones on foot. (Distribution in Camau was made while columnist Joseph Alsop was on his visit there which led to his sensational, gloomy articles later; our soldier "Vietminh" failed in an attempt to get the leaflet into Alsop's hands in Camau; Alsop was never told this story)...



The patriot we've named Trieu Dinh had been working on an almanac for popular sale, particularly in the northern cities and towns we could still reach. Noted Vietnamese astrologers were hired to write predictions about coming disasters to certain Vietminh leaders and undertakings, and to predict unity in the south. The work was carried out under the direction of Lt. Phillips, based on our concept of the use of astrology for psywar in Southeast Asia. Copies of the almanac were shipped by air to Haiphong and then smuggled into Vietminh territory.

Dinh also had produced a Thomas Paine type series of essays on Vietnamese patriotism against the Communist Vietminh, under the guidance of Capt. Arundel. These essays were circulated among influential groups in Vietnam; earned front-page editorials in the leading daily newspaper in Saigon. Circulation increased with the publication of these essays; the publisher is known to SMM as The Dragon Lady and is a fine Vietnamese girl who has been the mistress of an anti-American French civilian. Despite anti-American remarks by her boyfriend, we had helped her keep her paper from being closed by the government and she found it profitable to heed our advice on the editorial content of her paper.

Arms and equipment for the Binh paramilitary team were being cached in the north in areas still free from the Vietminh. Personnel movements were covered by the flow of [refugees](#). Haiphong was reminiscent of our own pioneer days as it was swamped with people whom it couldn't shelter. Living space and food were at a premium; nervous tension grew. It was a wild time for our northern team.

First supplies for the Hao paramilitary group started to arrive in Saigon. These shipments and the earlier ones for the Binh group were part of an efficient air smuggling effort by the 581st [word illegible] Wing, U.S. Air Force, to support SMM, with help by CIA and Air Force personnel in both Okinawa and the [Philippines](#). SMM officers frequently did coolie labor in manhandling tons of cargo... By 31 January, all operational equipment of the Binh paramilitary group had been trans-shipped to Haiphong from Saigon, mostly with the help of CAT [Civilian Air Transport], and the northern SMM team had it cached in operational sites. Security measures were tightened at the Haiphong airport and plans for bringing in the Hao equipment were changed from the air route to sea. Task Force 98, now 98.7 under command of Captain Frank, again was asked to give a helping hand and did so....

... [Major Conein](#) had briefed the members of the Binh paramilitary team and started them infiltrating into the north as individuals. The [infiltration](#) was carried out in careful stages over a 30-day period, a successful operation. The Binhs became normal citizens, carrying out every day civil pursuits, on the surface.

We had smuggled into Vietnam about eight and a half tons of supplies for the Hao paramilitary group. They included fourteen agent radios, 300 carbines, 90,000 rounds of carbine ammunition, 50 pistols, 10,000 rounds of pistol ammunition, and 300 pounds of explosives. Two and a half tons were delivered to the Hao agents in Tonkin...

## Robert F. Kennedy Calls Vietnam an Unwinnable War, February 8, 1968

Source: *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, edited by Robert McMahon (D. C. Heath and Co., 1990), pp. 352-55.

Our enemy, savagely striking at will across all of [South Vietnam](#), has finally shattered the mask of official illusion with which we have concealed our true circumstances, even from ourselves. But a short time ago we were serene in our reports and predictions of progress.

The [Vietcong](#) will probably withdraw from the cities, as they were forced to withdraw from the American Embassy. Thousands of them will be dead.

But they will, nevertheless, have demonstrated that no part or person of South Vietnam is secure from their attacks: neither district capitals nor American bases, neither the peasant in his rice paddy nor the commanding general of our own great forces.

No one can predict the exact shape or outcome of the battles now in progress, in [Saigon](#) or at [Khesanh](#). Let us pray that we will succeed at the lowest possible cost to our young men.

But whatever their outcome, the events of the last two weeks have taught us something. For the sake of those young Americans who are fighting today, if for no other reason, the time has come to take a new look at the war in Vietnam; not by cursing the past but by using it to illuminate the future.

And the first and necessary step is to face the facts. It is to seek out the austere and painful reality of Vietnam, freed from wishful thinking, false hopes and sentimental dreams. It is to rid ourselves of the "good company," of those illusions which have lured us into the deepening swamp of Vietnam.

We must, first of all, rid ourselves of the illusion that the events of the past two weeks represent some sort of victory. That is not so.

It is said the Vietcong will not be able to hold the cities. This is probably true. But they have demonstrated despite all our reports of progress, of government strength and enemy weakness, that half a million American soldiers with 700,000 Vietnamese allies, with total command of the air, total command of the sea, backed by huge resources and the most modern weapons, are unable to secure even a single city from the attacks of an enemy whose total strength is about 250,000....

For years we have been told that the measure of our success and progress in Vietnam was increasing security and control for the population. Now we have seen that none of the population is secure and no area is under sure control.

Four years ago when we only had about 30,000 troops in Vietnam, the Vietcong were unable to mount the assaults on cities they have now conducted against our enormous forces. At one time a suggestion that we protect enclaves was derided. Now there are no protected enclaves.

This has not happened because our men are not brave or effective, because they are. It is because we have misconceived the nature of the war: It is because we have sought to resolve by military might a conflict whose issue depends upon the will and conviction of the South Vietnamese people. It is like sending a lion to halt an epidemic of jungle rot.

This misconception rests on a second illusion--the illusion that we can win a war which the South Vietnamese cannot win for themselves.

You cannot expect people to risk their lives and endure hardship unless they have a stake in their own society. They must have a clear sense of identification with their own government, a belief they are participating in a cause worth fighting for.

People will not fight to line the pockets of generals or swell the bank accounts of the wealthy. They are far more likely to close their eyes and shut their doors in the face of their government--even as they did last week.

More than any election, more than any proud boast, that single fact reveals the truth. We have an ally in name only. We support a government without supporters. Without the efforts of American arms that government would not last a day.

The third illusion is that the unswerving pursuit of military victory, whatever its cost, is in the interest of either ourselves or the people of Vietnam.

For the people of Vietnam, the last three years have meant little but horror. Their tiny land has been devastated by a weight of bombs and shells greater than Nazi Germany knew in the Second World War.

We have dropped 12 tons of bombs for every square mile in North and South Vietnam. Whole provinces have been substantially destroyed. More than two million South Vietnamese are now homeless [refugees](#).

Imagine the impact in our own country if an equivalent number--over 25 million Americans--were wandering homeless or interned in refugee camps, and millions more refugees were being created as New York and Chicago, Washington and Boston, were being destroyed by a war raging in their streets.

Whatever the outcome of these battles, it is the people we seek to defend who are the greatest losers.

Nor does it serve the interests of America to fight this war as if moral standards could be subordinated to immediate necessities. Last week, a Vietcong suspect was turned over to the chief of the Vietnamese Security Services, who executed him on the spot--a flat violation of the Geneva Convention on the Rules of War.

The photograph of the execution was on front pages all around the world--leading our best and oldest friends to ask, more in sorrow than in anger, what has happened to America?

The fourth illusion is that the American national interest is identical with--or should be subordinated to--the selfish interest of an incompetent military regime.

We are told, of course, that the battle for South Vietnam is in reality a struggle for 250 million Asians--the beginning of a [Great Society](#) for all of Asia. But this is pretension.

We can and should offer reasonable assistance to Asia; but we cannot build a Great Society there if we cannot build one in our own country. We cannot speak extravagantly of a struggle for 250 million Asians, when a struggle for 15 million in one Asian country so strains our forces, that another Asian country, a fourth-rate power which we have already once defeated in battle, dares to seize an American ship and hold and humiliate her crew.

The fifth illusion is that this war can be settled in our own way and in our own time on our own terms. Such a settlement is the privilege of the triumphant: of those who crush their enemies in battle or wear away their will to fight.

We have not done this, nor is there any prospect we will achieve such a victory.

Unable to defeat our enemy or break his will--at least without a huge, long and ever more costly effort--we must actively seek a peaceful settlement. We can no longer harden our terms every time [Hanoi](#) indicates it may be prepared to negotiate; and we must be willing to foresee a settlement which will give the Vietcong a chance to participate in the political life of the country.

These are some of the illusions which may be discarded if the events of last week are to prove not simply a tragedy, but a lesson: a lesson which carries with it some basic truths.

First, that a total military victory is not within sight or around the corner; that, in fact, it is probably beyond our grasp; and that the effort to win such a victory will only result in the future slaughter of thousands of innocent and helpless people--a slaughter which will forever rest on our national conscience.

Second, that the pursuit of such a victory is not necessary to our national interest, and is even damaging that interest.

Third, that the progress we have claimed toward increasing our control over the country and the security of the population is largely illusory.

Fourth, that the central battle in this war cannot be measured by body counts or bomb damage, but by the extent to which the people of South Vietnam act on a sense of common purpose and hope with those that govern them.

Fifth, that the current regime in Saigon is unwilling or incapable of being an effective ally in the war against the Communists.

Sixth, that a political compromise is not just the best path to peace, but the only path, and we must show as much willingness to risk some of our prestige for peace as to risk the lives of young men in war.

Seventh, that the escalation policy in Vietnam, far from strengthening and consolidating international resistance to aggression, is injuring our country through the world, reducing the faith of other peoples in our wisdom and purpose and weakening the world's resolve to stand together for freedom and peace.

Eighth, that the best way to save our most precious stake in Vietnam--the lives of our soldiers--is to stop the enlargement of the war, and that the best way to end [casualties](#) is to end the war.

Ninth, that our nation must be told the truth about this war, in all its terrible reality, both because it is right--and because only in this way can any Administration rally the public confidence and unity for the shadowed days which lie ahead.

No war has ever demanded more bravery from our people and our Government--not just bravery under fire or the bravery to make sacrifices--but the bravery to discard the comfort of illusion--to do away with false hopes and alluring promises.

Reality is grim and painful. But it is only a remote echo of the anguish toward which a policy founded on illusion is surely taking us.

This is a great nation and a strong people. Any who seek to comfort rather than speak plainly, reassure rather than instruct, promise satisfaction rather than reveal frustration - - they deny that greatness and drain that strength. For today as it was in the beginning, it is the truth that makes us free.

## Rusk: American Foreign Policy and International Law

### Dean Rusk

Source: *Department of State Bulletin* (May 10, 1965), pp. 694-700.

. . . American foreign policy is at once principled and pragmatic. Its central objective is our national safety and well-being--to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity." But we know we can no longer find security and well-being in defenses and policies that are confined to North America, or the Western Hemisphere, or the North Atlantic community.

This has become a very small planet. We have to be concerned with all of it--with all of its land, waters, atmosphere, and with surrounding space. We have a deep national interest in peace, the prevention of aggression, the faithful performance of agreements, the growth of international law. Our foreign policy is rooted in the profoundly practical realization that the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter must animate the behavior of states if mankind is to prosper or is even to survive. Or at least they must animate enough states with enough will and enough resources to see to it that others do not violate those rules with impunity....

Unhappily, a minority of governments is committed to different ideas of the conduct and organization of human affairs. They are dedicated to the promotion of the Communist world revolution. And their doctrine justifies any technique, any ruse, any deceit, which contributes to that end. They may differ as to tactics from time to time. And the two principal Communist powers are competitors for the leadership of the world Communist movement. But both are committed to the eventual communization of the entire world.

The overriding issue of our time is which concepts are to prevail: those set forth in the United Nations Charter or those proclaimed in the name of a world revolution.

The paramount commitment of the charter is article 2, paragraph 4, which reads:

All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

This comprehensive limitation went beyond the Covenant of the League of Nations. This more sweeping commitment sought to apply a bitter lesson of the interwar period--that the threat or use of force, whether or not called "war," feeds on success. The indelible lesson of those years is that the time to stop aggression is at its very beginning.

The exceptions to the prohibitions on the use or threat of force were expressly set forth in the charter. The use of force is legal: --as a collective measure by the United Nations, or --as action by regional agencies in accordance with chapter VIII of the charter, or --in individual or collective self-defense....

What is a "war of national liberation"? It is, in essence, any war that furthers the Communist world revolution--what, in broader terms, the Communists have long referred to as a "just" war. The term "war of national liberation" is used not only to denote armed insurrection by people still under colonial rule--there are not many of those left outside the Communist world. It is used to denote any effort led by Communists to overthrow by force any non-Communist government.

Thus the war in South Vietnam is called a "war of national liberation." And those who would overthrow various other non-Communist governments in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are called "forces of national liberation."

Nobody in his right mind would deny that Venezuela is not only a truly independent nation but that it has a government chosen in a free election. But the leaders of the Communist insurgency in Venezuela are described as leaders of a fight for "national liberation"--not only by themselves and by Castro and the Chinese Communists but by the Soviet Communists.

A recent editorial in Pravda spoke of the "peoples of Latin America . . . marching firmly along the

path of struggle for their national independence" and said, ". . . the upsurge of the national liberation movement in Latin American countries has been to a great extent a result of the activities of Communist parties." It added:

The Soviet people have regarded and still regard it as their sacred duty to give support to the peoples fighting for their independence. True to their international duty the Soviet people have been and will remain on the side of the Latin American patriots.

In Communist doctrine and practice, a non-Communist government may be labeled and denounced as "colonialist," "reactionary," or a "puppet," and any state so labeled by the Communists automatically becomes fair game--while Communist intervention by force in non-Communist states is justified as "self-defense" or part of the "struggle against colonial domination." "Self-determination" seems to mean that any Communist nation can determine by itself that any non-Communist state is a victim of colonialist domination and therefore a justifiable target for a "war of liberation."

As the risks of overt aggression, whether nuclear or with conventional forces, have become increasingly evident, the Communists have put increasing stress on the "war of national liberation." The Chinese Communists have been more militant in language and behavior than the Soviet Communists. But the Soviet Communist leadership also has consistently proclaimed its commitment in principle to support [wars of national liberation](#). This commitment was reaffirmed as recently as Monday of this week by Mr. Kosygin [[Aleksai N. Kosygin](#), Chairman of the [U.S.S.R.](#) Council of Ministers].

International law does not restrict internal revolution within a state or revolution against colonial authority. But international law does restrict what third powers may lawfully do in support of insurrection. It is these restrictions that are challenged by the doctrine, and violated by the practice, of "wars of liberation."

It is plain that acceptance of the doctrine of "wars of liberation" would amount to scuttling the modern international law of peace which the charter prescribes. And acceptance of the practice of "wars of liberation," as defined by the Communists, would mean the breakdown of peace itself.

Vietnam presents a clear current case of the lawful versus the unlawful use of force. I would agree with General [Giap](#) [Vo Nguyen Giap, North Vietnamese Commander-in-Chief] and other Communists that it is a test case for "wars of national liberation." We intend to meet that test.

Were the insurgency in South Vietnam truly indigenous and self-sustained, international law would not be involved. But the fact is that it receives vital external support--in organization and direction, in training, in men, in weapons and other supplies. That external support is unlawful for a double reason. First, it contravenes general international law, which the United Nations Charter here expresses. Second, it contravenes particular international law: the [1954 Geneva accords](#) on Vietnam and the 1962 Geneva agreements on [Laos](#).

In resisting the aggression against it, the [Republic of Vietnam](#) is exercising its right of self-defense. It called upon us and other states for assistance. And in the exercise of the right of collective self-defense under the United Nations Charter, we and other nations are providing such assistance.

The American policy of assisting South Vietnam to maintain its freedom was inaugurated under President [Eisenhower](#) and continued under Presidents [Kennedy](#) and [Johnson](#). Our assistance has been increased because the aggression from the North has been augmented. Our assistance now encompasses the bombing of [North Vietnam](#). The bombing is designed to interdict, as far as possible, and to inhibit, as far as may be necessary, continued aggression against the Republic of Vietnam.

When that aggression ceases, collective measures in defense against it will cease. As President Johnson has declared:

. . . if that aggression is stopped, the people and Government of South Vietnam will be free to

settle their own future, and the need for supporting American military action there will end....

I continue to hear and see nonsense about the nature of the struggle there. I sometimes wonder at the gullibility of educated men and the stubborn disregard of plain facts by men who are supposed to be helping our young to learn--especially to learn how to think.

Hanoi has never made a secret of its designs. It publicly proclaimed in 1960 a renewal of the assault on South Vietnam. Quite obviously its hopes of taking over South Vietnam from within had withered to close to zero--and the remarkable economic and social progress of South Vietnam contrasted, most disagreeably for the North Vietnamese Communists, with their own miserable economic performance.

The facts about the external involvement have been documented in white papers and other publications of the Department of State. The International Control Commission has held that there is evidence "beyond reasonable doubt" of North Vietnamese intervention.

There is no evidence that the [Vietcong](#) has any significant popular following in South Vietnam. It relies heavily on terror. Most of its reinforcements in recent months have been North Vietnamese from the [North Vietnamese Army](#).

Let us be clear about what is involved today in Southeast Asia. We are not involved with empty phrases or conceptions that ride upon the clouds. We are talking about the vital national interests of the United States in the peace of the Pacific. We are talking about the appetite for aggression--an appetite that grows upon feeding and that is proclaimed to be insatiable. We are talking about the safety of nations with whom we are allied--and in the integrity of the American commitment to join in meeting attack.

It is true that we also believe that every small state has a right to be unmolested by its neighbors even though it is within reach of a great power. It is true that we are committed to general principles of law and procedure that reject the idea that men and arms can be sent freely across frontiers to absorb a neighbor. But underlying the general principles is the harsh reality that our own security is threatened by those who would embark upon a course of aggression whose announced ultimate purpose is our own destruction.

Once again we hear expressed the views that cost the men of my generation a terrible price in World War II. We are told that Southeast Asia is far away--but so were Manchuria and Ethiopia. We are told that, if we insist that someone stop shooting, that is asking them for unconditional surrender. We are told that perhaps the aggressor will be content with just one more bite. We are told that, if we prove faithless on one commitment, perhaps others would believe us about other commitments in other places. We are told that, if we stop resisting, perhaps the other side will have a change of heart. We are asked to stop hitting bridges and radar sites and ammunition depots without requiring that the other side stop its slaughter of thousands of civilians and its bombings of schools and hotels and hospitals and railways and buses.

Surely we have learned over the past three decades that the acceptance of aggression leads only to a sure catastrophe. Surely we have learned that the aggressor must face the consequences of his action and be saved from the frightful miscalculation that brings all to ruin. It is the purpose of law to guide men away from such events, to establish rules of conduct which are deeply rooted in the reality of experience....

## **Seven-Point Statement, Provisional Government of South Viet Nam, July 1, 1971**

The Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam, made public by Minister Madame [Nguyen Thi Binh](#) at the 119th session of the Paris Conference on Viet Nam (July 1st, 1971).

Source: Collection of George Katsiaficas.

Responding to the Vietnamese people's aspirations for peace and national independence, considering the American and the world peoples' desire for peace, showing its goodwill to make the Paris Conference on Viet Nam progress, basing itself on the 10-point over-all solution, and following up the September 17, 1970, eight-point and the December 10, 1970, three-point statements, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam declares the following:

### 1. Regarding the Terminal Date for the Total [Withdrawal](#) of U.S. Forces

The U.S. Government must end its war of aggression in Viet Nam, stop the policy of "[Vietnamization](#)" of the war, withdraw from [South Viet Nam](#) all troops, military personnel, weapons, and war materials of the United States and of the foreign countries in the U.S. camp, and dismantle all U.S. bases in South Viet Nam, without posing any conditions whatsoever.

The U.S. Government must set a terminal date for the withdrawal from South Viet Nam of the totality of U.S. forces and those of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp.

If the U.S. Government sets a terminal date for the withdrawal from South Viet Nam in 1971 of the totality of U.S. forces and those of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp, the parties will at the same time agree on the modalities of

(a) the withdrawal in safety from South Viet Nam of the totality of U.S. forces and those of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp;

(b) the release of the totality of military men of all parties and of the civilians captured during the war (including American pilots captured in [North Viet Nam](#)), so that they may all rapidly return to their homes.

These two operations will begin on the same date and will end on the same date.

A cease-fire will be observed between the South Viet Nam People's Liberation Armed Forces and the armed forces of the United States and of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp as soon as the parties reach agreement on the withdrawal from South Viet Nam of the totality of U.S. forces and those of the other foreign countries in the U.S. camp.

### 2. Regarding the Question of Power in South Viet Nam

The U.S. Government must really respect the South Viet Nam people's right to self-determination, put an end to its interference in the internal affairs of South Viet Nam, cease to support the bellicose group headed by [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) now in office in [Saigon](#), and stop all maneuvers, including tricks on elections, aimed at maintaining the puppet Nguyen Van Thieu.

By various means, the political, social, and religious forces in South Viet Nam aspiring to peace and national concord will form in Saigon a new administration favoring peace, independence, [neutrality](#) and democracy. The Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam will immediately enter into talks with that administration in order to settle the following questions:

(a) to form a broad three-segment government of national concord that will assume its functions during the period between the restoration of peace and the holding of general elections and that will organize general elections in South Viet Nam.

A cease-fire will be observed between the South Viet Nam People's Liberation Armed Forces and the armed forces of the Saigon administration as soon as a government of national concord is



formed.

(b) to take concrete measures with the necessary guarantees to prohibit all acts of terror, reprisal and discrimination against persons having collaborated with one or the other party; to ensure every democratic liberty to the South Viet Nam people; to release all persons jailed for political reasons; to dissolve all concentration camps and to liquidate all forms of constraint and coercion so as to permit the people to return to their native places in complete freedom and to freely engage in their occupations.

(c) To see that the people's conditions of living are stabilized and gradually improved, to create conditions allowing everyone to contribute his talents and efforts to heal the war wounds and rebuild the country.

(d) to agree on measures to be taken to ensure the holding of genuinely free, democratic, and fair general elections in South Viet Nam.

### 3. Regarding the Question of Vietnamese Armed Forces in South Viet Nam

The Vietnamese parties will together settle the question of Vietnamese armed forces in South Viet Nam in a spirit of national concord, equality, and mutual respect, without foreign interference, in accordance with the post-war situation and with a view to lightening the people's contributions.

### 4. Regarding the Peaceful Re-Unification of Viet Nam and the Relations between the North and the South Zones

(a) The re-unification of Viet Nam will be achieved step by step, by peaceful means, on the basis of discussions and agreements between the two zones, without constraint and annexation from either party, and without foreign interference.

Pending the re-unification of the country, the North and the South zones will re-establish normal relations, guarantee free movement, free correspondence, free choice of residence, and establish economic and cultural relations on the principle of mutual interests and mutual assistance.

All questions concerning the two zones will be settled by qualified representatives of the Vietnamese people in the two zones on the basis of negotiations, without foreign interference.

(b) In keeping with the provisions of the [1954 Geneva Agreements](#) on Viet Nam, during the present temporary partition of the country into two zones the North and the South zones of Viet Nam will refrain from joining any military alliance with any foreign countries, from allowing any foreign country to maintain military bases, troops, and military personnel on their soil, and from recognizing the protection of any country or of any military alliance or bloc.

### 5. Regarding the Foreign Policy of Peace and Neutrality of South Viet Nam

South Viet Nam will pursue a foreign policy of peace and neutrality, establish relations with all countries regardless of their political and social system, in accordance with the five principles of peaceful coexistence, maintain economic and cultural relations with all countries, accept the cooperation of foreign countries in the development of the resources of South Viet Nam, accept the economic and technical aid of any country without any political conditions attached, and participate in regional plans for economic cooperation. On the basis of these principles, after the end of the war South Viet Nam and the United States will establish relations in the political, economic, and cultural fields.

### 6. Regarding the Damages Caused by the United States to the Vietnamese People in the Two Zones

The U.S. government must bear full responsibility for the losses and the destruction it has caused to the Vietnamese people in the two zones.

### 7. Regarding the Respect and the International Guarantee of the Accords to be Concluded

The parties will reach agreement on the forms of respect and international guarantee of the accords that will be concluded.

## **Statement of the South Viet Nam N.F.L. Central Committee Concerning Intensification/Expansion of the U.S. War**

Source: South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation, *Documents* (Giai Phong Publishing House, December 1968), pp. 33-52 (excerpts).

For more than ten years now, the U.S. imperialists have continuously interfered in [South Viet Nam](#) and committed aggression against it. Of late, they brought into South Viet Nam many more U.S. combat units, composed of missile and marine units and B.52 strategic bombers, as well as mercenary troops from South [Korea](#), Taiwan, the [Philippines](#), [Australia](#), Malaya, etc. They even ordered their air force and that of their henchmen to conduct repeated bombings against [North Viet Nam](#) and [Laos](#). At present, they are not only stubbornly prosecuting their criminal aggressive war in South Viet Nam but also attempting to fan the flames of war throughout [Indochina](#) and Southeast Asia.

Clearly, the puppet administration in South Viet Nam, close upon the Americans' heels, is daily committing more monstrous crimes against the fatherland. These impudent traitors are bending their knees before the aggressors and "bringing in snakes to kill chickens of the home coop," inviting troops of the United States and many of its satellites into South Viet Nam to massacre their own compatriots, occupy and trample upon our sacred territory and most harshly oppress and exploit our people.

The Vietnamese people, the peoples of Indochina and Southeast Asia, and peace- and justice-loving people all over the world are highly indignant at and strongly protesting against, the criminal acts of the U.S. imperialists.

Facing this situation of utmost gravity, the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation deems it necessary to reaffirm once again its firm and unswerving stand to carry out the war of resistance against the U.S. imperialists for national salvation.

1. The U.S. Imperialists are the Saboteur of the [Geneva Agreements](#), the Most Brazen Warmonger and Aggressor, and the Sworn Enemy of the Vietnamese People.

As is known to everyone, the glorious resistance of the Vietnamese people defeated the aggressive war of the French colonialists in spite of the intervention and assistance of the U.S. imperialists. True, during this protracted resistance, the U.S. imperialists supplied to the French colonialists 2,600 million dollars, hundreds of thousands of tons of armaments, and 200 military advisers in order to strangle the aspirations for independence and freedom of the Vietnamese people. However, prompted by their indomitability and their determination to die rather than be enslaved, their courage and their strong resolve to fight, and enjoying the wholehearted support of the people around the world, the heroic Vietnamese people have won great victories, and liberated half of their beloved country from the clutches of the enemy; this led to the conclusion of international agreements in Geneva in 1954 which solemnly recognized the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Viet Nam, Laos and [Cambodia](#), restored peace in this area and laid the basis for the reunification of Viet Nam by peaceful means.

The Vietnamese people deeply understand the value of these agreements. Now as in the past, they are correctly implementing them and are resolved to make them implemented with due respect to the spirit and letter of a thoroughly legal international accord. On the other hand, the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen in South Viet Nam have, step by step and more brazenly with every passing day, trampled on the Geneva Agreements and have in fact scrapped them by openly waging an atrocious war of aggression against it for nearly eleven years in an attempt to enslave and oppress its people, turn it into a colony and military base on their own, and perpetuate the partition of Viet Nam.

Before the ink of their signature on the Geneva Agreements had dried, the U.S. imperialists induced their henchmen to set up the [SEATO](#), a military bloc of aggression and deliberately put South Viet Nam under its "umbrella," which amounted in fact to placing this part of Viet Nam under

the sway of the United States. Ever since the United States had undertaken deeper and more brazen intervention in the South. From late 1954 to 1959 the U.S. imperialists and the puppet [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) administration launched a series of barbarous terroristic raids and mop-ups such as the Truong Tan Buu and Thoai Ngoc Hau operations, frenziedly massacring patriotic and peace-loving people of all walks of life and former resistance members, and exterminating religious sects and all those who did not side with them.

Right in the first days following the restoration of peace, the blood of the South Vietnamese people already shed in Duy Xuyen, Huong Dien, Cho Duoc, Vinh Trinh and many other places, even in the streets of [Saigon](#). In order to step up their large-scale and barbarous mop-ups, the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen enacted the fascist 10-59 law, outlawing all the South Vietnamese people, political groupings and individuals who opposed them and whom they called "Communists." At the same time, they dragged guillotines across the breadth and length of the territory. In this period, according to still incomplete figures, the U.S. hangmen and their lackeys massacred or detained hundreds of thousands of patriots for the only reason that they struggled for peace and demanded the execution of the provisions of the Geneva Agreements, and consultation on general elections between the authorities of the two zones with a view to the reunification of the country, or simply because they refused to submit to them.

The criminal acts of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen naturally fanned the flames of anger throughout Viet Nam and aroused a wave of indignation around the world. Public opinion in Viet Nam and Asia and unbiased opinion all over the five continents severely condemned the tyrannical acts of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen and demanded that they stop their acts of war and aggression against the South Vietnamese people and correctly implement the 1954 Geneva Agreements.

However, in defiance of the peace- and justice-loving people throughout the world, the U.S. imperialists stubbornly continued to push forward their piratical war in South Viet Nam.

In pursuing their policy of colonialist aggression here in the past eleven years, the U.S. imperialists spent 4,000 million dollars under the signboard of "aid," more than 80% of which were devoted to military expenditures. This aggressive war has earned the special attention of the U.S. ruling circles. The late [President Kennedy](#) and [President Johnson](#), the U.S. [National Security Council](#), the Defense Department, the State Department and the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) have daily been following the developments in South Viet Nam. Honolulu has become the site for monthly meetings of the leaders of the White House and the Pentagon and American brass hats in the Pacific to discuss plans for the invasion of South Viet Nam.

To tightly control and directly command the war of aggression against South Viet Nam, besides the military mission [M.A.A.G.](#), the American imperialists set up a U.S. military command in Saigon headed by [Paul D. Harkins](#), and recently they rigged up the so-called "U.S.-Viet Nam Joint Command" which is in reality a military organ of the United States vested with the highest power in South Viet Nam and placed under the direct conduct of the American President and the Defense Department to prosecute the war of aggression against South Viet Nam. Nearly all the high officials of the United States, including Department secretaries and generals, have come to South Viet Nam to supervise and draw plans of aggression. To direct their predatory war on the spot the U.S. government sent to Saigon a series of well-known generals like O'Daniel, James Collins, McGarr, Robert Williams, P. D. Harkins, etc. More recently it dispatched there [Maxwell Taylor](#), former [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff](#), and a host of generals among whom W. G. [Westmoreland](#) and John L. Throckmorton.

The U.S. imperialists and their henchmen have used all their modern weapons and war means, except atomic bombs, to terrorize and massacre the South Vietnamese people with the hope of achieving their only goal that is to impose their domination and turn South Viet Nam into a colony and military base of their own.

For nearly eleven years, they conducted over 160,000 big and small raids, killed nearly 170,000

people, wounded or tortured to invalidity some 800,000, detained over 400,000 in more than 1,000 jails, raped tens of thousands of women, including old women, little girls and religious believers, disemboweled, plucked out livers and biles of the victims, and buried alive over 5,000 persons, razed to the ground a great many villages, herded over 5 million persons into 8,000 concentration camps disguised as "prosperity zones," "resettlement centres," and "[strategic hamlets](#)," sprayed toxic chemicals on many areas, which destroyed hundreds of thousands of hectares of food crops and fruit trees, and affected the health of tens of thousands of persons. They have also demolished thousands of pagodas, churches and temples, killing tens of thousands of religious believers. Under the iron heels of the cruel American aggressors and their lackeys, the beautiful and fertile land of South Viet Nam has been turned into a land of ruins and desolation. The barbarous, fascist rule of the U.S. imperialists and their flunkies in South Viet Nam is still more cruel than Hitler's Nazi regime or sinister ones in the Middle Ages.

The above data written down with our blood suffice to denounce the crimes of the U.S. imperialists and their quislings, and expose their bellicose, aggressive and traitorous nature. The latter have not only violated the provisions of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities and the Final Declaration of the 1954 Geneva Conference, but also blatantly and entirely scrapped all these international agreements. The Washington rulers and the Vietnamese traitors have not only flouted the Geneva Agreements but also grossly trampled upon the spirit and letter of international law and the resolutions of the Bandung Conference. These are undeniable facts. To cover up their piratical nature, the U.S. imperialists have resorted to deceitful signboards which nevertheless cannot fool the world people. It is necessary to recall the so-called "White Paper" recently issued by Washington is completely null and void. This clumsy "thief-crying-stop-thief" trick has thrown stronger lights on their intention to intensify and expand their aggressive war. At present, the reality in South Viet Nam is that the U.S. imperialists are waging a criminal war of aggression, that they are the most impudent saboteur of the Geneva Agreements, the most dangerous war provocateur and aggressor, the sworn enemy of the peoples of Viet Nam, Indochina and the rest of the world.

## 2. The Heroic People of South Viet Nam Are Resolved to Drive Out the U.S. Imperialists in Order to Liberate Themselves and Achieve an Independent, Democratic, Peaceful and Neutral South Viet Nam, Pending National Reunification

Though deeply attached to peace, the South Vietnamese people are determined not to sit back with folded arms and let the U.S. aggressors and their henchmen trample upon their homeland. Rather to die than live in slavery, the fourteen million valiant South Vietnamese have stood up like one man in an undaunted struggle to defeat the U.S. aggressors and the native traitors so as to liberate their territory and achieve independence, democracy, peace and neutrality in South Viet Nam, in contribution to the maintenance of peace in Indochina and Southeast Asia. Their war of liberation fully conforms to the most elementary and basic principles of international law concerning the people's rights to self-determination and their right to wage a patriotic war against foreign aggression. In this sacred war of liberation they have used all kinds of weapons to fight against their enemy. The chief and biggest arms purveyor of their forces is none other than the U.S. imperialists themselves, who have sustained heavy and repeated setbacks over the past years.

With bare hands at the beginning, the South Vietnamese people have achieved a great work and recorded glorious feats of arms. They are firmly convinced that with their own strength and the wholehearted support of the people throughout the world, they will certainly win complete victory. The U.S. imperialists and their lackeys find themselves in a desperate blind alley. They are being knocked down in the powerful storm of the South Vietnamese people's revolution and are madly writhing before reconciling themselves to their defeat. To retrieve this serious situation, the U.S. imperialists are plunging headlong into extremely dangerous military adventures.

The fact that they have dispatched to South Viet Nam more weapons and combat troops of the U.S. Navy, Army and Air Force, more mercenary troops from South Korea and other U.S. satellites, and undertaken air strikes against the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the

Kingdom of Laos, etc. is no indication of their strength; these are but frenzied acts of a truculent enemy who has lost his senses and thus can intimidate nobody.

The intensification and expansion by the U.S. imperialists of their aggressive war is in itself one of their pitiful failures, and proves that the colonialist and aggressive policy carried out in South Viet Nam over the past eleven years and their so-called "special war" have gone bankrupt. Bugged down so seriously in their "special war" they will have their hands fastened still more tightly in a "limited war." And if they are rash enough to extend the war to North Viet Nam, to the whole of Indochina or farther, they will surely meet with still more shameful and quicker defeat.

3. The Valiant People and Liberation Armed Forces of South Viet Nam Are Resolved to Fulfill Their Sacred Duty to Drive Out the U.S. Imperialists so as to Liberate South Viet Nam and Defend North Viet Nam

Viet Nam is one country; the Vietnamese people are one nation. North and South Viet Nam are of the same family. This sentiment is loftier than mountains and deeper than the sea. This truth is shining like the rising sun; nothing can tarnish it. In this boiling situation and in this life-and-death struggle against the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys, our heart cannot but suffer when our hands are cut. That the people in North Viet Nam are resolved to accomplish their duty toward their kith and kin in the South fully conforms to sentiment and reason.

On behalf of the fourteen million South Vietnamese people, the N.F.L. conveys to their seventeen million blood-sealed compatriots in the North their unshakable confidence and unswerving commitment: "The South Vietnamese people and their heroic Liberation Armed Forces are determined to fulfill their sacred duty to drive out the U.S. imperialists. liberate the South, defend the North and proceed toward the reunification of their fatherland." Recently, to save their critical situation and their inevitable collapse in South Viet Nam, the U.S. imperialists and their flunkies recklessly sent aircraft and warships to bomb, strafe and shell North Viet Nam, but they have received due punishment. Over 50 American jet planes have been shot down. The South Vietnamese Armed Forces and people greatly rejoice at, and warmly hail, those brilliant military exploits of the North Vietnamese army and people.

The heart suffers when the hand is cut! To defend the beloved North, the armed forces and people of the South have given vent to their flames of anger at the U.S. aggressors and their agents. If the U.S. imperialists strike at the North of our fatherland they will resolutely deal them blows twice or three times harder. In February 1965, when the aggressors and traitors attacked the North, in the south the Liberation Armed Forces launched stormy attacks on many of their important military bases and main forces, putting out of action 20,706 troops (among them nearly 600 U.S. aggressors killed, wounded or captured), seizing 4,144 guns of all calibers and shooting down, damaging or destroying 111 aircraft of various types.

4. The South Vietnamese People Express Their Profound Gratitude to the Whole-hearted Support of the Peace- and Justice-Loving People around the World, and Declare Their Readiness to Receive Assistance, Including Weapons and All Other War Materials, from Their Friends in the Five Continents.

In their just, patriotic struggle the South Vietnamese people have enjoyed the sympathy, support and encouragement of the peace- and justice-loving people throughout the world. They have enlisted not only moral support but also material assistance from them. Of course, they and their representative-- the National Front for Liberation--are fully entitled to accept this valuable assistance which they warmly welcome. Though the N.F.L. has always relied mainly on its own strength and capabilities, it is ready to go on accepting all moral support and material assistance, including weapons and other war materials from the socialist countries, and the newly-independent countries as well as from all international organizations and peace-loving people the world over. Besides, the Front reserves for itself the right to buy arms and materiel from all countries to strengthen the potential of its self-defense capacity.

The International Conference for Solidarity with the Vietnamese People Against U.S. Imperialist Aggression and For the Defense of Peace which was held late last year and attended by representatives from fifty countries and twelve international organizations, gave a positive response to these urgent and quite legitimate demands of ours. If the U.S. imperialists continue to commit U.S. combat troops and those of their satellites in South Viet Nam, and to extend the war to North Viet Nam and Laos, the N.F.L. will call on the peoples of all countries to send youths and army men to South Viet Nam so as, shoulder to shoulder with the South Vietnamese people, to wipe out their common enemy.

5. The Entire People with Arms in Hand Continue to March Forward Heroically, Resolved to Fight and Defeat the U.S. Aggressors and the Vietnamese Traitors.

The armed struggle waged by the South Vietnamese people against the U.S. aggressors and their henchmen has won very great victories.

In appearance, the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys are formidable, but in reality they have been greatly weakened; confusion prevails in their ranks, and their isolation has reached unprecedented dimensions. The South Vietnamese people, bearing in mind their vow "rather to die than live in slavery," will certainly smash the cruel and savage enemy.

The South Viet Nam N.F.L. and people are not only strong with the justice of their cause; their material and organizational strength are rapidly increasing. They have been and are the glorious victors. The more they fight, the more ardent they become and the more victories they win; and the more they win, the stronger they grow and the greater their victories. Worthy heirs to the traditions of the [Dien Bien Phu](#) fighters and of the Vietnamese people who possess a 4,000-year history of heroic struggle against foreign invasion, we have developed these traditions to a high degree. Moreover, the N.F.L. and the people of South Viet Nam are conducting their valiant fight in extremely favourable conditions afforded by the present time when the oppressed nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America have risen up like tidal waves. The socialist countries and the forces of democracy and peace around the world are an important factor stimulating the advance of mankind, overwhelming and smashing imperialism and colonialism under whatever disguise. If the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen are rash enough to fan the flames of war all over Indochina, the people of this area and Southeast Asia as a whole will resolutely stand up like one man and drive them out into the ocean.

The South Vietnamese people and their sole authentic representative--the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation--will surely win final victory.

Having got the better of the U.S. aggressors in the past ten years, we now have still more favourable conditions to defeat them. They, who have lost during this time, will further weaken and incur still more shameful defeats, especially if they venture to extend the war to the North. We are absolutely confident that victory will be ours. We are determined to fight, strike vigorously and accurately at the U.S. aggressors and their lackeys. We are determined to liberate the South, defend the North and reunify our fatherland.

South Viet Nam, March 22, 1965 The Central Committee of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation

## **The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution August 7, 1964**

Source: Department of State Bulletin 51 (August 24, 1964). *To Promote the Maintenance of International Peace and Security in Southeast Asia*.

Whereas naval units of the Communist regime in Vietnam, in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters, and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace; and

Whereas these attacks are part of a deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression that the Communist regime in [North Vietnam](#) has been waging against its neighbors and the nations joined with them in the collective defense of their freedom; and

Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protect their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these peoples should be left in peace to work out their own destinies in their own way: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to prevent further aggression.

SEC. 2. The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

SEC 3. This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress.



## **The North Vietnam Communist Party, Lao Dong Party, Document on Tet, March 1968**

Source: *Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes* (U.S. Embassy, [Saigon](#), July 1968), excerpt.

1. Great and unprecedented successes recorded in all fields during the first month phase of the General Offensive and General Uprising.

Since the beginning of Spring this year, the "Anti-U.S. National Salvation" resistance war of our people in the South has entered a new phase:

In this phase of General Offensive and General Uprising, after a month of continuous offensives and simultaneous uprisings conducted on all battlefields in the South, we have recorded great and unprecedented victories in all fields, inflicting on the enemy heavier losses than those he had suffered in any previous period.

1) We wore down, annihilated and disintegrated almost one-third of the puppet troops' strength, wore down and annihilated about one-fifth of U.S. combat forces, one-third of the total number of aircraft, one-third of the total number of mechanized vehicles, and an important part of U.S. and puppet material installations: destroyed and forced to surrender or [withdrawal](#) one-third of the enemy military posts, driving the enemy into an unprecedentedly awkward situation: from the position of the aggressor striving to gain the initiative through a two-prong tactic [military action and rural pacification], the enemy has withdrawn into a purely passive and defensive position, with his forces dispersed on all battlefields in the South for the purpose of defending the towns, cities and the main lines of communications. The struggle potential and morale of U.S. and puppet troops have seriously weakened because our army and people have dealt thundering blows at them everywhere, even at their principal lairs, and because they are facing great difficulties in replenishing troops and replacing war facilities destroyed during the past month.

2) We attacked all U.S.-puppet nerve centers, occupied and exerted our control for a definite period and at varying degrees over almost all towns, cities and municipalities in the South, and destroyed and disintegrated an important part of puppet installations at all levels, seriously damaging the puppet administrative machinery.

3) We liberated additional wide areas in the countryside containing a population of 1.5 million inhabitants; consolidated and widened our rear areas, shifted immense resources of manpower and material, which had been previously robbed by the enemy in these areas, to the support of the front-line and of victory; encircled and isolated the enemy, and reduced the enemy's reserves of human and material resources, driving him into a very difficult economic and financial situation.

4) We have quantitatively and qualitatively improved our armed forces and political forces which have become outstandingly mature during the struggle in the past month. Our armed forces have progressed in many aspects, political organizations are being consolidated and have stepped forward, much progress has been realized in leadership activities and methods and we have gained richer experiences.

The above-mentioned great and unprecedented successes in all fields have strongly encouraged and motivated compatriots in towns and cities and areas under temporary enemy control to arise to seize the state power, have created a lively and enthusiastic atmosphere and inspired a strong confidence in final victory among compatriots in both the North and South. These successes have moreover won the sympathy and support of the socialist countries and the world's progressive people (including the U.S. progressive people) for our people's revolutionary cause, seriously isolated the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys, deepened their internal contradictions and thereby weakened the U.S. will of aggression.

The above-mentioned great successes in all fields have been recorded thanks to the clear-sighted and correct policy, line and strategic determination of the Party, the wise and resolute leadership of the Party Central Committee, the correct implementation of the Party's policy and line by Nam Truong and Party committee echelons, the sacrifice and devotion of all Party cadres and members

who have in an exemplary manner carried out the Party's strategic determination, the eagerness for independence and freedom of the people in the South who are ready to shed their blood in exchange for independence and freedom, the absolute loyalty to the Party's and masses' revolution of the People's armed forces who have fought with infinite courage, the great assistance from the northern rear area and brotherly socialist countries, and the sympathy and support from the world people.

We have won great successes but still have many deficiencies and weak points:

1) In the military field--From the beginning, we have not been able to annihilate much of the enemy's live force and much of the reactionary clique. Our armed forces have not fulfilled their role as "lever" and have not created favorable conditions for motivating the masses to arise in towns and cities.

2) In the political field--Organized [popular forces](#) were not broad and strong enough. We have not had specific plans for motivating the masses to the extent that they would indulge in violent armed uprisings in coordination with and supporting the military offensives.

3) The puppet troop proselytising failed to create a military revolt movement in which the troops would arise and return to the people's side. The enemy troop proselyting task to be carried out in coordination with the armed struggle and political struggle has not been performed, and inadequate attention had been paid to this in particular.

4) There has not been enough consciousness about specific plans for the widening and development of liberated rural areas and the appropriate mobilization of manpower, material resources and the great capabilities of the masses to support the front line.

5) The building of real strength and particularly the replenishment of troops and development of political forces of the infrastructure has been slow and has not met the requirements of continuous offensives and uprisings of the new phase.

6) In providing leadership and guidance to various echelons, we failed to give them a profound and thorough understanding of the Party's policy, line and strategic determination so that they have a correct and full realization of this phase of General Offensive and General Uprising. The implementation of our policies has not been sharply and closely conducted. We lacked concreteness, our plans were simple, our coordination poor, control and prodding were absent, reporting and requests for instructions were much delayed.

The above-mentioned deficiencies and weak points have limited our successes and are, at the same time, difficulties which we must resolutely overcome.

## **The Paris Agreements on Viet Nam--Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet Nam**

Source: *United States Treaties and Other International Agreements*, compiled and edited under the direction of the U.S. [Secretary of State](#) (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), excerpts.

The parties participating in the Paris Conference on Viet Nam, with a view to ending the war and restoring peace in Viet Nam on the basis of respect for the Vietnamese people's fundamental national rights and the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination, and to contributing to the consolidation of peace in Asia and the world, have agreed on the following provisions and undertake to respect and to implement them:

### Chapter 1. The Vietnamese People's Fundamental National Rights

Article 1.--The United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Viet Nam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Viet Nam.

### Chapter 2. Cessation of Hostilities-- Withdrawal of Troops

Article 2.--A cease-fire shall be observed through [South Viet Nam](#) as of twenty-four hours G.M.T. on this twenty-seventh day of January, one thousand nine hundred and seventy-three.

At the same hour, the United States will stop all its military activities against the territory of the [Democratic Republic of Viet Nam](#) by ground, air and naval forces, wherever they may be based, and end the mining of the territorial waters, ports, harbours, and waterways of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. The United States will remove, permanently deactivate or destroy all the mines in the territorial waters, ports, harbours, and waterways of North Viet Nam as soon as this Agreement goes into effect.

The complete cessation of hostilities mentioned in this Article shall be durable and without limit of time.

Article 3.--The parties undertake to maintain the cease-fire and to ensure a lasting and stable peace.

As soon as the cease-fire goes into effect:

(a) The United States forces and those of the other foreign countries allied with the United States and the Republic of Viet Nam shall remain in place pending the implementation of the plan of troop withdrawal. The [Four-Party Joint Military Commission](#) described in Article 16 shall determine the modalities.

(b) The armed forces of the two South Vietnamese parties shall remain in place. The Two-Party Joint Military Commission described in Article 17 shall determine the areas controlled by each party and the modalities of stationing.

(c) The regular forces of all services and arms and the irregular forces of the parties in South Viet Nam shall stop all offensive activities against each other and shall strictly abide by the following stipulations:

--All acts of force on the ground, in the air, and on the sea shall be prohibited;

--All hostile acts, terrorism, and reprisals by both sides will be banned.

Article 4.--The United States will not continue its military involvement or intervene in the internal affairs of South Viet Nam.

Article 5.--Within sixty days of the signing of this Agreement, there will be total withdrawal from South Viet Nam of troops, military advisers, and military personnel, including technical military personnel and military personnel associated with the pacification programme, armaments, munitions, and war material of the United States and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3(a). Advisers from the above-mentioned countries to all paramilitary

organizations and the police force will also be withdrawn within the same period of time.

Article 6.--The dismantlement of all military bases in South Viet Nam of the United States and of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3(a) shall be completed within sixty days of the signing of the Agreement.

Article 7.--From the enforcement of the cease-fire to the formation of the government provided for in Articles 9(b) and 14 of this Agreement, the two South Vietnamese parties shall not accept the introduction of troops, military advisers, and military personnel including technical military personnel, armaments, munitions, and war material into South Viet Nam.

The two South Vietnamese parties shall be permitted to make periodic replacement of armaments, munitions and war material which have been destroyed, damaged, worn out or used-up after the cease-fire, on the basis of piece-for-piece, of the same characteristics and properties, under the supervision of the Joint Military Commission of the two South Vietnamese parties and of the [International Commission of Control and Supervision](#).

### Chapter 3. The Return of Captured Military Personnel and Foreign Civilians, and Captured and Detained Vietnamese Civilian Personnel

Article 8.--

(a) The return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties shall be carried out simultaneously with and completed not later than the same day as the troop withdrawal mentioned in Article 5. The parties shall exchange complete lists of the above-mentioned captured military personnel and foreign civilians on the day of the signing of this Agreement.

(b) The parties shall help each other to get information about those military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties missing in action, to determine the location and take care of the graves of the dead so as to facilitate the exhumation and repatriation of the remains, and to take any such other measures as may be required to get information about those still considered missing in action.

(c) The question of the return of Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained in South Viet Nam will be resolved by the two South Vietnamese parties on the basis of the principles of Article 21(b) of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet Nam of July 20, 1954. The two South Vietnamese parties will do so in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, with a view to ending hatred and enmity, in order to ease suffering and to reunite families. The two South Vietnamese parties will do their utmost to resolve this question within ninety days after the cease-fire comes into effect.

### Chapter 4. The Exercise of the South Vietnamese People's Right to Self-Determination

Article 9.--The Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the Government of the United States of America undertake to respect the following principles for the exercise of the South Vietnamese people's right to self determination:

(a) The South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination is sacred, inalienable, and shall be respected by all countries.

(b) The South Vietnamese people shall decide themselves the political future of South Viet Nam through genuinely free and democratic general elections under international supervision.

(c) Foreign countries shall not impose any political tendency or personality on the South Vietnamese people.

Article 10.--The two South Vietnamese parties undertake to respect the cease-fire and maintain peace in South Viet Nam, settle all matters of contention through negotiations, and avoid all armed conflict.

Article 11.--Immediately after the cease-fire, the two South Vietnamese parties will:

-- Achieve national reconciliation and concord, end hatred and enmity, prohibit all acts of reprisal and discrimination against individuals or organizations that have collaborated with one side or the other;

--Ensure the democratic liberties of the people: personal freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of meeting, freedom of organization, freedom of political activities, freedom of residence, freedom of work, right to property ownership, and right to free enterprise.

Article 12.--(a) Immediately after the cease-fire, the two South Vietnamese parties shall hold consultations in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, mutual respect, and mutual non-elimination to set up a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord of three equal segments. The Council shall operate on the principle of unanimity. After the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord has assumed its functions, the two South Vietnamese parties will consult about the formation of councils at lower levels. The two South Vietnamese parties shall sign an agreement on the internal matters of South Viet Nam as soon as possible and do their utmost to accomplish this within ninety days after the cease-fire comes into effect, in keeping with the South Vietnamese people's aspirations for peace, independence, and democracy.

(b) The [National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord](#) shall have the task of promoting the two South Vietnamese parties' implementation of this Agreement, achievement of national reconciliation and concord and ensurance of democratic liberties. The National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord will organize the free and democratic general elections provided for in Article 9(b) and decide the procedures and modalities of these general elections. The institutions for which the general elections are to be held will be agreed upon through consultations between the two South Vietnamese parties. The National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord will also decide the procedures and modalities of such local elections as the two South Vietnamese parties agree upon.

Article 13.--The question of Vietnamese armed forces in South Viet Nam shall be settled by the two South Vietnamese parties in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, equality and mutual respect, without foreign interference, in accordance with the postwar situation. Among the questions to be discussed by the two South Vietnamese parties are steps to reduce their military effectives and to demobilize the troops being reduced. The two South Vietnamese parties will accomplish this as soon as possible.

Article 14.--South Viet Nam will pursue a foreign policy of peace and independence. It will be prepared to establish relations with all countries irrespective of their political and social systems on the basis of mutual respect for independence and sovereignty and accept economic and technical aid from any country with no political conditions attached. The acceptance of military aid by South Viet Nam in the future shall come under the authority of the Government set up after the general elections in South Viet Nam provided for in Article 9(b).

#### Chapter 5. The Reunification of Viet Nam and the Relationship between North and South Viet Nam

Article 15.--The reunification of Viet Nam shall be carried out step by step through peaceful means on the basis of discussions and agreements between North and South Viet Nam, without coercion or annexation by either party, and without foreign interference. The time for reunification will be agreed upon by North and South Viet Nam.

Pending reunification:

(a) The military demarcation line between the two zones at the 17th parallel is only provisional and not a political or territorial boundary, as provided for in Paragraph 6 of the Final Declaration of the 1954 Geneva Conference.

(b) North and South Viet Nam shall respect the [demilitarized zone](#) on either side of the provisional military demarcation line.

(c) North and South Viet Nam shall promptly start negotiations with a view to re-establishing

normal relations in various fields. Among the questions to be negotiated are the modalities of civilian movement across the provisional military demarcation line.

(d) North and South Viet Nam shall not join any military alliance or military bloc and shall not allow foreign powers to maintain military bases, troops, military advisers, and military personnel on their respective territories, as stipulated in the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Viet Nam.

#### Chapter 8. The Relationship between the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the United States

Article 21.--The United States anticipates that this Agreement will usher in an era of reconciliation with the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam as with all the peoples of [Indochina](#). In pursuance of its traditional policy, the United States will contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and throughout Indochina.

Article 22.--The ending of the war, the restoration of peace in Viet Nam, and the strict implementation of the Agreement will create conditions for establishing a new, equal, and mutually beneficial relationship between the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the United States on the basis of respect for each other's independence and sovereignty, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. At the same time this will ensure stable peace in Viet Nam and contribute to the preservation of lasting peace in Indochina and Southeast Asia.

## **Truong Chinh: To Mobilize and Unite All Anti-U.S. Forces in the Country and World to Defeat the U.S. Aggressors**

### [Truong Chinh](#)

Source: Speech by Truong Chinh to the Vietnam Fatherland Front (Asia Information Group, 1972), excerpts.

Our people throughout the country are resisting the U.S. aggressors and building socialism in the North, contributing thereby to defending the socialist camp, stimulating the revolutionary movement of the people of other countries and safeguarding peace.

Our people's resistance is aimed at not only national but also international goals. The U.S. war of aggression in Vietnam is an act aimed at implementing the global strategy of U.S. imperialism--the number one enemy of mankind. The Vietnamese revolution is an inseparable part of the world revolution.

Since World War II, the U.S. imperialists have been carrying out an extremely reactionary, brutal and perfidious global strategy aimed at undermining the socialist camp; repressing the International communist and workers' movement, the national liberation movement and the democratic movement; wrecking peace; realizing U.S.-type neo-colonialism; and preparing for a new world war to seize world hegemony.

U.S. imperialism is the most bellicose imperialism. For that reason, we must study the military aspect of its global strategy. Since World War II, U.S. imperialism has set up aggressive military alliances in Europe (NATO), Asia ([SEATO](#)), the Middle East and Near East (CENTO), etc., built thousands of military bases in foreign countries, and set up a multi-ringed defense system to encircle the socialist camp and prevent the spread of the movement for national independence, stepped up the arms race, created modern weapons, including nuclear weapons, devised three different types of war: special war, local war, and total war, and waged special and local wars, while preparing for total war, which is also a nuclear showdown.

To prepare and wage a new World War, the U.S. imperialists have revived West German revanchist militarism and Japanese militarism, using them as their shock forces, and they have given aid to the reactionary rulers in Israel in provoking wars according to their plan in the Middle and Near East.

During the past 25 years, U.S. imperialism has re-adjusted its global strategy four times:

a) 1945-1950: The U.S. imperialists applied the Truman Doctrine and strategy which consists in using nuclear blackmail against the world peoples, and checking and repulsing the communist movement chiefly to defend Western Europe, an old bulwark of capitalism. However, the U.S. failed to check the revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe, North Korea, Vietnam and [China](#).

b) 1950-1960: The period of the "cold war" in which the U.S. imperialists carried out [Eisenhower's](#) strategy of "massive retaliation." With their nuclear superiority, the U.S. imperialists applied a foreign policy known as "brinkmanship" to browbeat the socialist camp and other countries, launched the arms race, and deployed their military and economic forces on a world scale.

Also during this period, the U.S. gave military aid to the French colonialists in their aggression against Vietnam, together with other countries in its camp triggered the Korean war, and perpetrated adventurous military acts against Arab countries in the Middle and Near East. At the same time it put into practice the so-called strategy of freeing "imprisoned countries" in Eastern Europe, and engineered the counter-revolutionary push in Hungary (1956).

c) 1961-1968. The U.S. imperialists applied [Kennedy's](#) "strategy for peace." Militarily, they carried out the "flexible response" strategy which was later complimented by [Johnson's](#) "escalation strategy." By this time, the [Soviet Union](#) had gained nuclear parity with the U.S. Therefore the

United States sought a temporary detente with the Soviet Union, tried to make full use of the differences of lines within the socialist camp and in the international communist and workers movement, especially those between the Soviet Union and China, launched a special war and then a local war in Vietnam, and instigated Israel to wage a war of aggression against a number of Arab countries, mainly against the United Arab Republic (1967).

But most disadvantageous to the U.S. in this period was the failure of its war of aggression against Vietnam, a failure that has weakened U.S. imperialism, lowered its prestige, and upset its global strategy.

d) Since 1969: The U.S. imperialists have been implementing the "[Nixon Doctrine](#)," which is precisely the global strategy of U.S. imperialism under the Nixon administration. It was born at a time when the world balance of power between revolution and counter-revolution has changed in favor of revolution. In spite of the dissension among socialist countries, the socialist system has been continually strengthened and consolidated and has exerted a decisive effect on the trend of development of human society.

The colonial system of imperialism continues its process of disintegration under the crushing blows of the national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The struggle of the working class and the democratic movement in the capitalist countries continue developing. More than ever before, the U.S., the ring-leader of imperialism, has been weakened militarily and isolated politically. U.S. imperialism and the other imperialist powers are in the throes of an economic and monetary crisis. The general capitalist crisis is becoming more serious. The contradictions between the U.S. and the other imperialist powers are sharpening day by day.

Under such unfavorable conditions, [Nixon](#) cannot help but readjust the U.S. global strategy. Politically, he has dished up the so-called "new strategy for peace." Militarily, he has applied the strategy of "realistic deterrence." Nixon's aim is to reduce U.S. international commitments so as to lighten the military and economic burden of the U.S., stabilize the situation at home and appease the American people, to strengthen its forces to regain a position of strength, to continue the drive for world hegemony, and to preserve U.S. interests in the various continents while continuing to play the role of international gendarme toward the revolutionary movement of people in various countries.

The main contents of Nixon's strategy consist of the following:

1. To stabilize and increase U.S. economic and military strength in order to achieve some degree of superiority over the socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union, and to use this strength to intimidate and win over a number of countries or to wage wars in one place or another.
2. To settle its differences and contradictions with its allies so as to "share responsibility" with them, use those countries as a shock force of the U.S. in each specific region, build up satellite countries as stooges to oppose and undermine the revolutionary movement of the world people, and make war with other people's blood for its own interests.
3. On this basis, it is "ready to negotiate" with a number of countries--especially the Soviet Union and China--with a view to "deterring" and "containing" these two biggest socialist countries, make the fullest use of the contradictions between these two countries and sow discord among the socialist countries in general in a bid to create favorable conditions for the U.S., to strive for "detente" among the big powers and continue to bully smaller nations.

The Nixon Doctrine applied to Asia has become Nixon's "New Doctrine on Asia." Relying on the Asian and Pacific Organization (ASPAC) with Japan as the core, this new doctrine is intended to suppress the national and democratic movement in Asia and dam up the spread of Socialism to other countries in this region.

Applying the "new doctrine on Asia" to Vietnam and Asia, Nixon has worked out the policy of "[Vietnamization](#)" of the war and "Indochinazation" of the war. The essence of this doctrine and



policy is to make Vietnamese fight Vietnamese and Indochinese fight Indochinese, and Asians fight Asians with U.S. bombs, dollars, shells and under the command of the U.S. Militarists.

"Vietnamization of the war" obviously is a perfidious move to prolong and widen the war, not to end it. "Vietnamization of the war," or "de-Americanization of the war" in no way means that the U.S. will withdraw all its troops from [South Vietnam](#). Instead it will leave a residual force for a long-term occupation on a number of military bases to be used as bridgeheads for helping the [Saigon](#) puppet army to continue its criminal persecution and massacre of our people, and turn South Vietnam into a U.S. neo-colony and military base.

U.S. imperialism is using the Vietnam and Indochina battlefields as a testing ground for the Nixon Doctrine and for various military strategies, tactics and modern weapons of the U.S. with a view to preparing for a new world war.

The anti-U.S. resistance of the Vietnamese people and the other Indochinese peoples is not only a test of strength between our people on the one hand, and U.S. imperialism and its lackeys on the other, but also a struggle between the socialist countries and the bellicose imperialists, between the national liberation forces and the aggressive imperialist forces, between the peace-loving forces and the world's war-mongering forces led by U.S. imperialism.

The fight against U.S. aggression for national salvation of the Vietnamese and other Indochinese peoples is not only aimed at defending their fundamental rights but also has a great international significance since it contributes positively to foiling the counter-revolutionary global strategy of U.S. imperialism, to defeating the very perfidious "Nixon Doctrine," to defending the socialist system at the cost of our blood, to encouraging the revolutionary movements of Asia, Africa and Latin America and to safeguarding peace and democracy in the world.

In the face of such a cruel and crafty enemy as the U.S. imperialist aggressors, what should we Vietnamese people do? We must struggle in all forms--politically, military and diplomatic--to drive the aggressors out of our country.

On the military front our people and people's armed forces must annihilate as much of the U.S.-puppet's potential as possible, especially their mobile strategic forces. At the same time we must smash their rural "pacification" plan; foil their policies aimed at scraping up manpower and material resources for Vietnamization; destroy "strategic hamlets" and their coercive system as a whole; wipe out, decimate, and disband the enemy's "territorial forces"; expand the liberated areas; and maintain and develop the resistance bases of our people.

Our army and people in the North must always keep high vigilance, organize well the civil defense, stand ready to fight and with the resolve to smash all military adventures of the U.S. that violate the sovereignty and security of the DRVN.

On the political front our Southern compatriots must mobilize and rally all forces that are eager for peace, independence and neutrality, especially in the cities, combining various forms of struggle and achieve unity of action in demanding the total and rapid withdrawal of all U.S. troops from South Vietnam and the ouster of the [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) administration, protest against fraudulent elections, demand the people's right to life and democracy, protest against the depraved culture of the U.S. and urge the restoration of peace. The rising political struggles in the urban centers will have the effect of shaking the enemy right in its lair and will be an excellent coordination with the armed struggle of our entire people and nation.

On the diplomatic front our people warmly support the 7-point plan of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam put forth at the four-party conference in Paris on July 1, 1971. The armed and political struggle of the popular masses at home must create a firm base for the diplomatic struggle. The latter must highlight our people's just goals, promptly lay bare all maneuvers and acts of the enemy and their deceitful and demagogic contentions, point to the certainty of our victory and the enemy's failure, contribute to winning the sympathy, support and assistance of the world's peoples for the anti-U.S. patriotic war of our people.

To lead our struggle on all of these three fronts to ever greater successes and ultimate total victory, an important thing is to mobilize and rally all the peace-loving forces. We advocate a three-layered United Front to encircle and defeat the U.S. imperialist aggressors.

Our country is victim of direct aggression by the U.S. imperialists. To resist the U.S. and save the country is the duty of the entire Vietnamese people and nation. To persevere in and step up our resistance till complete victory we stand for the union of the entire people in a National United Front against U.S. aggression to struggle on three fronts--military, political and diplomatic--in order to liberate the South, defend and build the socialist North, proceed toward the peaceful reunification of the Fatherland, and build a peaceful, united, independent democratic and prosperous Vietnam, thus making a worthy contribution to the revolutionary cause of the world people. In furthering their policy of "Vietnamizing" the war, the U.S. imperialists are using Vietnamese to fight Vietnamese with a view to turning South Vietnam into a new-type colony and military base of the U.S. Therefore the entire Vietnamese people must unite millions as one to persevere in and step up the resistance and smash this vicious scheme of the U.S. aggressors.

At present, our country is temporarily divided into two zones under two different social systems. The North is under a socialist regime. The South itself has two different parts-- one under the U.S. neo-colonialist regime, and the other (the liberated zone) under the people's democratic regime. The people in both the South and [North Vietnam](#) must resist U.S. aggression and save the country.

Besides this common mission, each zone has strategic revolutionary tasks suited to its conditions. The North is carrying out the socialist revolution, including socialist construction and socialist transformation. The South is waging a people's national democratic revolution to sweep away the U.S. imperialist aggressors, topple their stooges--the pro-U.S. imperialist compradors and feudal landlords, and win back national independence and democracy for the people.

Therefore, each zone has its own front. The North has the Vietnam Fatherland Front with its own program. The South has the South Vietnam National Liberation Front with its own program, and also the Vietnam Alliance of National Democratic and Peace forces with its appropriate program to rally and unite people of various strata in the urban centers under the Alliance's responsibility. The three programs differ from one another, but have this in common: they aim to unite the entire people, resist U.S. aggression, and win independence and reunification of the fatherland.

Under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, the U.S. imperialists carried out an aggressive war not only in Vietnam but also in Laos. Under the Nixon administration, the U.S. imperialists have taken another step by widening the war to Cambodia. The three Indochinese countries have thus become a single battlefield. The Nixon administration is carrying out the policy of "Indochinizing the war" by using Indochinese to fight Indochinese in an attempt to turn the whole peninsula into a new-type colony and military base of the U.S.

The flame of the people's war is burning throughout Indochina. The three fraternal peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are closely uniting in the struggle to drive the U.S. aggressors out of Indochina, overthrow the puppet administrations, henchmen of the U.S. in their countries, and win back and defend their sacred national rights. The joint declaration of the Indochinese People's Summit Conference (April 24, 1970) pointed out:

"At this historic moment, the Summit Conference of the Indochinese Peoples earnestly calls on the three peoples to strengthen their solidarity and wage a heroic and tenacious fight, to overcome all hardships and accept all sacrifice with the firm resolve to defeat the U.S. imperialists and their agents, to defend their sacred national rights, to defend the fundamental principles of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Agreements so as to make Indochina a truly independent and peaceful area, in accordance with the aspirations of the three peoples and the interests of peace in Southeast Asia and the world."

To defeat the U.S. aggressors, the people of the three Indochinese countries assist and respect

one another. During the fight against the U.S. and its henchmen as well as after their total victory, the people of each country will build their fatherland according to their own will.

To strengthen and broaden the United Front of the Indochinese people against the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen, the people of each country must strive for the consolidation and broadening of their own front: The Vietnam Fatherland Front of the DRVN, the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation and the Vietnam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces in the Republic of South Vietnam, the Lao Patriotic Front in Laos, and the National United Front of Kampuchea in Cambodia. All these organizations are members of the United Front of the Indochinese Peoples against the U.S. imperialist aggressors.

It is necessary to rally all forces in the world against the U.S. imperialists. We are elated to note that over the recent years, a world peoples' front to support the Vietnamese and the other Indochinese peoples against the U.S. imperialist aggressors actually has been taking shape. This is a front for united actions with concrete and limited objectives.

Who are the targets of that front? The U.S. imperialists and their henchmen. Its goal of struggle is to foil the aggressive and war-seeking policy of the imperialists and defend national independence and world peace.

The forces of peace, national independence, democracy and social progress have joined and are joining that front in increasing numbers. If the three torrential streams of world revolution--the great force of the socialist countries, the movement for national liberation in Asia, African and Latin American countries, and the movement of the working class and other laboring people in the capitalist countries--keep on pouring into the great river which is the World United Front, then they can sweep away both the U.S. aggressors and their henchmen.

Relying on the core forces and firmly grasping the goal of struggle, that is, to defend national independence and peace, the World People's Front against the U.S. aggressors should unite any force that can be united, win over any force that can be won over, split the imperialist ranks to the highest degree, isolate the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen, and spearhead the struggle at the cruelest enemy--U.S. imperialism.

To support the Vietnamese and Indochinese peoples' patriotic war against U.S. aggression has become the key question in the world people's struggle against U.S. imperialism. The world peoples are responding to this question to take unity of action against U.S. imperialism in various sections, branches, countries, regions (such as Asian, African and Latin American regions) of the world, from low to high, from local to global. The United Front of the Indochinese Peoples against the U.S. aggressors and the World Peoples Front in support of the Vietnamese people against the U.S. imperialists are important reinforcements to our people's resistance against U.S. aggression, for national salvation.

We take this opportunity to express the heartfelt thanks of the Vietnamese people and the Vietnam Fatherland Front to the peoples of the fraternal socialist countries, the Lao people, the Khmer people, and the peoples in the rest of the world, including the progressive people in the United States, for their sympathy and their great support and assistance to our people's patriotic war against U.S. aggression.

In short, the anti-U.S. National United Front in Vietnam, the anti-U.S. United Front of the Indochinese Peoples, and the World Peoples' United Front against U.S. imperialism and for defending national independence and peace, are the three layers of a front encircling and defeating aggressive U.S. imperialism. With the formation of such a three-layered front, the U.S. aggressors will be hemmed in by ring after ring of steel net, and they cannot escape total defeat.

## U.S. Peace Proposal, October 11, 1971

Source: Viet Nam News Agency, January 31, 1972.

1. The United States agrees to a total [withdrawal](#) from [South Vietnam](#) of all U.S. forces and other foreign forces allied with the Government of South Vietnam. The withdrawal will be carried out in the following manner:

--The U.S. and allied forces, except for a small number of personnel necessary for technical advice, logistics and observation of the cease-fire mentioned in Point 6, will be withdrawn by 1 July 1972 at the latest, on the condition that this declaration of principle is signed between now and 1 December 1971. In no case will the final date for these withdrawals exceed a period of 7 months after the signing of this declaration of principle.

--The remaining personnel will be progressively withdrawn, beginning 1 month before the presidential election mentioned in Point 3 and simultaneously with the resignation of the present president and vice president of South Vietnam also provided for in Point 3. These withdrawals will be completed before the date of the presidential election.

2. The release of all military men and innocent civilians captured throughout [Indochina](#) will be carried out in parallel with the troop withdrawals mentioned in Point 1. Both sides will present a complete list of military men and innocent civilians held throughout Indochina on the day this declaration of principle is signed. This release will begin on the same day the troop withdrawal begins and will be completed on 1 July 1972, on the condition that this declaration is signed by 1 December 1971 at the latest. The completion of this release will not be later than 7 months after the signing of this declaration.

3. The following principles will govern the political future of South Vietnam.

The political future of South Vietnam will be left for the South Vietnamese people to decide for themselves, free from outside interference.

There will be free and democratic presidential elections in South Vietnam within 6 months after the signing of the final agreement based on the principles of this declaration.

These elections will be organized and run by an independent body representing all political forces in South Vietnam which will assume its responsibilities on the date of the final agreement. This body will, among other responsibilities, determine the qualifications of candidates. All political forces in South Vietnam can participate in the elections and present candidates. There will be international supervision of these elections.

One month before the presidential election takes place, the present president and vice president of South Vietnam will resign. A caretaker government, headed by the chairman of the senate, will assume administrative responsibilities except for those pertaining to the election, which will remain with the independent election body.

The United States, for its part, declares that:

--It will support no candidate and will remain completely neutral in the election.

--It will abide by the outcome of this election and any other political processes shaped by the South Vietnamese people themselves.

--It is prepared to define its military and economic assistance relationships with any government that exists in South Vietnam.

Both sides agree that:

--South Vietnam, together with the other Indochinese countries, should adopt a foreign policy of [neutrality](#).

--The reunification of Vietnam should be decided on the basis of discussions and agreements

between North and South Vietnam without constraint or annexation from either party and without foreign interference.

4. Both sides will respect the [1954 Geneva agreements](#) on Indochina and those of 1962 on [Laos](#). There will be no foreign intervention in the Indochinese countries and the Indochinese people will be able to settle their own affairs by themselves.

5. The problems existing among the Indochinese countries will be settled by the Indochinese parties on the basis of mutual respect for their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and noninterference in each other's affairs. Among the problems that will be settled is the implementation of the principle that all armed forces of the Indochinese countries must remain within their national frontiers.

6. There will be a general cease-fire throughout Indochina, to begin when the final agreement is signed. Apart from the cease-fire, there will be no further [infiltration](#) of outside forces into any of the Indochinese countries.

7. There will be international supervision of the military aspects of this agreement, including the cease-fire and its provisions, the release of [prisoners of war](#) and innocent civilians and the withdrawal of outside forces from Indochina.


8. There will be an international guarantee for the fundamental national rights of the Indochinese people, for the neutrality of all Indochinese countries and for a lasting peace in this region.


Both sides express their willingness to participate in an international conference for this and other appropriate purposes.




 **William Colby: U.S. Government Official**


[William Colby](#) worked on [Vietnam](#) policy issues beginning in 1959. He headed the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) office in [Saigon](#), then became Director of Central Intelligence from 1973 to 1976.

 The International Atmosphere in the 50's.

 Stopping Communism.

 The importance of leadership in Vietnamese rural communities.


 The [Tet Offensive](#), February, 1968.

 Communism Lost in the End.

 **Ambassador Bui Diem: South Vietnamese Official**

Ambassador [Bui Diem](#) was the [Republic of South Vietnam](#)'s representative in Washington, D.C. where he now lives.

 What Vietnamese Knew About Americans.

 The United States Abandons South Vietnam.




 **Bill Ehrhart: Marine**

Bill Ehrhart joined the [Marines](#) in 1965 and served his year in the villages near [Da Nang](#), at a Marine firebase along the [Demilitarized Zone](#) and in [Hue](#) during the [Tet Offensive](#). He is now a poet.

 Mail Call.


 The Next Step.

 Coming Home.

 Guns.




 How It All Comes Back.

 Midnight at the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#)

 For a Coming Extinction.


 **Colonel Vernon Gillespie: Special Forces Officer**

Colonel Vernon Gillespie, a Captain in 1964, commanded a [Special Forces](#) team in the [Central Highlands](#). In 1967, he was an artillery battalion commander with the [First Air Cavalry Division](#).


-  Conditions in 1964 during my first tour of duty as an adviser.
-  On my second tour in 1966 the situation had change dramatically.
-  Confronting anti-war students.


 **Dave Connolly: Tank Crewman**

Dave Connolly arrived in [Saigon](#) on the eve of the [Tet Offensive](#) and served as a rifleman with the 11th Armored Division which fought in areas just north of Saigon. He started writing poetry on the war while he was there.

 All the Stars Do Not Spangle.

 Corporal Tach.


 A Goodbye for the Bac Si, The Medics.


 20 July, 1969, On Ambush.

 In His Father's Footsteps.

 **Don Luce: Civilian Aid Worker**

Don Luce spent 13 years in Vietnam and speaks the language fluently. He worked for the International Voluntary Service, which is similar to the Peace Corps and taught at the Agricultural College in [Saigon](#).


 U.S. military not prepared for an insurgency in early 60's.


 The issue in [South Vietnam](#).


 **Dr. Sanford Gottlieb: Antiwar Activist**

Dr. Sanford Gottlieb worked at the Center for Defense Information and taught at American University in Washington, D.C.

 Protesting the French [Indochina](#) war in Paris in the 50's.

 My impressions of the [Viet Minh](#). These are Vietnamese fighting for [Ho Chi Minh](#) in the French colonial time.

 Impressions of Ho Chi Minh.


 Protesting the war in the U.S.


 "No More Vietnam!" Syndrome


## **John Beitzel: Infantryman**

John Beitzel was a rifleman with the [Americal Division](#) in 1969.

 Why are we in Vietnam, the view in '69.

 Walking through villages.


 What's a war crime?

 Everybody did the same things.

 Looking back.


 **Lynda Van Devanter: Army Nurse**

Lynda Van Devanter joined the army in 1969 and served as a nurse in field hospitals that received [casualties](#) directly from battlefields in the [Central Highlands](#).

 Letter #1: Proud to be in Vietnam.


 Letter #2: Helping wounded civilians.


 A wounded American.

 I started to despise the war .


### **Ngo Vinh Long: Vietnamese Antiwar Activist**

Dr. Ngo Vinh Long came to the United States as a student at Harvard University in 1964. He is a professor of history with the University of Maine.

 My Father was arrested.

 The French killed large numbers.


 I attended Harvard.

 The war was wrong.




### **Ron Serrizzi: Helicopter Gunner**


Ron Serrizzi was crew chief on a reconnaissance helicopter in the [First Air Cavalry Division](#) in 1968.


 I never thought I'd end up in Vietnam.

 My job.

 The first time the enemy takes aim at me.

 How combat made me feel.

 Everybody was the enemy.

 I try to rescue my friends.

## **Stanley Karnow: Journalist**

Stanley Karnow is a writer and journalist who has reported on Vietnam for forty years.

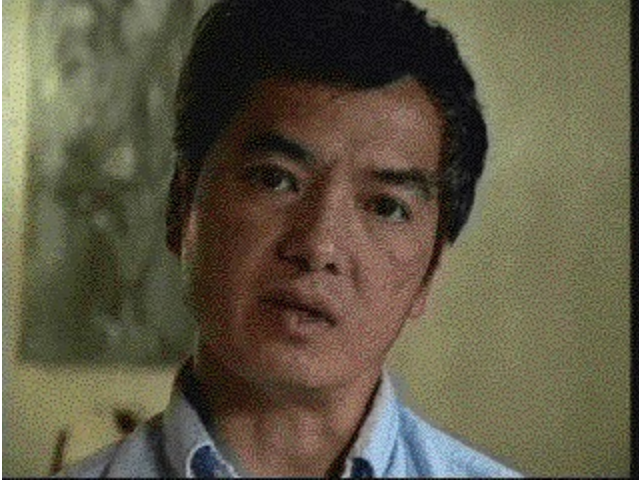
 The French war against [Ho Chi Minh](#) as I saw it in Paris in 1950.

 My first trip to [South Vietnam](#) in 1959.

 The [Tet Offensive](#).

 How it felt when we lost.

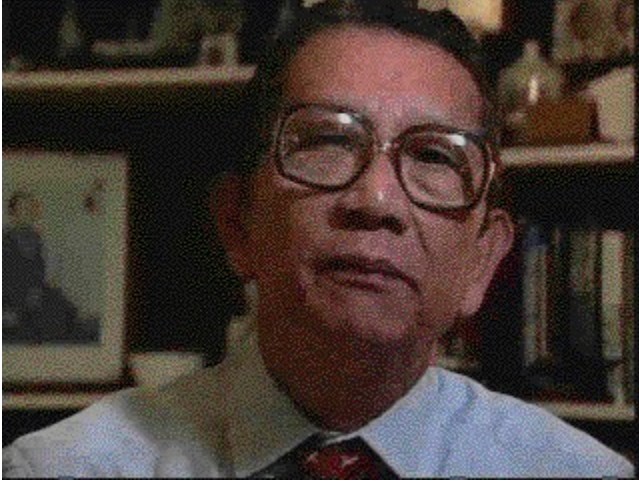
 Looking back.





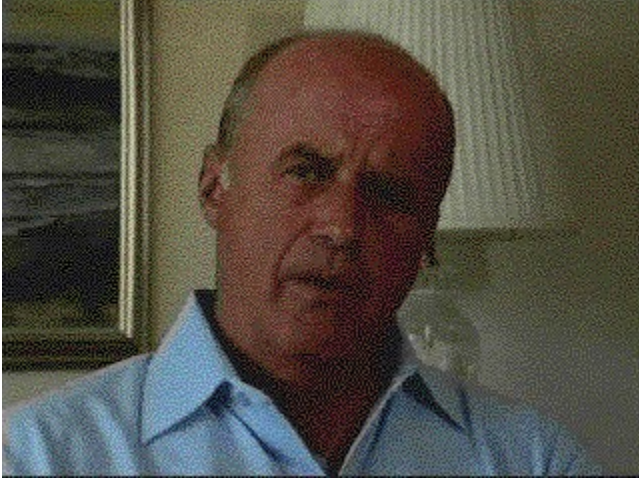






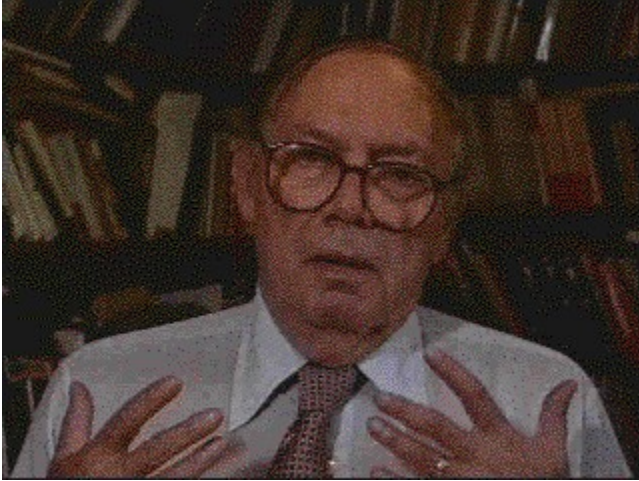


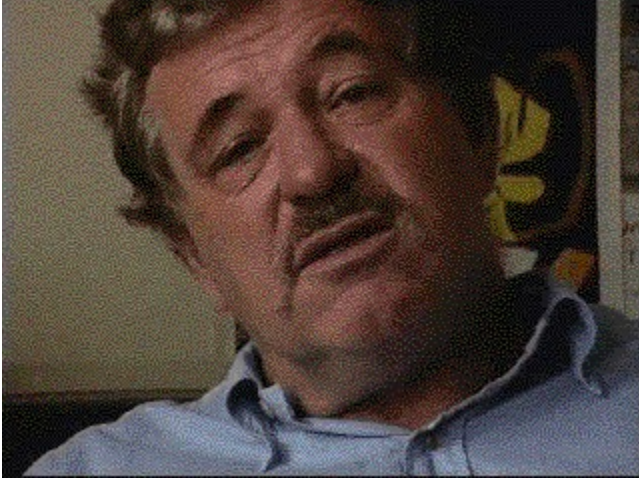


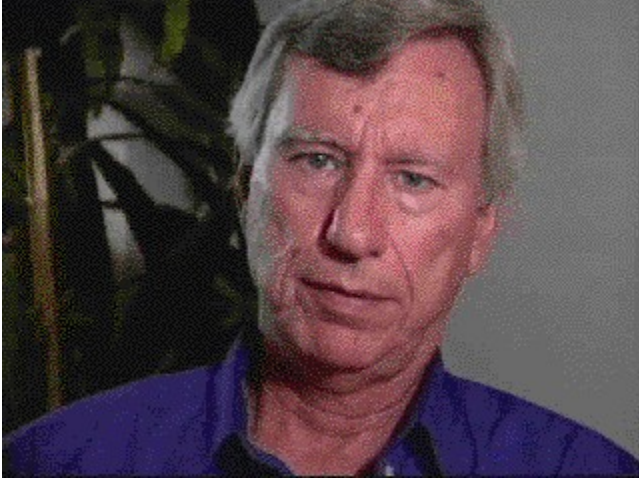














## **An Khe**

An Khe is strategically located in the [Central Highlands](#) between [Qui Nhon](#) on the coast and [Pleiku](#) to the west. Home base for the [First Cavalry Division](#), (Airmobile), when they first arrived in [South Vietnam](#) in 1965.



## **Angkor Wat Temple**

Angkor Wat is the ancient capital of [Cambodia](#) (Kampuchea). It contains extensive ruins of a beautiful temple complex.

## Artillery

American [artillery](#) units are usually equipped with 105mm and 155mm howitzers. In some areas, especially along the coast, the self-propelled M107 was used. The Viet Cong did not have artillery. But they were equipped with mobile rockets of Soviet design that were fired on cities in [South Vietnam](#), inflicting many civilian [casualties](#). The North Vietnamese regular army units that moved into South Vietnam beginning in 1963 had artillery supplied by [China](#) and the [Soviet Union](#). They were normally equipped with the 130mm M-46 field gun with a range of almost 44,000 yards.

## Battery

[Artillery](#) position

## **Battleships**

A battleship is by definition the type of warship which is most heavily armored, equipped with the most powerful armament. The U.S. battleship New Jersey, the world's last active battleship, took up position off the coast of Vietnam in September 1968. The New Jersey was decommissioned in August, 1969.

## Central Coast

The Central Coast is the region in former [South Vietnam](#) along the coast, from north of [Saigon](#) to the [Demilitarized Zone](#). It's an especially beautiful part of Vietnam, where mountains come down to the South China Sea. Valleys between the mountains are heavily populated and rice is grown in irrigated fields. There are also numerous fishing villages along the white sandy beaches. These regions were largely controlled by the National Liberation Front, or [Viet Cong](#), which was allied to [Ho Chi Minh](#)'s Communist Party. In 1965, when American ground troops landed, they fought major battles along the Central Coast to defeat the local Viet Cong forces. Later, in 1966, the [First Cavalry Division](#), (Airmobile), conducted operations in these rice growing areas to prevent the crop from being used by Viet Cong or North Vietnamese troops.

## **Georges Clemenceau**

Born in 1841, Clemenceau was considered a political liberal. As a member of the French government, he opposed [France](#)'s colonial ventures in Asia during the time France was consolidating its possessions into [Indochina](#). He became Prime Minister during World War I and was nicknamed "The Tiger".

## **Northern Coast**

This is the region in former [South Vietnam](#) including [Da Nang](#) and [Hue](#), north to the [DMZ](#), or [Demilitarized Zone](#), which separates North and South Vietnam. The U.S. Marines were largely responsible for military operations in this area. Many of its villages were in what American troops referred to as "Indian Country," in other words, controlled by the National Liberation Front, or [Viet Cong](#).

## **Phnom Penh**

Capitol city of [Cambodia](#). Located on the southern bank of the Mekong River. Prince [Norodom Sihanouk](#) ruled Cambodia from his palace in the city until he was ousted by one of his Generals, [Lon Nol](#), in a coup in 1970. In April, 1975, Cambodian Communists, the Khmer Rouge, marched into Phnom Penh and forcibly relocated the city's inhabitants into the countryside. Vietnamese forces then invaded Cambodia and installed a new ruler sympathetic to them. Now, Prince Sihanouk once again rules in Phnom Penh, after winning a recent election supervised by the United Nations.



## Qui Nhon

[Qui Nhon](#) is a city on the Central Coast of [Vietnam](#) which connects the coast with An Khe and [Pleiku](#) in the [Central Highlands](#). It is the principal city in the Province of Binh Dinh, the largest coastal rice growing zone. The [First Cavalry Division](#), (Airmobile), fought major battles against North Vietnamese and local [Viet Cong](#) forces in Binh Dinh. Populations in remote valleys which could not be controlled by the government were relocated to refugee camps to deny the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese their labor and food production. It was also a major supply port for American forces operating in the Highlands.

## **Recoilless Rifles**

The Portable Rocket Launcher, RPG-7, was a standard [Viet Cong](#) weapon, carried by the men and women in their military units. It could penetrate 12in (320 mm) armor plate at a normal range, and was used to knock out tanks and [armored personnel carriers](#).

## **Tanks**

U.S. armored units fought in [South Vietnam](#). The North Vietnamese also brought in Soviet-supplied T-55 tanks for their major offensive in 1972. They were driven down the various branches of the [Ho Chi Minh trail](#) into South Vietnam. Others came straight across the [Demilitarized Zone](#).

## **Tay Nin**

Tay Ninh is the capital of Tay Ninh Province, northwest of [Saigon](#). French colonists developed rubber plantations here which were later used by the Japanese in World War II when they occupied [Vietnam](#). The plantations became major battle zones in the 60's between North Vietnamese troops and American forces.

## **Tear Gas**

Tear gas was used by both sides, but especially by American troops to force people out of caves and underground tunnels and bunkers.



## 16 March 1964 Memorandum for the President

SUBJECT [South Vietnam](#)

This report addresses two questions:

1. What is the present situation in Vietnam? (What is the trend of the [counterinsurgency](#) program, how stable is the [Khanh](#) government, and what is the effectiveness of our current policy of assisting the South Vietnamese Government by economic aid, military training and logistical support?)
2. How can we improve that situation? (What are the plans and prospects of the Khanh government and what more should they be doing, and what more should the U.S. be doing under present or revised policy, in South Vietnam or against [North Vietnam](#)?)

To answer the questions, the report will review: I. U.S. Objectives in South Vietnam; II. Present U.S. Policy in South Vietnam; III. The Present Situation; IV. Alternative Present Courses of Action; V. Possible Later Actions; VI. Other Actions Considered But Rejected; and VII. Recommendations.

### U.S. OBJECTIVES IN SOUTH VIETNAM

We seek an independent non-Communist South Vietnam. We do not require that it serve as a Western base or as a member of a Western Alliance. South Vietnam must be free, however, to accept outside assistance as required to maintain its security. This assistance should be able to take the form not only of economic and social measures but also police and military help to root out and control insurgent elements.

Unless we can achieve this objective in South Vietnam, almost all of Southeast Asia will probably fall under Communist dominance (all of Vietnam, [Laos](#), and [Cambodia](#)), accommodate to Communism so as to remove effective U.S. and anti-Communist influence (Burma), or fall under the domination of forces not now explicitly Communist but likely then to become so (Indonesia taking over Malaysia). [Thailand](#) might hold for a period with our help, but would be under grave pressure. Even the [Philippines](#) would become shaky, and the threat to India to the west, [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#) to the south, and Taiwan, [Korea](#), and [Japan](#) to the north and east would be greatly increased.

All of these consequences would probably have been true even if the U.S. had not since 1954, and especially since 1961, become so heavily engaged in South Vietnam. However, that fact accentuates the impact of a Communist South Vietnam not only in Asia, but in the rest of the world, where the South Vietnam conflict is regarded as a test case of U.S. capacity to help a nation meet a Communist "war of liberation."

Thus, purely in terms of foreign policy, the stakes are high. They are increased by domestic factors.

### II. PRESENT U.S. POLICY IN SOUTH VIETNAM

We are now trying to help South Vietnam defeat the [Viet Cong](#), supported from the North, by means short of the unqualified use of U.S. combat forces. We are not acting against North Vietnam except by a very modest "covert" program operated by South Vietnamese (and a few [Chinese](#) Nationalists)--a program so limited that it is unlikely to have any significant effect. In Laos, we are still working largely within the framework of the 1962 Geneva Accords. In Cambodia we are still seeking to keep Sihanouk from abandoning whatever [neutrality](#) he may still have and fulfilling his threat of reaching an accommodation with [Hanoi](#) and Peking. As a consequence of these policies, we and the GVN have had to condone the extensive use of Cambodian and Laotian territory by the Viet Cong, both as sanctuary routes.

### III. THE PRESENT SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

The key elements in the present situation are as follows:

A. The military tools and concepts of the GVN/US effort are generally sound and adequate.\* Substantially more can be done in the effective employment of military forces and in the economic and civic action areas. These improvements may require some selective increases in the U.S. presence, but it does not appear likely that major equipment replacement and additions in U.S. personnel are indicated under current policy.

\* Mr. McCone emphasizes that the GVN/US program can never be considered completely satisfactory so long as it permits the Viet Cong a sanctuary in Cambodia and a continuing uninterrupted and unmolested source of supply and reinforcement from NVN through Laos.

B. The U.S. policy of reducing existing personnel where South Vietnamese are in a position to assume the functions is still sound. Its application will not lead to any major reductions in the near future, but adherence to this policy as such has a sound effect in portraying to the U.S. and the world that we continue to regard the war as a conflict the South Vietnamese must win and take ultimate responsibility for. Substantial reductions in the numbers of U.S. military training personnel should be possible before the end of 1965. However, the U.S. should continue to reiterate that it will provide all the assistance and advice required to do the job regardless of how long it takes.

C. The situation has unquestionably been growing worse, at least since September:

1. In terms of government control of the countryside, about 40% of the territory is under Viet Cong control or predominant influence. In 22 of the 43 provinces, the Viet Cong control 50% or more of the land area, including 80% of Phuoc Tuy; 90% of Binh Duong; 75% of Hau Nghia; 90% of Long An; 90% of Kien Tuong; 90% of Dinh Tuong; 90% of Kien Hoa; and 85% of An Xuyen.

2. Large groups of the population are now showing signs of apathy and indifference, and there are some signs of frustration within the U.S. contingent:

a. The [ARVN](#) and paramilitary [desertion](#) rates, and particularly the latter, are high and increasing.

b. Draft dodging is high while the Viet Cong are recruiting energetically and effectively.

c. The morale of the hamlet militia and of the Self Defense Corps, on which the security of the hamlets depends, is poor and falling.

3. In the last 90 days the weakening of the government's position has been particularly noticeable. For example:

a. In Quang Nam province, in the [I Corps](#), the militia in 17 hamlets turned in their weapons.

b. In Binh Duong province ([III Corps](#)) the hamlet militia were disarmed because of suspected disloyalty.

c. In Binh Dinh province, in the [II Corps](#), 75 hamlets were severely damaged by the Viet Cong (in contrast, during the twelve months ending June 30, 1963, attacks on strategic hamlets were few and none were overrun).

d. In Quang Ngai province, at the northern edge of the II Corps, there were 413 strategic hamlets under government control a year ago. Of that number, 335 have been damaged to varying degrees or fallen into disrepair, and only 275 remain under government control.

e. Security throughout the [IV Corps](#) has deteriorated badly. The Viet Cong control virtually all facets of peasant life in the southernmost provinces and the government troops there are reduced to defending the administrative centers. Except in An Giang province (dominated by the [Hoa Hao](#) religious sect) armed escort is required for almost all movement in both the southern and northern areas of the IV Corps.

4. The political control structure extending from [Saigon](#) down into the hamlets disappeared following the November coup. Of the 41 incumbent province chiefs on November 1, 35 have been replaced (nine provinces had three province chiefs in three months; one province had four). Scores of lesser officials were replaced. Almost all major military commands have changed hands



twice since the November coup. The faith of the peasants has been shaken by the disruptions in experienced leadership and the loss of physical security. In many areas, power vacuums have developed causing confusion among the people and a rising rate of rural disorders.

5. North Vietnamese support, always significant, has been increasing:

a. Communications between Hanoi and the Viet Cong (see classified annex ).

b. Since July 1, 1963, the following items of equipment, not previously encountered in South Vietnam, have been captured from the Viet Cong: Chicom 75 mm. recoilless rifles. Chicom heavy machine guns. U.S. .50 caliber heavy machine guns on Chicom mounts.

In addition, it is clear that the Viet Cong are using Chinese 90 mm rocket launchers and [mortars](#).

c. The Viet Cong are importing large quantities of munitions and chemicals for the production of explosives: Approximately 50,000 pounds of explosive-producing chemicals destined for the Viet Cong have been intercepted in the 12 months ending March 1964. On December 24, five tons of ammunition, of which one and one-half tons were 75 mm recoilless rifle ammunition, was captured at the Dinh Tuong Viet Cong arsenal. Ninety percent was of Chicom manufacture.

D. The greatest weakness in the present situation is the uncertain viability of the Khanh government. Khanh himself is a very able man within his experience, but he does not yet have wide political appeal and his control of the Army itself is uncertain (he has the serious problem of the jailed generals). After two coups, as was mentioned above, there has been a sharp drop in morale and organization, and Khanh has not yet been able to build these up satisfactorily. There is a constant threat of assassination or of another coup, which would drop morale and organization nearly to zero.\* Whether or not French nationals are actively encouraging such a coup, de Gaulle's position and the continuing pessimism and anti-Americanism of the French community in South Vietnam provide constant fuel to neutralist sentiment and the coup possibility. If a coup is set underway, the odds of our detecting and preventing it in the tactical sense are not high.

\* Mr. McCone does not believe the dangers of another coup (except as a result of a possible assassination) at this time are as serious as he believes this paragraph implies.

E. On the positive side, we have found many reasons for encouragement in the performance of the Khanh government to date. Although its top layer is thin, it is highly responsive to U.S. advice, and with a good grasp of the basic elements of rooting out the Viet Cong. Opposition groups are fragmentary, and Khanh has brought in at least token representation from many key groups hitherto left out. He is keenly aware of the danger of assassination or coup and is taking resourceful steps to minimize these risks. All told, these evidences of energy, comprehension, and decision add up to a sufficiently strong chance of Khanh's really taking hold in the next few months for us to devote all possible energy and resources to his support...

#### INITIATE MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

There were and are sound reasons for the limits imposed by present policy--the South Vietnamese must win their own fight; U.S. intervention on a larger scale, and/or GVN actions against the North, would disturb key allies and other nations; etc. In any case, it is vital that we continue to take every reasonable measure to assure success in South Vietnam. The policy choice is not an "either/or" between this course of action and possible pressures against the North; the former is essential without regard to our decision with respect to the latter. The latter can, at best, only reinforce the former.

The following are the actions we believe can be taken in order to improve the situation both in the immediate future and over a longer term period. To emphasize that a new phase has begun, the measures to be taken by the Khanh government should be described by some term such as "South Vietnam's Program for National Mobilization."

Basic U.S. Posture

1. The U.S. at all levels must continue to make it emphatically clear that we are prepared to furnish assistance and support for as long as it takes to bring the insurgency under control.
2. The U.S. at all levels should continue to make it clear that we fully support the Khanh government and are totally opposed to any further coups. The ambassador should instruct all elements, including the military advisors, to report intelligence information of possible coups promptly, with the decision to be made by the ambassador whether to report such information to Khanh. However, we must recognize that our chances would not be great of detecting and preventing a coup that had major military backing.
3. We should support fully the Pacification Plan now announced by Khanh (described in Annex B), and particularly the basic theory--now fully accepted both on the Vietnamese and U.S. sides--of concentrating on the more secure areas and working out from these through military operations to provide security, followed by necessary civil and economic actions to make the presence of the government felt and to provide economic improvements. This so-called "oil spot" theory is excellent, and its acceptance is a major step forward. However, it is necessary to push hard to get specific instructions out to the provinces, so that there is real unity of effort at all levels. A related matter is to stabilize the assignment of province chiefs and senior commanders and clarify their responsibilities and relationships.

Many of the actions described in succeeding paragraphs fit right into the framework of the Plan as announced by Khanh. Wherever possible, we should tie our urging of such actions to Khanh's own formulation of them, so that he will be carrying out a Vietnamese plan and not one imposed by the U.S.

#### Civil and Military Mobilization

4. To put the whole nation on a war footing--to obtain the manpower for these efforts described below and to remedy present inequities and inadequacies in the use of manpower--a new National Mobilization Plan (to include a National Service Law) should be urgently developed by the Country Team in collaboration with the Khanh Government. The present structure of decrees, dating from the [Dien](#) Government, is haphazard and produces substantial injustices. The new Program for National Mobilization would both greatly increase the effectiveness of the war effort and be a strong visible sign of the Government's determination and will. Full attention should be given to the way it is presented so that it appears as a remedy for past injustices and not as a repressive or totalitarian act.
5. The strength of the Armed Forces (regular plus paramilitary) must be increased by at least 50,000 men. About 15,000 of these are required to fill the regular Armed Forces (ARVN) to their present authorized strength. Another 5,000 would fill the existing paramilitary forces to authorized strengths. The balance of 30,000 men is required to increase the strength of the paramilitary forces, in whatever form these may be organized (see paragraph 7 below). (All of the foregoing strength figures are illustrative and subject to review, which review I have directed General [Harkins](#) to make in consultation with General Khanh.)
6. A Civil Administrative Corps is urgently required to work in the provincial capitals, the district towns, the villages, and the hamlets. "Hamlet civic action teams" of five men each are now beginning to be trained, on a small scale, to go into hamlets after they have been cleared, start the rehabilitation process, and train hamlet leaders to carry on. School teachers and health technicians are now assigned in some hamlets, many more are needed, and those on the job need to be retrained to higher competence. Many other types of technicians (e.g., agricultural workers) are needed, in varying numbers. Taking into account the fact that many hamlets are not now secure, and that adequate training is required, the initial goal during 1964 should be at least 7,500 additional persons; the ultimate target, at least 40,000 men for the 8,000 hamlets, in 2500 villages and 43 provinces. The administrators would come largely from the areas in which they serve and would be paid by the national government. The U.S. should work with the GVN urgently to devise the necessary recruiting plans, training facilities, financing methods, and organizational

arrangements, and should furnish training personnel at once, under the auspices of the AID Mission. Further, maximum effort should be made to make use of the available trained personnel by assignment to provincial and village administration where needed.

#### Improved Military Forces

7. The paramilitary forces are now understrength and lacking in effectiveness. They must be improved and reorganized...

8. An offensive Guerrilla force should be created to operate along the border and in areas where VC control is dominant. Such a force could be organized around present Ranger Companies and ARVN Special Forces and provided with special training and advice by U.S. Special Forces. The force should carry the fight to the VC on their own basis in advance of clear-and-hold operations on the conventional pattern.

9. The Vietnamese Air Force should be strengthened at once by the substitution of 25 A-1H aircraft for the present 25 T-28s. The A-1H aircraft has a much greater bomb load and slightly better speed.\*

\* Concurrently, the effectiveness of the USAF's Farmgate operation will be increased by assignment of A-1E aircraft in replacement of B-26s and T-28s. Furthermore, in another important area, we are strengthening the U.S. intelligence and reporting system.

10. Although there are no major equipment deficiencies in other forces, we should act at once to replace the present M-114 armored personnel carriers by 63 M-113s and to provide additional river boats. Additional lesser deficiencies should also be met at an estimated cost of approximately \$10 million.

#### Economic Actions

11. The approved, but unannounced, Fertilizer Program should be particularly stressed and expanded and publicly announced. Its target of 85,000 tons for the present planting season (April-June) should probably be doubled for the next season and trebled the following season, both to provide immediate and direct benefits to peasants in secure areas and to improve the rice crops and export earnings. Estimates are that an additional ton of fertilizer costing around \$70 can, if properly applied, produce additional yield of an equivalent two tons of rice, which might be sold for \$110 per ton. Thus, the potential export improvement alone could be on the order of \$20 million from this year's 85,000 ton input.

#### US and GVN Costs of the Above Actions

The above actions will involve a limited increase in U.S. personnel and in direct Defense Department costs. More significantly, they involve significant increase in Military Assistance Program costs and in the budget of the GVN itself, with the latter requiring additional US economic aid. The estimates of additional annual costs are as follows:

Action	GVN Budget Costs	Cost to U.S.
a. Raise military and scales	5-6billion piastres	\$30-40million paramilitary numbers and pay
b. Enlarge civil ad-piastres(1st year)	250 million (first year)	\$1,500,000 ministrative cadre
c. Furnish additional (one time)		\$20million military equipment

\*\* Increases in GVN budget expenditures do not automatically require equal increases in U.S. economic aid. As a rough approximation, subject to later refinement, an increase of 5-6 billion piastres of GVN budget expenditures might require an increase of \$30-40 million worth of imports financed through U.S. economic aid. Some of the imports undoubtedly could be obtained under

P.L. 480.

#### Conclusion

If the Khanh Government can stay in power and the above actions can be carried out rapidly, it is my judgment that the situation in South Vietnam can be significantly improved in the next four to six months. The present deterioration may continue for a part of this period, but I believe it can be levelled out and some improvement will become visible during the period. I therefore believe that this course of action should be urgently pursued while we prepare such additional actions as may be necessary for success.

#### V. POSSIBLE LATER ACTIONS

If the Khanh government takes hold vigorously--inspiring confidence, whether or not noteworthy progress has been made--or if we get hard information of significantly stepped-up VC arms supply from the North, we may wish to mount new and significant pressures against North Vietnam. We should start preparations for such a capability now. (See Annex C for an analysis of the situation in North Vietnam and Communist China.) Specifically, we should develop a capability to initiate within 72 hours the "Border Control" \* and "Retaliatory Actions" referred to on pages 5 and 6, and we should achieve a capability to initiate with 30 days' notice the program of "Graduated Overt Military Pressure." The reasoning behind this program of preparations for initiating action against North Vietnam is rooted in the fact that, even with progress in the pacification plan, the Vietnamese Government and the population in the South will still have to face the prospect of a very lengthy campaign based on a war-weary nation and operating against Viet Cong cadres who retain a great measure of motivation and assurance.

In this connection, General Khanh stated that his primary concern is to establish a firm base in the South. He favors continuation of covert activities against North Vietnam, but until such time as "rear-area security" has been established, he does not wish to engage in overt operations against the North.

In order to accelerate the realization of pacification and particularly in order to denigrate the morale of the Viet Cong forces, it may be necessary at some time in the future to put demonstrable retaliatory pressure on the North. Such a course of action might proceed according to the scenario outlined in Annex D.

\* Authority should be granted immediately for covert Vietnamese operations into Laos, for the purposes of border control and of "hot pursuit" into Laos. Decision on "hot pursuit" into Cambodia should await further study of our relations with that country...

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that you instruct the appropriate agencies of the U.S. Government:

1. To make it clear that we are prepared to furnish assistance and support to South Vietnam for as long as it takes to bring the insurgency under control.
2. To make it clear that we fully support the Khanh government and are opposed to any further coups.
3. To support a Program for National Mobilization (including a national service law) to put South Vietnam on a war footing.
4. To assist the Vietnamese to increase the armed forces (regular plus paramilitary) by at least 50,000 men.
5. To assist the Vietnamese to create a greatly enlarged Civil Administrative Corps for work at province, district and hamlet levels.
6. To assist the Vietnamese to improve and reorganize the paramilitary forces and to increase their compensation.

7. To assist the Vietnamese to create an offensive guerrilla force.
8. To provide the Vietnamese Air Force 25 A-1H aircraft in exchange for the present T-28s.
9. To provide the Vietnamese Army additional M-113 armored personnel carriers (withdrawing the M-114s there), additional river boats, and approximately \$5-10 million of other additional material.
10. To announce publicly the Fertilizer Program and to expand it with a view within two years to trebling the amount of fertilizer made available.
11. To authorize continued high-level U.S. overflights of South Vietnam's borders and to authorize "[hot pursuit](#)" and South Vietnamese ground operations over the Laotian line for the purpose of border control. More ambitious operations into Laos involving units beyond battalion size should be authorized only with the approval of Souvanna Phouma. Operations across the Cambodian border should depend on the state of relations with Cambodia.
12. To prepare immediately to be in a position on 72 hours' notice to initiate the full range of Laotian and Cambodian "Border Control" actions (beyond those authorized in paragraph 11 above) and the "Retaliatory Actions" against North Vietnam, and to be in a position on 30 days' notice to initiate the program of "Graduated Overt Military Pressure" against North Vietnam.

[Robert S. McNamara](#)

### 3rd Draft--11/7/64--McNaughton

#### ACTION FOR [SOUTH VIETNAM](#)

##### 1. U.S. aims.

- (a) To protect U.S. reputation as a counter-subversion guarantor.
- (b) To avoid domino effect especially in Southeast Asia.
- (c) To keep South Vietnamese territory from Red hands.
- (d) To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used.

2. Present situation: The situation in South Vietnam is deteriorating. "Bien Hoas" cannot be prevented; the new government will probably be unstable and ineffectual, and the VC will probably continue to extend their hold over the population and territory. It can be expected that soon (6 months? two years?) (a) government officials at all levels will adjust their behavior to an eventual VC take-over, (b) defections of significant military forces will take place, (c) whole integrated regions of the country will enter as totally denied to the GVN, (d) neutral and/or left-wing elements will enter the government, (e) a popular-front regime will emerge which will invite the US out, and (f) fundamental concessions to the VC and accommodations to the [DRV](#) will put South Vietnam behind the Curtain.

##### 3. Urgency:

- (a) For GVN morale, risky US action needed now (post-11/3) to prove mettle.
- (b) Reprisal for new DRV or VC "spectacular" would require urgent decision.
- (c) General deteriorating situation in .SVN requires decision soon.

4. Inside South Vietnam: Progress inside SVN is important, but it is unlikely despite our best ideas and efforts (and progress, if made, will take at least several months). Nevertheless, whatever other actions might be taken, great efforts should be made within South Vietnam: (a) to strengthen the government, its bureaucracy, and its civil-military coordination and planning, (b) to dampen ethnic, religious, urban and civil-military strife by a broad and positive GVN program designed (with US Team help) to enlist the support of important groups, and (c) to press the pacification program in the countryside. [Separate paper on this subject needed.]

5. Options against DRV: Action against [North Vietnam](#) is to some extent a substitute for strengthening the government in South Vietnam. That is, a less active VC (on orders from DRV) can be handled by a less efficient GVN (which we expect to have). We have three options open to us (all envision reprisals in the DRV for DRV/VC "spectaculars" against GVN as well as US assets in South Vietnam):

OPTION A. Continue present policies. Maximum assistance within SVN and limited external actions in [Laos](#) and by the GVN covertly against North Vietnam. The aim of any reprisal actions would be to deter and punish large VC actions in the South (but not to a degree that would create strong international negotiating pressures). Basic to this option is the continued rejection of negotiating in the hope that the situation will improve.

OPTION B. Fast/full squeeze. Present policies plus a systematic program of military pressures against the North, meshing at some point with negotiation, but with pressure actions to be continued at a fairly rapid pace and without interruption until we achieve our central present objectives.

OPTION C. Progressive squeeze-and-talk. Present policies plus an orchestration of (a) communications with [Hanoi](#) and (b) a crescendo of additional military moves against [infiltration](#) targets, first in Laos and then in the DRV, and then against other targets in North Vietnam. The scenario should give the impression of a steady deliberate approach. It would be designed to give the US the option at any point to proceed or not, to escalate or not, and to quicken the pace or not.

These decisions would be made from time to time in view of all relevant factors.

Analysis of OPTION A. [To be provided.]

Analysis of OPTION B. [To be provided.]

Analysis of OPTION C.

(a) Military actions. (South Vietnamese should play as large a role as possible. )

PRESENT (in addition to reprisals in DRV for DRV actions against US assets):

- (1) High-level reconnaissance of North Vietnam.
- (2) 34A Marops and Airops (legitimated? including black bomber"?).
- (3) [DeSoto](#) patrols, for intelligence purposes.
- (4) South Vietnamese shallow ground actions in Laos when practicable.
- (5) T28 strikes against infiltration-associated targets in Laos.

PHASE ONE (in addition to reprisals in DRV for VC "spectaculars" in South Vietnam ):

- (6) US armed-recce strikes against infiltration-associated targets in Laos.

PHASE TWO (in addition to reprisals in DRV against broader range of VC actions ):

- (7) Low-level reconnaissance in southern DRV.
- (8) US/VNAF strikes against infiltration-associated targets in southern DRV.

PHASE THREE: Continue only the above actions or add one or more of the following, making timely evacuation of dependents and deployment of US forces:

- (9) Aerial mining of DRV ports.
- (10) Naval quarantine of DRV.
- (11) US VNAF, in "crescendo," strike additional targets on "94 target list."

(b) Political side:

- (1) After OPTION C decision, Taylor "noisily" to Washington.
- (2) Before PHASE ONE, set up covert US-DRV talking channel.
- (3) As larger forums (US. Geneva) pressed on us, judge them.

(c) Terms:

- (1) We do not seek to destroy North Vietnam or to acquire a base,
- (2) We will arrange a rice-barter deal between the two Vietnams, and
- (3) We will stop squeeze on DRV (no promise to withdraw from SVN),  
but
- (4) DRV must stop training and sending personnel to SVN and Laos,
- (5) DRV must stop sending arms and supplies into SVN and Laos,
- (6) DRV must stop directing military actions in SVN and Laos,
- (7) DRV must order the VC and PL to stop their insurgencies,
- (8) DRV must stop propaganda broadcasts to South Vietnam, and
- (9) DRV must remove VM forces and cadres from SVN and Laos,

[(10) DRV must see that VC and PL stop incidents in SVN and Laos?]

[(11) DRV must see that VC and PL cease resistance?]

[(12) DRV must see that VC and PL turn in weapons and bases?]

[(13) DRV must see that VC and PL surrender for amnesty of expatriation?]

(d) Information actions. The start of military actions against the DRV will have to be accompanied by a convincing world-wide public information program. Briefings of responsible newspaper people along "Jordan Report" lines (without disclosing sensitive information) should start before PHASE ONE. Our actions then would clearly be reactions to an established Communist perfidy, but the scenario would be under our control.

(e) VC/DRV/Chicom/USSR reactions. [to be elaborated later.] The DRV and [China](#) almost certainly will not invade South Vietnam, Laos or Burma, or conduct air strikes on these countries in response to PHASES ONE and TWO; and the same is probably true in response to PHASE THREE. The USSR will almost certainly confine herself to political actions. If the DRV or China strike or invade South Vietnam, US forces will be sufficient to handle the problem.

(f) GVN reactions. Military action against the DRV could be counter-productive in South Vietnam because (1) the VC could step up its activities, (2) the South Vietnamese could panic, (3) they could resent our striking their "brothers," and (4) they could tire of waiting for results. Should South Vietnam disintegrate completely beneath us, we should try to hold it together long enough to permit us to try to evacuate our forces and to convince the world to accept the uniqueness (and congenital impossibility) of the South Vietnamese case.

(g) Allied and neutral reactions. [To be elaborated later.] (1) Even if OPTION C failed, it would, by demonstrating US willingness to go to the mat, tend to bolster allied confidence in the US as an ally. (2) US military action against the DRV will probably prompt military actions elsewhere in the world--e.g., Indonesia against Malaysia or Timor, or Turkey against Cyprus.

(h) Evaluation. OPTION C, as compared with OPTION A, stands a better chance of coming out better (though, involving a somewhat larger chance of big escalation than OPTION A, it stands some chance of coming out very badly). If OPTION C is tried and fails, we are in no worse position than we would be under OPTION A; but whatever form a failure took, OPTION C would leave behind a better odor than OPTION A: It would demonstrate that US was a "good doctor" willing to keep promises, be tough, take risks, get bloodied, and hurt the enemy badly. OPTION C stands a better chance of avoiding appearances which will affect judgments by, and provide pretexts to, other nations regarding US power, resolve and competence, and regarding how the US will behave in future cases of particular interest to those nations.



## Admiral Sharp's Progress Report on War at End of 1967

Excerpts from cablegram from Admiral U. S. Grant Sharp, commander in chief of Pacific forces, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff dated January 1, 1968, and headed "Year-End Wrap-Up Cable," as provided in the body of the Pentagon study. Paragraphs in italics are the study's paraphrase or explanation.

*Admiral Sharp outlined three objectives which the air campaign was seeking to achieve: disruption of the flow of external assistance into [North Vietnam](#), curtailment of the flow of supplies from North Vietnam into [Laos](#) and [South Vietnam](#), and destruction "in depth" of North Vietnamese resources that contributed to the support of the war. Acknowledging that the flow of fraternal communist aid into the North had grown every year of the war, [CINCPAC](#) noted the stepped up effort in 1967 to [neutralize](#) this assistance by logistically isolating its primary port of entry-- Haiphong. The net results, he felt, had been encouraging:*

The overall effect of our effort to reduce external assistance has resulted not only in destruction and damage to the transportation systems and goods being transported thereon but has created additional management, distribution and manpower problems. In addition, the attacks have created a bottleneck at Haiphong where inability effectively to move goods inland from the port has resulted in congestion on the docks and a slowdown in offloading ships as they arrive. By October, road and rail interdictions had reduced the transportation clearance capacity at Haiphong to about 2700 short tons per day. An average of 4400 short tons per day had arrived in Haiphong during the year.

*The assault against the continuing traffic of men and material through North Vietnam toward Laos and South Vietnam, however, had produced only marginal results. Success here was measured in the totals of destroyed transport, not the constriction of the flow of personnel and goods.*

Although men and material needed for the level of combat now prevailing in South Vietnam continue to flow despite our attacks on LOCs, we have made it very costly to the enemy in terms of material, manpower, management, and distribution. From 1 January through 15 December 1967, 122,960 attack [sorties](#) were flown in [Rolling Thunder](#) route packages I through V and in Laos, SEA Dragon offensive operations involved 1,384 ship-days on station and contributed materially in reducing enemy seaborne [infiltration](#) in southern NVN and in the vicinity of the [DMZ](#). Attacks against the NVN transport system during the past 12 months resulted in destruction of carriers, cargo carried, and personnel [casualties](#). Air attacks throughout North Vietnam and Laos destroyed or damaged 5,261 motor vehicles, 2,475 railroad rolling stock, and 11,425 watercraft from 1 January through 20 December 1967. [SEA DRAGON](#) accounted for another 1,473 WBLC destroyed or damaged from 1 January-30 November. There were destroyed rail-lines, bridges, ferries, railroad yards and shops, storage areas, and truck parks. Some 3,685 land targets were struck by Sea Dragon forces, including the destruction or damage of 303 coastal defense and radar sites. Through external assistance, the enemy has been able to replace or rehabilitate many of the items damaged or destroyed, and transport inventories are roughly at the same level they were at the beginning of the year. Nevertheless, construction problems have caused interruptions in the flow of men and supplies, caused a great loss of work-hours, and restricted movement particularly during daylight hours.

*The admission that transport inventories were the same at year's end as when it began must have been a painful one indeed for CINCPAC in view of the enormous cost of the air campaign against the transport system in money, aircraft, and lives. As a consolation for this signal failure, CINCPAC pointed to the extensive diversion of civilian manpower to war-related activities as a result of the bombing. A primary effect of our efforts to impede movement of the enemy has been to force [Hanoi](#) to engage from 500,000 to 600,000 civilians in full-time and part-time war-related activities, in particular for air defense and repair of the LOCs. This diversion of manpower from other pursuits, particularly from the agricultural sector, has caused a drawdown on manpower. The estimated lower food production yields, coupled with an increase in food imports in 1967 (some six*

times that of 1966), indicate that agriculture is having great difficulty in adjusting to this changed composition of the work force. The cost and difficulties of the war to Hanoi have sharply increased, and only through the willingness of other communist countries to provide maximum replacement of goods and material has NVN managed to sustain its war effort.

*To these manpower diversions CINCPAC added the cost to North Vietnam in 1967 of the destruction of vital resources--the third of his air war objectives: C. Destroying vital resources:*

Air attacks were authorized and executed by target systems for the first time in 1967, although the attacks were limited to specific targets within each system. A total of 9,740 sorties was flown against targets on the ROLLING THUNDER target list from 1 January-15 December 1967. The campaign against the power system resulted in reduction of power generating capability to approximately 15 percent of original capacity. Successful strikes against the Thau Nguyen iron and steel plant and the Haiphong cement plant resulted in practically total destruction of these two installations. NVN adjustments to these losses have had to be made by relying on additional imports from [China](#), the USSR or the Eastern European countries. The requirement for additional imports reduces available shipping space for war supporting supplies and adds to the congestion at the ports. Interruptions in raw material supplies and the requirement to turn to less efficient means of power and distribution has degraded overall production.

Economic losses to North Vietnam amounted to more than \$130 million dollars in 1967, representing over one-half of the total economic losses since the war began.

## Geneva Conference Summary

### SUMMARY

Throughout the rapid series of compromises in the last thirty days of [the Geneva Conference](#), American diplomacy revealed a constancy of purpose fully in line with the [Eisenhower](#) Administration's global foreign policy. Based largely on the unfortunate experiences at Panmunjom, the Administration could not reconcile itself to the notion that Sino-Soviet negotiating tactics in the post-Stalin period of peaceful coexistence had changed. Consequently, even as the realization dawned that the Communists could not be expelled from [Indochina](#) and that some compromise with them by [France](#) was inevitable, the Administration stuck fast to the position that the United States delegation to the conference would only assist, but not take an active part, in bringing about an acceptable settlement. From June on, the delegation was under instructions to remain clear of any involvement in the negotiations such as might implicate or commit the United States to the final terms reached, yet simultaneously was to maintain an influential role in making the best of difficult circumstances. British and French agreement to the Seven Points proved a diplomatic victory, not because their acceptance of them assured a reasonable settlement but because, quite contrary to American expectations, they returned to Geneva prepared to hold the line against exorbitant Communist demands. Allied agreement to future discussions of a regional defense system for Southeast Asia was really a hedge against a French sell-out at Geneva; in the event Vietnam, and parts of [Cambodia](#) and [Laos](#), were ceded to the Communist insurgents, the United States would at least have Anglo-French consent to protect the security of what remained of Indochina and its neighbors.

The Seven Points represented principles, not American objectives. They constituted not a statement of goals to be achieved by the United States, but of principles to be adopted by the [British](#) and French negotiators toward concluding a satisfactory settlement. In this manner, the Administration could preserve its dignity before anticipated Vietnamese outrage at partition and domestic displeasure at further Communist inroads in the Far East without losing its ability to influence the terms. Under Secretary Smith's final statement taking note of the agreements and vowing not to disturb them thus culminated a careful policy that rejected an American commitment to the accords such as might identify the Administration with a cession of territory and people to the Communist bloc.

The Geneva Conference left much work undone, especially on a political settlement for Vietnam. The State of Vietnam, like the United States, had refused to adhere to the Final Declaration and was not signatory to the military accord that partitioned the country. In the next section, the focus is therefore on the practical effect of the Geneva accords, the expectations of the conferees concerning them, and the extent to which the major powers, in reaching a settlement, achieved the objectives they had set for themselves.

\* Article 27, which is frequently cited to demonstrate that Vietnam was bound to abide by the accords, and particularly the elections provision, refers to "signatories of the present [military] Agreement..." Hence, the article would seem not to obligate France's "successor" with respect to any provisions of the Final Declaration, a document to which [South Vietnam](#) did not adhere.

### THE MEANING OF GENEVA

Much of the controversy surrounding the American involvement in Vietnam relates to the post-Geneva period, in particular to the two-year interval before national elections were to bring about Vietnam's reunification. To address the question whether the United States instigated or colluded with the Government of Vietnam to defy the Final Declaration's stipulation for national elections would broaden this paper beyond its intended scope. What is relevant, however, are the documented or presumed expectations and objectives of the major participants concerning Vietnam, as well as Cambodia and Laos, at the time the conference closed. How had the accords met the aims of the participants, and to what extent were objectives intertwined with, or perhaps divorced from, expectations? To anticipate, the present argument over the failure to hold elections

in July 1956 overlooks the relative unimportance of them, for a variety of reasons to the five major powers at the Geneva Conference; their objectives only secondarily took into account the expectations of the Vietnamese, north and south.

An assessment of the hopes and goals of the Geneva conferees in the immediate aftermath of the conference should, in the first place, be differentiated from the practical effect of the accords they drew up. The distinction not often made, yet highly important to an understanding of the conference and its achievements, is between the intent of the parties regarding Vietnam and the seemingly contradictory consequences of their agreement.

#### THE PRACTICAL NATURE OF THE ACCORDS

With the exception of South Vietnam, every nation represented at the conference came to believe that partition was the only way to separate the combatants, settle the widely disparate military and political demands of the French and [Viet Minh](#), and conclude an armistice. It might further be argued (although the evidence available does not actually permit a definitive statement one way or the other) that these eight delegations intended the partition line to be temporary, inasmuch as they all desired Vietnamese elections in 1956. But what needs to be pointed out is that the accords themselves did not further that intent. By creating two regimes responsible for "civil administration" (article 14-a of the Vietnam armistice agreement), by providing for the regroupment of forces to two zones and for the movement of persons to the zone of their choice, and by putting off national elections for two years, the conferees had actually made a future political settlement for Vietnam extremely unlikely. Certainly, the separation of Vietnam at the 17th parallel was designed to facilitate the armistice, not to create political subdivisions; but its unintended effect was to allow time for the development of two governments, headed by totally divergent personalities and committed to antithetical political philosophies, foreign policies, and socio-economic systems. Thus, the call for elections in the Final Declaration had as little chance of implementation in Vietnam as previously in [Korea](#) and Germany, a point brought home by Vietnamese officials and reinforced by the failure of the same Geneva conferees to agree on a political settlement in Korea. "Elections," Victor Bator has commented "can, indeed, decide secondary problems of coexistence in circumstances where some measurable minimum basis for political agreement exists. But they are incapable of acceptance by two opposing states, or parts of a state, when diametrically opposite philosophies are involved." If the intent of the Geneva accords was subverted, the subverters were the conferees themselves, who aspired to an ideal political settlement incompatible with the physical and psychological dismemberment of Vietnam on July 21, 1954...

## Joint Chiefs' Memo Disputing McNamara View on Bombing

Excerpts from Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum, signed by Gen. [Earle G. Wheeler](#), Chairman, to Secretary of Defense, October 14, 1966, as provided in the body of the Pentagon study.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff do not concur in your recommendation that there should be no increase in level of bombing effort and no modification in areas and targets subject to air attack. They believe our air campaign against NVN to be an integral and indispensable part of overall war effort. To be effective, the air campaign should be conducted with only those minimum constraints necessary to avoid indiscriminate killing of population....

The Joint Chiefs of Staff do not concur with your proposal that as a carrot to induce negotiations, we should suspend or reduce our bombing campaign against NVN. Our experiences with pauses in bombing and resumption have not been happy ones. Additionally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that the likelihood of the war being settled by negotiation is small, and that, far from inducing negotiations, another bombing pause will be regarded by North Vietnamese leaders, and our Allies, as renewed evidence of lack of U.S. determination to press the war to a successful conclusion. The bombing campaign is one of the two trump cards in the hands of the President (the other being the presence of U.S. troops in SVN). It should not be given up without an end to the NVN aggression in SVN....

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that the war has reached a stage at which decisions taken over the next sixty days can determine the outcome of the war and, consequently, can affect the overall security interests of the United States for years to come. Therefore, they wish to provide to you and to the President their unequivocal views on two salient aspects of the war situation: the search for peace and military pressures on NVN.

A. The frequent, broadly-based public offers made by the President to settle the war by peaceful means on a generous basis, which would take from NVN nothing it now has, have been admirable. Certainly, no one--American or foreigner--except those who are determined not to be convinced, can doubt the sincerity, the generosity, the altruism of U.S. actions and objectives. In the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the time has come when further overt actions and offers on our part are not only nonproductive, they are counter-productive. A logical case can be made that the American people, our Allies, and our enemies alike are increasingly uncertain as to our resolution to pursue the war to a successful conclusion. The Joint Chiefs of Staff advocate the following:

- (1) A statement by the President during the Manila Conference of his unswerving determination to carry on the war until NVN aggression against SVN shall cease;
- (2) Continued covert exploration of all avenues leading to a peaceful settlement of the war; and
- (3) Continued alertness to detect and react appropriately to [withdrawal](#) of North Vietnamese troops from SVN and cessation of support to the VC.

B. In JCSM-955-64, dated 14 November 1964, and in JCSM962-64, dated 23 November 1964, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided their views as to the military pressures which should be brought to bear on NVN. In summary, they recommended a "sharp knock" on NVN military assets and war-supporting facilities rather than the campaign of slowly increasing pressure which was adopted. Whatever the political merits of the latter course, we deprived ourselves of the military effects of early weight of effort and shock, and gave to the enemy time to adjust to our slow quantitative and qualitative increase of pressure. This is not to say that it is now too late to derive military benefits from more effective and extensive use of our air and naval superiority. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend:

- (1) Approval of their ROLLING THUNDER 52 program, which is a step toward meeting the requirement for improved target systems. This program would decrease the [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong sanctuary areas, authorize attacks against the steel plant, the Hanoi rail yards, the thermal power plants, selected areas within Haiphong port and other ports, selected locks and dams controlling

water LOC's, [SAM](#) support facilities within the residual Hanoi and Haiphong [sanctuaries](#), and POL at Haiphong, Hai Gia (Phuc Yen) and Can Thon (Kep).

(2) Use of naval surface forces to interdict North Vietnamese coastal waterborne traffic and appropriate land LOCs and to attack other coastal military targets such as radar and AAA sites.

...The Joint Chiefs of Staff request that their views as set forth above be provided to the President.

## May 4 Memo on Force Levels by Systems-Analysis Chief

Memorandum for Secretary [McNamara](#), "Force Levels and Enemy [Attrition](#)," from Alain C. [Enthoven](#), Assistant [Secretary of Defense](#) for Systems Analysis, May 4, 1967, as provided in the body of the Pentagon study.

Although MACV has admitted to you that the VC/NVA forces can refuse to fight when they want to, this fact has played no role in MACV's analysis of strategy and force requirements. (For example, in his October 1965 briefing, General DePuy said, "The more often we succeed at (search and destroy operations) the less often will the VC stand and fight.") Because enemy attrition plays such a central role in MACV's thinking, and because the enemy's degree of control over the pace of the action determines how well he can control his attrition, we have taken a hard look at the facts on the enemy's tactical initiative. From reliable, detailed accounts of 56 [platoon](#)-sized and larger fire-fights in 1966 we have classified these fights according to how they developed. The first four categories in the table all represent cases in which the enemy willingly and knowingly stood and fought in a pitched battle; these categories include 47 (84%) of the 56 battles. The first three categories, enemy ambushes and assaults on our forces, have 66% of the cases; these three plus category 4a, comprising the cases where the enemy has the advantage of surprise, have 78% of the cases.

The results are independently confirmed from two sources. First, the ARCOV study, which analyzed a different set of battles in late 1965 and early 1966, found that 46% of the fights begin as enemy ambushes and that the enemy starts the fight in 88% of the cases; moreover, it found that 63% of the infantry targets encountered were personnel in trenches or bunkers. Second, we have analyzed the After-Action Reports submitted to MACV by the line commanders in the field; although generally vague and incomplete in their descriptions of what happened, they broadly confirm the drift of the above numbers.

These results imply that the size of the force we deploy has little effect on the rate of attrition of enemy forces. This conclusion should scarcely surprise you in view of the trend of enemy losses in 1966 and in view of the obvious sensitivity of mouth-to-mouth enemy losses to his known strategic initiatives. What is surprising to me is that MACV has ignored this type of information in discussing force levels. I recommend that you inject this factor into the discussion.

## McGeorge Bundy Memo to Johnson on "Sustained Reprisal" Policy

'Annex A, "A Policy of Sustained Reprisal," to memorandum to President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) from [McGeorge Bundy](#), Presidential assistant for national security, February 7, 1965.'

### I. INTRODUCTORY

We believe that the best available way of increasing our chance of success in Vietnam is the development and execution of a policy of 'sustained reprisal' against [North Vietnam](#)--a policy in which air and naval action against the North is justified by and related to the whole [Viet Cong](#) campaign of violence and terror in the South.

While we believe that the risks of such a policy are acceptable, we emphasize that its costs are real. It implies significant U.S. air losses even if no full air war is joined, and it seems likely that it would eventually require an extensive and costly effort against the whole air defense system of North Vietnam. U.S. [casualties](#) would be higher--and more visible to American feelings--than those sustained in the struggle in [South Vietnam](#). Yet measured against the costs of defeat in Vietnam, this program seems cheap. And even if it fails to turn the tide--as it may --the value of the effort seems to us to exceed its cost.

### II. OUTLINE OF THE POLICY

In partnership with the Government of Vietnam, we should develop and exercise the option to retaliate against "any" VC act of violence to persons or property.

2. In practice, we may wish at the outset to relate our reprisals to those acts of relatively high visibility such as the [Pleiku](#) incident. Later, we might retaliate against the assassination of a province chief, but not necessarily the murder of a hamlet official; we might retaliate against a grenade thrown into a crowded cafe in [Saigon](#) but not necessarily to a shot fired into a small shop in the countryside.

3. Once a program of reprisals is clearly underway, it should not be necessary to connect each specific act against North Vietnam to a particular outrage in the South. It should be possible for example, to publish weekly lists of outrages in the South and to have it clearly understood that these outrages are the cause of such action against the North as may be occurring in the current period. Such a more generalized pattern of reprisal would remove much of the difficulty involved in finding precisely matching targets in response to specific [atrocities](#). Even in such a more general pattern, however, it would be important to insure that the general level of reprisal action remained in close correspondence with the level of outrages in the South. We must keep it clear at every stage both to [Hanoi](#) and to the world, that our reprisals will be reduced or stopped when outrages in the South are reduced or stopped--and that we are 'not' attempting to destroy or conquer North Vietnam.

4. In the early stages of such a course, we should take the appropriate occasion to make clear our firm intent to undertake reprisals on any further acts, major or minor, that appear to us and the GVN as indicating Hanoi's support. We would announce that our two governments have been patient and forbearing in the hope that Hanoi would come to its senses without the necessity of our having to take further action; but the outrages continue and now we must react against those who are responsible; we will not provoke; we will not use our force indiscriminately; but we can no longer sit by in the face of repeated acts of terror and violence for which the [DRV](#) is responsible.

5. Having once made this announcement, we should execute our reprisal policy with as low a level of public noise as possible. It is to our interest that our acts should be seen--but we do not wish to boast about them in ways that make it hard for Hanoi to shift its ground. We should instead direct maximum attention to the continuing acts of violence which are the cause of our continuing reprisals.



6. This reprisal policy should begin at a low level. Its level of force and pressure should be increased only gradually--and as indicated above should be decreased if VC terror visibly decreased. The object would not be to "win" an air war against Hanoi, but rather to influence the course of the struggle in the South.

7. At the same time it should be recognized that in order to maintain the power of reprisal without risk of excessive loss, an "air war" may in fact be necessary. We should therefore be ready to develop a separate justification for energetic flak suppression and if necessary for the destruction of Communist [air power](#). The essence of such an explanation should be that these actions are intended solely to insure the effectiveness of a policy of reprisal, and in no sense represent any intent to wage offensive war against the North. These distinctions should not be difficult to develop.

8. It remains quite possible, however, that this reprisal policy would get us quickly into the level of military activity contemplated in the so-called Phase II of our December planning. It may even get us beyond this level with both Hanoi and Peiping, if there is Communist counter-action. We and the GVN should also be prepared for a spurt of VC terrorism, especially in urban areas, that would dwarf anything yet experienced. These are the risks of any action. They should be carefully reviewed--but we believe them to be acceptable.

9. We are convinced that the political values of reprisal require a 'continuous' operation. Episodic responses geared on a one-for one basis to "spectacular" outrages would lack the persuasive force of sustained pressure. More important still, they would leave it open to the Communists to avoid reprisals entirely by giving up only a small element of their own program. The [Gulf of Tonkin affair](#) produced a sharp upturn in morale in South Vietnam. When it remained an isolated episode, however, there was a severe relapse. It is the great merit of the proposed scheme that to stop it the Communists would have to stop enough of their activity in the South to permit the probable success of a determined pacification effort.

### III. EXPECTED EFFECT OF SUSTAINED REPRISAL POLICY

1. We emphasize that our primary target in advocating a reprisal policy is the improvement of the situation in 'South' Vietnam. Action against the North is usually urged as a means of affecting the will of Hanoi to direct and support the VC. We consider this an important but longer-range purpose. The immediate and critical targets are in the South--in the minds of the South Vietnamese and in the minds of the [Viet Cong](#) cadres.

2. Predictions of the effect of any given course of action upon the states of mind of people are difficult. It seems very clear that if the United States and the Government of Vietnam join in a policy of reprisal, there will be a sharp immediate increase in optimism in the South, among nearly all articulate groups. The Mission believes--and our own conversations confirm--that in all sectors of Vietnamese opinion there is a strong belief that the United States could do much more if it would, and that they are suspicious of our failure to use more of our obviously enormous power. At least in the short run, the reaction to reprisal policy would be very favorable.

3. This favorable reaction should offer opportunity for increased American influence in pressing for a more effective government--at least in the short run. Joint reprisal. would imply military planning in which the American role would necessarily be controlling, and this new relation should add to our bargaining power in other military efforts--and conceivably on a wider plane as well if a more stable government is formed. We have the whip hand in reprisals as we do not in other fields.

4. The Vietnamese increase in hope could well increase the readiness of Vietnamese factions themselves to join together in forming a more effective government.

5. We think it plausible that effective and sustained reprisals, even in a low key, would have a substantial depressing effect upon the morale of Viet Cong cadres in South Vietnam. This is the strong opinion of CIA Saigon. It is based upon reliable reports of the initial Viet Cong reaction to the Gulf of Tonkin episode, and also upon the solid general assessment that the determination of Hanoi and the apparent timidity of the mighty United States are both major items in Viet Cong

confidence.

6. The long-run effect of reprisals in the South is far less clear. It may be that like other stimulants, the value of this one would decline over time. Indeed the risk of this result is large enough so that we ourselves believe that a very major effort all along the line should be made in South Vietnam to take full advantage of the immediate stimulus of reprisal policy in its early stages. Our object should be to use this new policy to effect a visible upward turn in pacification, in governmental effectiveness, in operations against the Viet Cong, and in the whole U.S./G.V.N. relationship. It is changes in these areas that can have enduring long-term effects .

7. While emphasizing the importance of reprisals in the South, we do not exclude the impact on Hanoi. We believe, indeed, that it is of great importance that the level of reprisal be adjusted rapidly and visibly to both upward and downward shifts in the level of Viet Cong offenses. We want to keep before Hanoi the carrot of our desisting as well as the stick of continued pressure. We also need to conduct the application of force so that there is always a prospect of worse to come.

8. We cannot assert that a policy of sustained reprisal will succeed in changing the course of the contest in Vietnam. It may fail, and we cannot estimate the odds of success with any accuracy--they may be somewhere between 25% and 75%. What we can say is that even if it fails, the policy will be worth it. At a minimum it will damp down the charge that we did not do all that we could have done, and this charge will be important in many countries, including our own. Beyond that, a reprisal policy--to the extent that it demonstrates U.S. willingness to employ this new norm in counter-insurgency--will set a higher price for the future upon all adventures of guerrilla warfare, and it should therefore somewhat increase our ability to deter such adventures. We must recognize, however, that ability will be gravely weakened if there is failure for any reason in Vietnam.

#### IV. PRESENT ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

I. This general recommendation was developed in intensive discussions in the days just before the attacks on Pleiku. These attacks and our reaction to them have created an ideal opportunity for the prompt development and execution of sustained reprisals. Conversely, if no such policy is now developed, we face the grave danger that Pleiku, like the Gulf of Tonkin, may be a short-run stimulant and a long-term depressant. We therefore recommend that the necessary preparations be made for continuing reprisals. The major necessary steps to be taken appear to us to be the following:

(1) We should complete the evacuation of dependents.

(2) We should quietly start the necessary westward deployments of [word illegible] contingency forces.

(3) We should develop and refine a running catalogue of Viet Cong offenses which can be published regularly and related clearly to our own reprisals. Such a catalogue should perhaps build on the foundation of an initial White Paper.

(4) We should initiate joint planning with the GVN on both the civil and military level. Specifically, we should give a clear and strong signal to those now forming a government that we will be ready for this policy when they are.

(5) We should develop the necessary public and diplomatic statements to accompany the initiation and continuation of this program.

(6) We should insure that a reprisal program is matched by renewed public commitment to our family of programs in the South, so that the central importance of the southern struggle may never be neglected.

(7) We should plan quiet diplomatic communication of the precise meaning of what we are and are not doing, to Hanoi, to Peking and to Moscow.

(8) We should be prepared to defend and to justify this new policy by concentrating attention in every forum upon its cause--the aggression in the South.

(9) We should accept discussion on these terms in any forum, but we should 'not' now accept the idea of negotiations of any sort except on the basis of a stand down of Viet Cong violence. A program of sustained reprisal, with its direct link to Hanoi's continuing aggressive actions in the South, will not involve us in nearly the level of international recrimination which would be precipitated by a go-North program which was not so connected. For this reason the international pressures for negotiation should be quite manageable.

## McNamara Memo of October 14, 1966 Opposing Increase in War Effort

Draft memorandum for President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), "Action Recommended for Vietnam from [Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara](#) October 14, 1966.

1. Evaluation of the situation In the report of my last trip to Vietnam almost a year ago, I stated that the odds were about even that, even with the then-recommended deployments, we would be faced in early 1967 with a military stand-off at a much higher level of conflict and with "pacification" still stalled. I am a little less pessimistic now in one respect. We have done somewhat better militarily than I anticipated. We have by and large blunted the communist military initiative--any military victory in [South Vietnam](#) the [Viet Cong](#) may have had in mind 18 months ago has been thwarted by our emergency deployments and actions. And our program of bombing the North has exacted a price.

My concern continues, however, in other respects. This is because I see no reasonable way to bring the war to an end soon. Enemy morale has not broken--he apparently has adjusted to our stopping his drive for military victory and has adopted a strategy of keeping us busy and waiting us out (a strategy of attriting our national will). He knows that we have not been, and he believes we probably will not be, able to translate our military successes into the "end products"--broken enemy morale and political achievements by the GVN.

The one thing demonstrably going for us in Vietnam over the past year has been the large number of enemy killed-in-action resulting from the big military operations. Allowing for possible exaggeration in reports, the enemy must be taking losses--deaths in and after battle--at the rate of more than 60,000 a year. The [infiltration](#) routes would seem to be one-way trails to death for the North Vietnamese. Yet there is no sign of an impending break in enemy morale and it appears that he can more than replace his losses by infiltration from North Vietnam and recruitment in South Vietnam

Pacification is a bad disappointment. We have good grounds to be pleased by the recent elections, by [Ky's](#) 16 months in power, and by the faint signs of development of national political institutions and of a legitimate civil government. But none of this has translated itself into political achievements at Province level or below. Pacification has if anything gone backward. As compared with two, or four, years ago, enemy full-time [regional forces](#) and part-time guerrilla forces are larger; attacks, terrorism and sabotage have increased in scope and intensity; more railroads are closed and highways cut; the rice crop expected to come to market is smaller; we control little, if any, more of the population; the VC political infrastructure thrives in most of the country, continuing to give the enemy his enormous intelligence advantage; full security exists nowhere (now even behind the U.S. Marines' lines and in Saigon); in the countryside, the enemy almost completely controls the night.

Nor has the [ROLLING THUNDER](#) program of bombing the North either significantly affected infiltration or cracked the morale of [Hanoi](#). There is agreement in the intelligence community on these facts (see the attached Appendix).

In essence, we find ourselves--from the point of view of the important war (for the complicity of the people)--no better, and if anything worse off. This important war must be fought and won by the Vietnamese themselves. We have known this from the beginning. But the discouraging truth is that, as was the case in 1961 and 1963 and 1965, we have not found the formula, the catalyst, for training and inspiring them into effective action.

2. Recommended actions. In such an unpromising state of affairs, what should we do? We must continue to press the enemy militarily; we must make demonstrable progress in pacification; at the same time, we must add a new ingredient forced on us by the facts. Specifically, we must improve our position by getting ourselves into a military posture that we credibly would maintain indefinitely--a posture that makes trying to "wait us out" less attractive. I recommend a five-pronged course of action to achieve those ends.

a. Stabilize U.S. force-levels in Vietnam. It is my judgment that, barring a dramatic change in the war, we should limit the increase in U.S. forces in SVN in 1967 to 70,000 men and we should level off at the total of 470,000 which such an increase would provide.\* It is my view that this is enough to punish the enemy at the large-unit operations level and to keep the enemy's main forces from interrupting pacification. I believe also that even many more than 470,000 would not kill the enemy off in such numbers as to break their morale so long as they think they can wait us out. It is possible that such a 40 percent increase over our present level of 325,000 will break the enemy's morale in the short term, but if it does not, we must, I believe, be prepared for and have underway a long-term program premised on more than breaking the morale of main force units. A stabilized U.S. force level would be part of such a long-term program. It would put us in a position where negotiations would be more likely to be productive, but if they were not we could pursue the all-important pacification task with proper attention and resources and without the spectre of apparently endless escalation of U.S. deployments.

\*Admiral [Sharp](#) has recommended a 12/31/67 strength of 570,000. However, I believe both he and General [Westmoreland](#) recognize that the danger of inflation will probably force an end 1967 deployment limit of about 470,000.

b. Install a barrier. A portion of the 470,000 troops--perhaps 10,000 to 20,000--should be devoted to the construction and maintenance of an infiltration barrier. Such a barrier would lie near the 17th parallel--would run from the sea, across the neck of South Vietnam (choking off the new infiltration routes through the DMZ) and across the trails in [Laos](#). This interdiction system (at an approximate cost of \$1 billion) would comprise to the east a ground barrier of fences, wire, sensors, [artillery](#), aircraft and mobile troops; and to the west--mainly in Laos--an interdiction zone covered by air-laid mines and bombing attacks pinpointed by air-laid acoustic sensors.

The barrier may not be fully effective at first, but I believe that it can be effective in time and that even the threat of its becoming effective can substantially change to our advantage the character of the war. It would hinder enemy efforts, would permit more efficient use of the limited number of friendly troops, and would be persuasive evidence both that our sole aim is to protect the South from the North and that we intend to see the job through.

c. Stabilize the ROLLING THUNDER program against the North. Attack [sorties](#) in North Vietnam have risen from about 4,000 per month at the end of last year to 6,000 per month in the first quarter of this year and 12,000 per month at present. Most of our 50 percent increase of deployed attack-capable aircraft has been absorbed in the attacks on North Vietnam. In North Vietnam, almost 84,000 attack sorties have been flown (about 25 percent against fixed targets), 45 percent during the past seven months.

Despite these efforts, it now appears that the North Vietnamese Laotian road network will remain adequate to meet the requirements of the Communist forces in South Vietnam--this is so even if its capacity could be reduced by one-third and if combat activities were to be doubled. North Vietnam's serious need for trucks, spare parts and petroleum probably can, despite air attacks, be met by imports. The petroleum requirement for trucks involved in the infiltration movement, for example, has not been enough to present significant supply problems, and the effects of the attacks on the petroleum distribution system, while they have not yet been fully assessed, are not expected to cripple the flow of essential supplies. Furthermore, it is clear that, to bomb the North sufficiently to make a radical impact upon Hanoi's political, economic and social structure, would require an effort which we could make but which would not be stomachable either by our own people or by world opinion; and it would involve a serious risk of drawing us into open war with [China](#).

The North Vietnamese are paying a price. They have been forced to assign some 300,000 personnel to the lines of communication in order to maintain the critical flow of personnel and material to the South. Now that the lines of communication have been manned, however, it is doubtful that either a large increase or decrease in our interdiction sorties would substantially

change the cost to the enemy of maintaining the roads, railroads, and waterways or affect whether they are operational. It follows that the marginal sorties--probably the marginal 1,000 or even 5,000 sorties--per month against the lines of communication no longer have a significant impact on the war. (See the attached excerpts from intelligence estimates.)

When this marginal inutility of added sorties against North Vietnam and Laos is compared with the crew and aircraft losses implicit in the activity ( four men and aircraft and \$20 million per 1,000 sorties), I recommend, as a minimum, against increasing the level of bombing of North Vietnam and against increasing the intensity of operations by changing the areas or kinds of targets struck .

Under these conditions, the bombing program would continue the pressure and would remain available as a bargaining counter to get talks started (or to trade off in talks). But, as in the case of a stabilized level of U.S. ground forces, the stabilization of ROLLING THUNDER would remove the prospect of ever escalating bombing as a factor complicating our political posture and distracting from the main job of pacification in South Vietnam.

At the proper time, as discussed on pages 6-7 below, I believe we should consider terminating bombing in all of North Vietnam, or at least in the Northeast zones, for an indefinite period in connection with covert moves toward peace.

d. Pursue a vigorous pacification program. As mentioned above, the pacification (Revolutionary Development ) program has been and is thoroughly stalled. The large-unit operations war, which we know best how to fight and where we have had our successes, is largely irrelevant to pacification as long as we do not lose it. 557

By and large, the people in rural areas believe that the GVN when it comes will not stay but that the VC will; that cooperation with the GVN will be punished by the VC; that the GVN is really indifferent to the people's welfare; that the low-level GVN are tools of the local rich; and that the GVN is ridden with corruption.

Success in pacification depends on the interrelated functions of providing physical security, destroying the VC apparatus, motivating the people to cooperate and establishing responsive local government. An obviously necessary but not sufficient requirement for success of the Revolutionary Development cadre and police is vigorously conducted and adequately prolonged clearing operations by military troops, who will "stay" in the area, who behave them selves decently and who show some respect for the people.

This elemental requirement of pacification has been missing.

In almost no contested area designated for pacification in recent years have [ARVN](#) forces actually "cleared and stayed" to a point where cadre teams, if available, could have stayed overnight in hamlets and survived, let alone accomplish their mission. VC units of [company](#) and even [battalion](#) size remain in operation, and they are more than large enough to overrun anything the local security forces can put up.

Now that the threat of a Communist main-force military victory has been thwarted by our emergency efforts, we must allocate far more attention and a portion of the regular military forces (at least half of the ARVN and perhaps a portion of the U.S. forces) to the task of providing an active and permanent security screen behind which the Revolutionary Development teams and police can operate and behind which the political struggle with the VC infrastructure can take place.

The U.S. cannot do this pacification security job for the Vietnamese. All we can do is "Massage the heart." For one reason, it is known that we do not intend to stay; if our efforts worked at all, it would merely postpone the eventual confrontation of the VC and GVN infrastructures. The GVN must do the job; and I am convinced that drastic reform is needed if the GVN is going to be able to do it.

The first essential reform is in the attitude of GVN officials. They are generally apathetic, and there

is corruption high and low. Often appointments, promotions, and draft deferments must be bought; and kickbacks on salaries are common. Cadre at the bottom can be no better than the system above them.

The second needed reform is in the attitude and conduct of the ARVN. The image of the government cannot improve unless and until the ARVN improves markedly. They do not understand the importance (or respectability) of pacification nor the importance to pacification of proper, disciplined conduct. Promotions, assignments and awards are often not made on merit, but rather on the basis of having a diploma, friends or relatives, or because of bribery. The ARVN is weak in dedication, direction and discipline.

Not enough ARVN are devoted to area and population security and when the ARVN does attempt to support pacification, their actions do not last long enough; their tactics are bad despite U.S. prodding ( no aggressive small-unit saturation patrolling, hamlet searches, quick-reaction contact, or offensive night ambushes); they do not make good use of intelligence; and their leadership and discipline are bad.

Furthermore, it is my conviction that a part of the problem undoubtedly lies in bad management on the American as well as the GVN side. Here split responsibility --or "no responsibility"--has resulted in too little hard pressure on the GVN to do its job and no really solid or realistic planning with respect to the whole effort. We must deal with this management problem and deal with it effectively.

One solution would be to consolidate all U.S. activities which are primarily part of the civilian pacification program and all persons engaged in such activities, providing a clear assignment of responsibility and a unified command under a civilian relieved of all other duties.\*\* Under this approach. there would be a carefully delineated division of responsibility between the civilian-charge and an element of COMUSMACV under a senior officer, who would give the subject of planning for and providing hamlet security the highest priority in attention and resources. Success will depend on the men selected for the jobs on both sides (they must be among the highest rank and most competent administrators in the U.S. Government ), on complete cooperation among the U.S. elements. and on the extent to which the South Vietnamese can be shocked out of their present pattern of behavior. The first work of this reorganized U.S. pacification organization should be to produce within 60 days a realistic and detailed plan for the coming year.

\*\* If this task is assigned to Ambassador Porter, another individual must be sent immediately to Saigon to serve as Ambassador Lodge's deputy.

From the political and public-relations viewpoint, this solution is preferable--if it works. But we cannot tolerate continued failure. If it fails after a fair trial. the only alternative in my view is to place the entire pacification program--civilian and military--under General Westmoreland. This alternative would result in the establishment of a Deputy COMUSMACV for Pacification who would be in command of all pacification staffs in Saigon and of all pacification staffs and activities in the field; one person in each corps, province and district would be responsible for the U.S. effort.

(It should be noted that progress in pacification, more than anything else, will persuade the enemy to negotiate or withdraw.)

c. Press for Negotiations. I am not optimistic that Hanoi or the VC will respond to peace overtures now (explaining my recommendations above that we get into a level-off posture for the long-term prospects:

(1) Take steps to increase the credibility of our peace gestures in the minds of the enemy. There is considerable evidence both in private statements by the Communists and in the reports of competent Western officials who have talked with them that charges of U.S. bad faith are not solely propagandistic, but reflect deeply held beliefs. Analyses of Communists' statements and actions indicate that they firmly believe that American leadership really does not want the fighting to stop, and, that we are intent on winning a military victory in Vietnam and on maintaining our

presence there through a puppet regime supported by U.S. military bases.

As a way of projective U.S. bona fides, I believe that we should consider two possibilities with respect to our bombing program against the North, to be undertaken, if at all, at a time very carefully selected with a view to maximizing the chances of influencing the enemy and world opinion and to minimizing the chances that failure would strengthen the hand of the "hawks" at home: First, without fanfare, conditions. or avowal, whether the stand-down was permanent or temporary, stop bombing all Of North Vietnam. It is generally thought that Hanoi will not agree to negotiations until they can claim that the bombing has stopped unconditionally. We should see what develops, retaining freedom to resume the bombing if nothing useful was forthcoming.

Alternatively, we could shift the weight-of-effort away from "Zones 6A and 6B"--zones including Hanoi and Haiphong and areas north of those two cities to the Chinese border. This alternative has some attraction in that it provides the North Vietnamese a "face saver" if only problems of "face" are holding up Hanoi peace gestures; it would narrow the bombing down directly to the objectionable infiltration (supporting the logic of a stop infiltration/full-pause deal); and it would reduce the international heat on the U.S. Here, too, bombing of the Northeast could be resumed at any time, or "spot" attacks could be made there from time to time to keep North Vietnam off balance and to require her to pay almost the full cost by maintaining her repair crews in place. The sorties diverted from Zones 6A and 6B could be concentrated on infiltration routes in Zones 1 and 2 (the southern end of North Vietnam, including the [Mu Gia Pass](#)), in Laos and in South Vietnam.\*\*\*

\*\*\* Any limitation on the bombing of North Vietnam will cause serious psychological problems among the men who are risking their lives to help achieve our political objectives; among their commanders up to and including the JCS; and among those of our people who cannot understand why we should withhold punishment from the enemy. General Westmoreland, as do the JCS, strongly believes in the military value of the bombing program. Further, Westmoreland reports that the morale of his Air Force personnel may already be showing signs of erosion--an erosion resulting from current operational restrictions.

To the same end of improving our credibility, we should seek ways--through words and deeds--to make believable our intention to withdraw our forces once the North Vietnamese aggression against the South stops. In particular, we should avoid any implication that we will stay in South Vietnam with bases or to guarantee any particular outcome to a solely South Vietnamese struggle.

(2) Try to split the VC off from Hanoi. The intelligence estimate is that evidence is overwhelming that the North Vietnamese dominate and control the National Front and the Viet Conc. Nevertheless, I think we should continue and enlarge efforts to contact the VC/NLF and to probe ways to split members or sections off the VC/NLF organization.

(3) Press contacts with North Vietnam, the Soviet Union and other parties who might contribute toward a settlement.

(4) Develop a realistic plan providing a role for the VC in negotiations, postwar life, and government of the nation. An amnesty offer and proposals for national reconciliation would be steps in the right direction and should be parts of the plan. It is important that this plan be one which will appear reasonable, if not at first to Hanoi and the VC, at least to world opinion.

3. The prognosis. The prognosis is bad that the war can be brought to a satisfactory conclusion within the next two years. The large-unit operations probably will not do it; negotiations probably will not do it. While we should continue to pursue both of these routes in trying for a solution in the short run, we should recognize that success from them is a mere possibility, not a probability .

The solution lies in girding, openly, for a longer war and in taking actions immediately which will in 12 to 18 months give clear evidence that the continuing costs and risks to the American people are acceptably limited, that the formula for success has been found. and that the end of the war is merely a matter of time. All of my recommendations will contribute to this strategy, but the one most difficult to implement is perhaps the most important one--enlivening the pacification program.



The odds are less than even for this task, if only because we have failed consistently since 1961 to make a dent in the problem. But, because the 1967 trend of pacification will, I believe, be the main talisman of ultimate U.S. success or failure in Vietnam, extraordinary imagination and effort should go into changing the stripes of that problem.

President [Thieu](#) and Prime Minister Ky are thinking along similar lines. They told me that they do not expect the Enemy to negotiate or to modify his program in less than two years. Rather, they expect that enemy to continue to expand and to increase his activity. They expressed agreement with us that the key to success is pacification and that so far pacification has failed. They agree that we need clarification of GVN and U.S. roles and that the bulk of the ARVN should be shifted to pacification. Ky will, between January and July 1967, shift all ARVN infantry divisions to that role. And he is giving Thang, a good Revolutionary Development director, added powers. Thieu and Ky see this as part of a two-year (1967-68) schedule, in which offensive operations against enemy main force units are continued, carried on primarily by the U.S. and other Free-World forces. At the end of the two-year period, they believe the enemy may be willing to negotiate or to retreat from his current course of action.

Note: Neither the Secretary of State nor the JCS have yet had an opportunity to express their views on this report. Mr. Katzenbach and I have discussed many of its main conclusions and recommendations--in general, but not in all particulars, it expresses his views as well as my own.

#### APPENDIX

Extracts from CIA/DIA Report "An Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam through 12 September 1966."

1. There is no evidence yet of any shortage of POL in North Vietnam and stocks on hand, with recent imports, have been adequate to sustain necessary operations.
2. Air strikes against all modes of transportation in North Vietnam and during the past month, but there is no evidence of serious transport problems in the movement of supplies to or within North Vietnam.
3. There is no evidence yet that the air strikes have significantly weakened popular morale.
4. Air strikes continue to depress economic growth and have been responsible for the abandonment of some plans for economic development, but essential economic activities continue.

Extracts from a March 16, 1966 CIA Report "An Analysis of the ROLLING THUNDER Air Offensive against North Vietnam."

1. Although the movement of men and supplies in North Vietnam has been hampered and made somewhat more costly (by our bombing), the Communists have been able to increase the flow of supplies and manpower to South Vietnam.
2. Hanoi's determination (despite our bombing) to continue its policy of supporting the insurgency in the South appears as firm as ever.
3. Air attacks almost certainly cannot bring about a meaningful reduction in the current level at which essential supplies and men flow into South Vietnam.

Bomb Damage Assessment in the North by the Institute for Defense Analyses' "Summer Study Group."

What surprised us (in our assessment of the effect of bombing North Vietnam ) was the extent of agreement among various intelligence agencies on the effects of past operations and probable effects of continued and expanded Rolling Thunder. The conclusions of our group, to which we all subscribe, are therefore merely sharpened conclusions of numerous Intelligence summaries. They are that Rolling Thunder does not limit the present logistic flow into SVN because NVN is neither

the source of supplies nor the choke-point on the supply routes from China and USSR. Although an expansion of Rolling Thunder by closing Haiphong harbor, eliminating electric power plants and totally destroying railroads, will at least indirectly impose further privations on the populace of NVN and make the logistic support of VC costlier to maintain, such expansion will not really change the basic assessment. This follows because NVN has demonstrated excellent ability to improvise transportation, and because the primitive nature of their economy is such that Rolling Thunder can affect directly only a small fraction of the population. There is very little hope that the [Ho Chi Minh](#) Government will lose control of population because of Rolling Thunder. The lessons of the Korean War are very relevant in these respects. Moreover, foreign economic aid to NVN is large compared to the damage we inflict, and growing. Probably the government of NVN has assurances that the USSR and/or China will assist the rebuilding of its economy after the war, and hence its concern about the damage being inflicted may be moderated by long-range favorable expectations.

Specifically:

1. As of July 1966 the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam had no measurable direct effect on Hanoi's ability to mount and support military operations in the South at the current level.
2. Since the initiation of the Rolling Thunder program the damage to facilities and equipment in North Vietnam has been more than offset by the increased flow of military and economic aid, largely from the USSR and Communist China.
3. The aspects of the basic situation that have enabled Hanoi to continue its support of military operations in the South and to neutralize the impact of U.S. bombing by passing the economic costs to other Communist countries are not likely to be altered by reducing the present geographic constraints, mining Haiphong and the principal harbors in North Vietnam, increasing the number of armed reconnaissance sorties and otherwise expanding the U.S. air offensive along the lines now contemplated in military recommendations and planning studies.
4. While conceptually it is reasonable to assume that some limit may be imposed on the scale of military activity that Hanoi can maintain in the South by continuing the Rolling Thunder program at the present, or some higher level of effort, there appears to be no basis for defining that limit in concrete terms, or for concluding that the present scale of VC/NVN activities in the field have approached that limit.
5. The indirect effects of the bombing on the will of the North Vietnamese to continue fighting and on their leaders' appraisal of the prospective gains and costs of maintaining the present policy have not shown themselves in any tangible way. Furthermore, we have not discovered any basis for concluding that the indirect punitive effects of bombing will prove decisive in these respects.

## Notes on Johnson Discussion with Wheeler and Westmoreland

Excerpts from the Pentagon study describing a conversation on April 27, 1967 between [President Johnson](#) and Generals [Wheeler](#) and [Westmoreland](#).

Westmoreland was quoted as saying that without the 2-1/3 additional [divisions](#) which he had requested "we will not be in danger of being defeated but it will be nip and tuck to oppose the reinforcements the enemy is capable of providing. In the final analysis we are fighting a [war of attrition](#) in Southeast Asia."

Westmoreland predicted that the next step if we were to pursue our present strategy to fruition would probably be the second addition of 2-1/3 divisions or approximately another 100,000 men. Throughout the conversations he repeated his assessment that the war would not be lost but that progress would certainly be slowed down. To him this was "not an encouraging outlook but a realistic one." When asked about the influence of increased [infiltration](#) upon his operations the general replied that as he saw it "this war is action and counteraction. Anytime we take an action we expect a reaction." The President replied: "When we add divisions can't the enemy add divisions? If so, where does it all end?" Westmoreland answered: "The VC and [DRV](#) strength in SVN now totals 285,000 men. It appears that last month we reached the crossover point in areas excluding the two northern provinces. Attritions will be greater than additions to the force.... The enemy has 8 divisions in [South Vietnam](#). He has the capability of deploying 12 divisions although he would have difficulty supporting all of these. He would be hard pressed to support more than 12 divisions. If we add 2-1/2 divisions, it is likely the enemy will react by adding troops." The President then asked "At what point does the enemy ask for volunteers?" Westmoreland's only reply was, "That is a good question."

COMUSMACV briefly analyzed the strategy under the present program of 470,000 men for the President. He explained his concept of a "meatgrinder" where we would kill large numbers of the enemy but in the end do little better than hold our own, with the shortage of troops still restricting MACV to a fire brigade technique chasing after enemy main force units when and where it could find them. He then predicted that "unless the will of the enemy is broken or unless there was an unraveling of the VC infrastructure the war could go on for 5 years. If our forces were increased that period could be reduced although not necessarily in proportion to increases in strength, since factors other than increase in strength had to be considered. For instance, a nonprofessional force, such as that which would result from fulfilling the requirement for 100,000 additional men by calling reserves, would cause some degradation of normal leadership and effectiveness. Westmoreland concluded by estimating that with a force level of 565,000 men, the war could well go on for three years. With a second increment of 2-1/3 divisions leading to a total of 665,000 men, it could go on for two years.

General Wheeler . . . listed three matters . . . bothering the JCS. These were:

- (a) DRV troop activity in [Cambodia](#). U.S. troops may be forced to move against these units in Cambodia.
- (b) DRV troop activity in [Laos](#). U.S. troops may be forced to move against these units.
- (c) Possible invasion of [North Vietnam](#). We may wish to take offensive action against the DRV with ground troops.

The bombing which had always attracted considerable JCS attention was in Wheeler's estimation about to reach the point of target saturation--when all worthwhile fixed targets except the ports had been struck. Once this saturation level was reached the decision-makers would be impelled to address the requirement. To deny to the North Vietnamese use of the ports. He summarized the JCS position saying that the JCS firmly believed that the President must review the contingencies which they faced, the troops required to meet them and additional punitive action against DRV. Westmoreland parenthetically added that he was "frankly dismayed at even the thought of stopping the bombing program." . . .

The President closed the meeting by asking: "What if we do not add the 2-1/3 divisions?" General Wheeler replied first, observing that the momentum would die; in some areas the enemy would recapture the initiative, an important but hardly disastrous development, meaning that we wouldn't lose the war but it would be a longer one. He added that:

"Of the 2-1/3 divisions, I would add one division on the [DMZ](#) to relieve the Marines to work with [ARVN](#) on pacification; and I would put one division east of [Saigon](#) to relieve the 9th Division to deploy to the Delta to increase the effectiveness of the three good ARVN divisions now there; the brigade I would send to Quang Ngai to make there the progress in the next year that we have made in Binh Dinh in the past year."

The President reacted by saying:

"We should make certain we are getting value received from the South Vietnamese troops. Check the discharges to determine whether we could make use of them by forming additional units, by mating them with US troops, as is done in [Korea](#), or in other ways."

There is no record of General Westmoreland's reply, if any....

## NSC Staff Study February 13, 1952

### UNITED STATES OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO COMMUNIST AGGRESSION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA\*

\* The term Southeast Asia is used herein to mean [Indochina](#), Burma, [Thailand](#), the Malay Peninsula, and Indonesia.

#### THE PROBLEM

1. To determine the policy of the United States toward the countries of Southeast Asia, and in particular, the courses of action which may be taken by the United States to strengthen and coordinate resistance to communism on the part of the governments and peoples of the area, to prevent [Chinese](#) Communist aggression, and to meet such aggression should it occur.

#### I. CONSEQUENCES TO THE UNITED STATES OF COMMUNIST DOMINATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

2. Communist domination of Southeast Asia, whether by means of overt invasion, subversion, or accommodation on the part of the indigenous governments, would be critical to United States security interests. Communist success in this area would spread doubt and fear among other threatened non-communist countries as to the ability of the United States and the United Nations to halt communist aggression elsewhere. It would strengthen the claim that the advance of communism is inexorable and encourage countries vulnerable to Soviet pressure to adopt policies of neutralism or accommodation. Successful overt Chinese Communist aggression in this area, especially if achieved without encountering more than token resistance on the part of the United States or the United Nations, would have critical psychological and political consequences which would probably include the relatively swift alignment of the rest of Asia and thereafter of the Middle East to communism, thereby endangering the stability and security of Europe. Such a communist success might nullify the psychological advantages accruing to the free world by reason of its response to the aggression in [Korea](#).

3. The fall of Southeast Asia would underline the apparent economic advantages to [Japan](#) of association with the communist-dominated Asian sphere. Exclusion of Japan from trade with Southeast Asia would seriously affect the Japanese economy, and increase Japan's dependence on United States aid. In the long run the loss of Southeast Asia, especially Malaya and Indonesia, could result in such economic and political pressures in Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to the Soviet Bloc.

4. Southeast Asia, especially Malaya and Indonesia, is the principal world source of natural rubber and tin. Access to these materials by the Western Powers and their denial to the Soviet Bloc is important at all times and particularly in the event of global war. Communist control over the rice surplus of the Southeast Asian mainland would provide the USSR with a powerful economic weapon in its relations with other countries of the Far East. Indonesia is a secondary source of petroleum whose importance would be enhanced by the denial to the Western Powers of petroleum sources in the Middle East. Malaya is the largest net dollar earner for the [United Kingdom](#), and its loss would seriously aggravate the economic problems facing the UK.

5. Communist control of all of Southeast Asia would render the United States position in the Pacific offshore island chain precarious and would seriously jeopardize fundamental United States security interests in the Far East. An extension of communist power via Burma would augment the communist threat to India and Pakistan and strengthen the groups within those countries which favor accommodation. However, such an event would probably result in a stiffer attitude toward communism on the part of the Indian government.

6. Communist domination of mainland Southeast Asia would place unfriendly forces astride the most direct and best-developed sea and air routes between the Western Pacific and India and the

Near East. In the event of global war, the development of Soviet submarine and air bases in mainland Southeast Asia might compel the detour of U.S. and allied shipping and air transportation in the Southeast Asia region via considerably longer alternate routes to the south. This extension of friendly lines of communication would hamper U.S. strategic movements in this region and tend to isolate the major non-communist bases in the Far East--the offshore island chain and [Australia](#)--from existing bases in East Africa and the Near and Middle East, as well as from potential bases on the Indian sub-continent.

7. Besides disrupting established lines of communication in the area, the denial of actual military facilities in mainland Southeast Asia--in particular the loss of the major naval operating bases at Singapore--would compel the utilization of less desirable peripheral bases. Soviet exploitation of the naval and air bases in mainland Southeast Asia probably would be limited by the difficulties of logistic support but would, nevertheless, increase the threat to existing lines of communication.

## II. REGIONAL STRATEGY

8. The continued integrity of the individual countries of Southeast Asia is to a large extent dependent upon a successful coordination of political and military measures for the entire area. The development of practical measures aimed at preventing the absorption of these countries into the Soviet orbit must therefore recognize this interdependence and must, in general, seek courses of action for the area as a whole.

9. However, it must be recognized that the governments and peoples of Southeast Asia have little in common other than their geographic proximity and their newly awakened nationalism and anti-colonialism. For the most part, their economies are competitive rather than complementary. The countries are divided internally and from each other by language and ethnic differences. The several nationalities and tribal groups are the heirs of centuries of warfare, jealousy and mutual distrust. In addition, their present governments are sharply divided in their attitudes toward the current East-West struggle. The governments of the three Associated States of Indochina are not recognized by any other Asian states except Nationalist China and Thailand.

10. In the strategic sense, the defense of [Tonkin](#) is important to the defense of mainland Southeast Asia. If Communist forces should succeed in driving the [French Union forces](#) from Tonkin, military action in the remainder of Indochina might have to be limited to delaying action and the perimeter defense of certain coastal areas pending reinforcement or evacuation. With the appearance of communist success, native support would probably swing increasingly to the [Viet Minh](#).

11. Thailand has no common border with China and no strong internal communist element. It adjoins areas of Indochina now controlled by the Viet Minh, but the border areas are remote and difficult. Hence, communist seizure of Thailand is improbable except as a result of the prior loss of either Burma or Indochina.

12. Communist control of 'either' Indochina or Burma would expose Thailand to [infiltration](#) and severe political pressures as well as to the threat of direct attack. Unless substantial outside aid were forthcoming, it is possible that in such a case, political pressure alone would be sufficient to bring about the accommodation of Thailand to international communism within a year. However, substantial aid, together with assurance of support by the United States and the UN might be sufficient to preserve a non-communist government in Thailand in spite of any form of pressure short of overt attack.

13. Thailand would be difficult to defend against an overt attack from the east by way of the traditional invasion route through [Cambodia](#). Thailand is more defensible against attack from Burma owing to the mountainous terrain and poor communications of the Thai-Burmese border. In either case it might be possible to defend an area in southern Thailand centering on Bangkok. Since any attack on Thailand would necessarily be preceded by communist encroachment on Indochina or Burma, the defense of Thailand would probably be part of a broader pattern of hostilities.

14. If the loss of Thailand followed the loss of Burma, the defense of Indochina would be out-flanked; and any substantial communist forces based on Thailand would render the position of the French Union Forces in Indochina untenable in the long run. If the collapse of Thailand followed the loss of Indochina, the psychological and political consequences would accelerate the deterioration of Burma. However, the military consequences in such a case would be less immediate, owing to the difficult terrain of the Thai-Burmese border country.

15. Communist control of Thailand would aggravate the already serious security problem presented by the Thai-Malayan border and greatly increase the difficulties of the British security forces in Malaya. However, assuming control of the sea by the Western Powers, Malaya offers a defensible position against even a full-scale land attack. The Kra Isthmus of the Malayan Peninsula would afford the best secondary line of defense against total communist domination of Southeast Asia and the East Indies. Such a defense would effectively protect Indonesia against external communist pressure. By thus defending Malaya and Indonesia, the anti-communist forces would continue to hold the most important strategic material resources of the area, as well as strategic air and naval bases and lines of communication.

16. The strategic interdependence of the countries in Southeast Asia, and the cumulative effect of a successful communist penetration in any one area, point to the importance of action designed to forestall any aggression by the Chinese Communists. The most effective possible deterrent would be a joint warning by the United States and certain other governments regarding the grave consequences of Chinese aggression against Southeast Asia, and implying the threat of retaliation against Communist China itself. Such a warning should be issued in conjunction with other nations, including at least the United Kingdom, [France](#), Australia and [New Zealand](#). Participation in such a warning involves all the risks and disadvantages of a precommitment to take action in future and unknown circumstances. However, these disadvantages must be weighed against the alternative of a costly effort to repel Chinese invasion after it has actually occurred. A second, but probably less effective, means of attempting to deter such an invasion would be to focus world attention on the continuing threat of Chinese Communist aggression against Southeast Asia and to make clear to the Soviet and Chinese Communist Governments the fact that the United States views the situation in Southeast Asia with great concern. In fact, statements along these lines have already been made. Such means might also include a Peace Observation Commission, if desired and requested by the countries concerned, public addresses by U.S. officials, and "show the flag" visits by naval and air units.

17. The Chinese Nationalist forces represent considerable reserve upon which to draw in the event of military action against Communist China. The deficiency in equipment and training seriously limits the possible employment of these forces at present, however, continuation of our training and supply efforts should serve to alleviate these deficiencies. The manner of employment of these forces is beset not only with military but also with political difficulties. Hence the decision as to the best use of these forces cannot be made at this time. Nevertheless, we should be prepared to make the best practicable use of this military augmentation in light of the circumstances existing at the time.

### III. INDOCHINA

18. In the long run, the security of Indochina against communism will depend upon the development of native governments able to command the support of the masses of the people and national armed forces capable of relieving the French of the major burden of maintaining internal security. Some progress is being made in the formation and development of national armies. However, the Vietnamese Government has been slow to assume its responsibilities and has continued to suffer from a lack of strong leadership. It has had to contend with: (a) lingering Vietnamese suspicion of any French-supported regime, combined with the apathetic and "fence sitting" attitude of the bulk of the people; (b) the difficulty, common to all new and inexperienced governments, of training the necessary personnel and building an efficient administration; and (c) the failure of factional and sectional groups to unite in a concerted national effort.

19. The U.S. economic aid program for Indochina has as its objectives to increase production and thereby offset the military drain on the economy of the Associated States; to increase popular support for the Government by improving the effectiveness of Government services; to make the Government and the people aware of America's interest in their independence and welfare; and to use economic aid as a means of supporting the military effort. Because of their strained budgetary situation, the Associated States cannot meet the local currency costs of the projects; about 60 percent of the program funds is, therefore, devoted to importing needed commodities which are sold to generate counterpart.

20. The military situation in Indochina continues to be one of stalemate. Increased U.S. aid to the Franco-Vietnamese forces has been an essential factor in enabling them to withstand recent communist attacks. However, Chinese aid to the Viet Minh in the form of logistic support, training, and technical advisors is increasing at least at a comparable rate. The prospect is for a continuation of the present stalemate in the absence of intervention by important forces other than those presently engaged.

21. While it is unlikely under the present circumstances that the French will suffer a military defeat in Indochina, there is a distinct possibility that the French Government will soon conclude that France cannot continue indefinitely to carry the burden of her total military commitments. From the French point of view, the possible means of lessening the present burden include: (1) a settlement with the communists in Indochina; (2) an agreement to internationalize the action in Indochina; (3) reduction of the NATO obligations of France.

22. A settlement based on a military armistice would be more complicated in Indochina than in the case of Korea. Much of Indochina is not firmly under the control of either side, but subject to occasional forays from both. Areas controlled by the opposing sides are interspersed, and lines of contact are fluid. Because of the weakness of the native governments, the dubious attitudes of the population even in areas under French control, and the certainty of continued communist pressure, it is highly probable that any settlement based on a withdrawal of French forces would be tantamount to handing over Indochina to communism. The United States should therefore continue to oppose any negotiated settlement with the Viet Minh.

23. In the event that information and circumstances point to the conclusion that France is no longer prepared to carry the burden in Indochina, or if France presses for a sharing of the responsibility for Indochina, whether in the UN or directly with the U.S. Government, the United States should oppose a French withdrawal and consult with the French and British concerning further measures to be taken to safeguard the area from communist domination. In anticipation of these possibilities, the United States should urgently re-examine the situation with a view to determining:

- a. Whether U.S. participation in an international undertaking would be warranted.
- b. The general nature of the contributions which the United States, with other friendly governments, might be prepared to make.

24. A cessation of hostilities in Korea would greatly increase the logistical capability of the Chinese Communists to support military operations in Indochina. A Korean peace would have an even more decisive effect in increasing Chinese air capabilities in that area. Recent intelligence reports indicate increased Chinese Communist military activity in the Indochinese border area. If the Chinese Communists directly intervene with large forces over and above those introduced as individuals or in small units, the French would probably be driven back to a beachhead around Haiphong. The French should be able to hold this beachhead for only a limited time at best in the absence of timely and substantial outside support.

25. In view of the world-wide reaction to overt aggression in Korea, Communist China may prefer to repeat in Indochina the method of "volunteer" intervention. Inasmuch as the French do not control the border between China and Indochina nor large areas north of Hanoi, it may be difficult



to detect the extent of preparation for such intervention. It is important to U.S. security interests to maintain the closest possible consultation with the French Government on the buildup of Chinese Communist intervention in Indochina. The Government of France has agreed to consult with the United States before it requests UN or other international action to oppose Chinese Communist aggression in Indochina in order that the two countries may jointly evaluate the extent of Chinese Communist intervention.

26. If it is thus determined that Chinese Communist forces (including volunteers) have overtly intervened in the conflict in Indochina, or are covertly participating to such an extent as to jeopardize retention of the Tonkin Delta by the French forces, the United States should support the French to the greatest extent possible, preferably under the auspices of the UN. It is by no means certain that an appropriate UN resolution could be obtained. Favorable action in the UN would depend upon a change in the attitude of those governments which view the present regime in Indochina as a continuation of French colonialism. A new communist aggression might bring about a reassessment of the situation on the part of these governments and an increased recognition of the danger. Accordingly, it is believed that a UN resolution to oppose the aggression could be passed in the General Assembly by a small margin.

27. Even if it is not possible to obtain a UN resolution in such a case, the United States should seek the maximum possible international support for and participation in any international collective action in support of France and the Associated States. The United States should take appropriate military action against Communist China as part of a UN collective action or in conjunction with France and the United Kingdom and other friendly governments. However, in the absence of such support, it is highly unlikely that the United States would act unilaterally. It is probable however, that the United States would find some support and token participation at least from the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth countries.

28. The U.S. forces which would be committed, and the manner of their employment, as well as the military equipment which could be furnished to bolster the French Union forces, would be dependent upon certain factors which cannot now be predicted with accuracy. These include the extent of progress in U.S. rearmament, whether or not hostilities in Korea were continuing, and strategic developments in other parts of the world. It would be desirable to avoid the use of major U.S. ground forces in Indochina. Other effective means of opposing the aggression would include naval, air and logistical support of the French Union forces, naval blockade of Communist China, and attacks by land- and carrier-based aircraft on military targets in Communist China. The latter could be effective against the long, tenuous, and vulnerable supply lines by which Chinese operations in Indochina would have to be supported. In the event of a forced evacuation, U.S. forces might provide cover and assistance. United Kingdom participation in these measures might well result in the seizure of Hong Kong by the Chinese Communists.

29. It is recognized that the commitment of U.S. military forces against Communist China would: (a) increase the risk of general hostilities in the Far East, including Soviet participation under cover of the existing Sino-Soviet agreements; (b) involve U.S. military forces in another Asiatic peripheral action, thus detracting from U.S. capabilities to conduct a global war in the near future; (c) arouse public opposition to "another Korea"; and (d) imply willingness to use U.S. military forces in other critical areas subject to communist aggression. Nevertheless, by failing to take action, the United States would permit the communists to obtain, at little or no cost, a victory of major world consequence.

30. Informed public opinion might support use of U.S. forces in Indochina regardless of sentiment against "another Korea" on the basis that: (a) Indochina is of far greater strategic importance than Korea; (b) the confirmation of UN willingness to oppose aggression with force, demonstrated at such a high cost in Korea, might be nullified by the failure to commit UN forces in Indochina; and (c) a second instance of aggression by the Chinese Communists would justify measures not subject to the limitations imposed upon the UN action in Korea.

31. The military action contemplated herein would constitute, in effect, a war against Communist China which would be limited only as to its objectives, but would not be subject to any geographic limitations. Employment of U.S. forces in a 'de facto' war without a formal declaration would raise questions which would make it desirable to consult with key members of both parties in Congress in order to obtain their prior concurrence in the courses of action contemplated.

## Origins of the U.S. Involvement in Vietnam

A. The Policy Context Events in [China](#) of 1948 and 1949 brought the United States to a new awareness of the vigor of communism in Asia, and to a sense of urgency over its [containment](#). U.S. policy instruments developed to meet unequivocal communist challenges in Europe were applied to the problem of the Far East. Concurrent with the development of NATO, a U.S. search began for collective security in Asia; economic and military assistance programs were inaugurated; and the [Truman](#) Doctrine acquired wholly new dimensions by extension into regions where the European empires were being dismantled. In March, 1947, President Truman had set forth the following policy guidelines:

"I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way...."

The President went on to underscore the U.S. determination to commit its resources to contain communism. While he clearly subordinated military aid to economic and political means, he did assert the U.S. intent to assist in maintaining security:

"To insure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations. The United Nations is designed to make possible freedom and independence for all its members. We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes."

In the year 1947, while U.S. military assistance began to flow into Greece to ward off subversive aggression, the U.S. inaugurated the European Recovery Plan (ERP). ERP was aimed at economic recovery in Western Europe, especially in countries such as [France](#) and Italy where post-war depression was fostering marked leftward political trends. In one of the high level appraisals of the situation that the U.S. had to counter in 1947, the [Harriman](#) Committee on Foreign Aid has concluded that:

"The interest of the United States in Europe . . . cannot be measured simply in economic terms. It is also strategic and political. We all know that we are faced in the world today with two conflicting ideologies . . . Our position in the world has been based for at least a century on the existence in Europe of a number of strong states committed by tradition and inclination to the democratic concept...."

The fall of the Czechoslovakian Government in February 1948 brought about the Brussels Pact, a Western European collective defense and economic collaboration arrangement. The blockade of Berlin, which began on 1 April 1948, accelerated U.S. movement toward membership in the alliance. On June 11, 1948 the U.S. Senate adopted a resolution advising the Executive to undertake the:

". . . Progressive development of regional and other collective arrangements for individual and collective self-defense in accordance with the purposes, principle, and provisions of the Charter [of the UN], association of the United States, by constitutional process, with such regional and other collective arrangements as are based on continuous and effective self--help and mutual aid, and as affect its national security."

That same month, Congress passed the Economic Cooperation Act, and in July, 1948, opened negotiations for a North Atlantic Alliance. The North Atlantic Treaty was signed in April, 1949, and entered into force in August of that year.

In the same omnibus foreign assistance legislation which had authorized ECA in June, 1948, Congress had provided for a China Aid Program. This measure met almost immediate failure, for Mao's armies spread unchecked over the China mainland, and by mid-1949 the position of the nationalists there was untenable. The "failure" of U.S.aid -- which was termed such by

Congressional critics--no less than the urgent situation in Europe and the exploding of the first Soviet nuclear device in September, 1949, figured in Congressional action on military assistance legislation.

On October 6, 1949, Congress passed the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) through which U.S. arms, military equipment and training assistance might be provided world-wide for collective defense. In the first appropriations under MDAP, NATO countries received 76% of the total, and Greece and Turkey (not yet NATO members), 16%. But [Korea](#) and the [Philippines](#) received modest aid, and the legislators clearly intended the law to underwrite subsequent appropriations for collective security in Asia. The opening paragraph of the law not only supported NATO, but foreshadowed the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty:

"An Act to Promote the Foreign Policy and Provide for the Defense and General Welfare of the United States by Furnishing Military Assistance to Foreign Nations, Approved October 6, 1949.

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that this Act may be cited as the 'Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949.'"

#### FINDINGS AND DECLARATION OF POLICY

The [Congress of the United States](#) reaffirms the policy of the United States to achieve international peace and security through the United Nations so that armed force shall not be used except in the common interest. The Congress hereby finds that the efforts of the United States and other countries to promote peace and security in furtherance of the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations require additional measures of support based upon the principle of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid. These measures include the furnishing of military assistance essential to enable the United States and other nations dedicated to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter to participate effectively in arrangements for individual and collective self-defense in support of those purposes and principles. In furnishing such military assistance, it remains the policy of the United States to continue to exert maximum efforts to obtain agreements to provide the United Nations with armed forces as contemplated in the Charter and agreements to achieve universal control of weapons of mass destruction and universal regulation and reduction of armaments, including armed forces, under adequate safeguards to protect complying nations against violation and evasion.

The Congress hereby expresses itself as favoring the creation by the free countries and the free peoples of the Far East of a joint organization, consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, to establish a program of self-help and mutual cooperation designed to develop their economic and social well-being, to safeguard basic rights and liberties and to protect their security and independence.

The Congress recognizes that economic recovery is essential to international peace and security and must be given clear priority. The Congress also recognizes that the increased confidence of free peoples in their ability to resist direct or indirect aggression and to maintain internal security will advance such recovery and support political stability.

While Congress was deliberating on MDAP, the staff of the [National Security Council](#), at the request of the [Secretary of Defense](#), had been reexamining U.S. policy toward Asia. In June, 1949, the Secretary had noted that he was:

" . . . increasingly concerned at the . . . advance of communism in large areas of the world and particularly the successes of communism in China.

"A major objective of United States policy, as I understand it, is to contain communism in order to reduce its threat to our security. Our actions in Asia should be part of a carefully considered and comprehensive plan to further that objective."

The NSC study responding to the Secretary's request is remarkable for the rarity of its specific references to [Indochina](#). The staff study focused, rather, on generalities concerning the conflict

between the interests of European metropolises and the aspirations of subject Asian peoples for independence. The following extract is from the section of the study dealing with Southeast Asia:

"The current conflict between colonialism and native independence is the most important political factor in southeast Asia. This conflict results not only from the decay of European imperial power in the area but also from a widening political consciousness and the rise of militant nationalism among the subject peoples. With the exception of [Thailand](#) and the Philippines, the southeast Asia countries do not possess leaders practiced in the exercise of responsible power. The question of whether a colonial country is fit to govern itself, however, is not always relevant in practical politics. The real issue would seem to be whether the colonial country is able and determined to make continued foreign rule an overall losing proposition for the metropolitan power. If it is, independence for the colonial country is the only practical solution, even though misgovernment eventuates. A solution of the consequent problem of instability, if it arises, must be sought on a nonimperialist plane. In any event, colonial-nationalist conflict provides a fertile field for subversive communist activities, and it is now clear that southeast Asia is the target of a coordinated offensive directed by the Kremlin. In seeking to gain control of southeast Asia, the Kremlin is motivated in part by a desire to acquire southeast Asia's resources and communication lines, and to deny them to us. But the political gains which would accrue to the USSR from communist capture of southeast Asia are equally significant. The extension of communist authority in China represents a grievous political defeat for us; if southeast Asia also is swept by communism we shall have suffered a major political rout the repercussions of which will be felt throughout the rest of the world, especially in the Middle East and in a then critically exposed [Australia](#). The United States should continue to use its influence looking toward resolving the colonial nationalist conflict in such a way as to satisfy the fundamental demands of the nationalist-colonial conflict, lay the basis for political stability and resistance to communism, and avoid weakening the colonial powers who are our western allies. However, it must be remembered that the long colonial tradition in Asia has left the peoples of that area suspicious of Western influence. We must approach the problem from the Asiatic point of view in so far as possible and should refrain from taking the lead in movements which must of necessity be of Asian origin. It will therefore be to our interest wherever possible to encourage the peoples of India, Pakistan, the Philippines and other Asian states to take the leadership in meeting the common problems of the area....

"It would be to the interest of the United States to make use of the skills, knowledge and long experience of our European friends and, to whatever extent may be possible, enlist their cooperation in measures designed to check the spread of USSR influence in Asia. If members of [the British](#) Commonwealth, particularly India, Pakistan, Australia and [New Zealand](#), can be persuaded to join with the United Kingdom and the United States in carrying out constructive measures of economic, political and cultural cooperation, the results will certainly be in our interest. Not only will the United States be able thus to relieve itself of part of the burden, but the cooperation of the white nations of the Commonwealth will arrest any potential dangers of the growth of a white-colored polarization."

On December 30, 1949, the National Security Council met with President Truman presiding, discussed the NSC staff study, and approved the following conclusions:

"As the basis for realization of its objectives, the United States should pursue a policy toward Asia containing the following components:

a. The United States should make known its sympathy with the efforts of Asian leaders to form regional associations of non-Communist states of the various Asian areas, and if in due course associations eventuate, the United States should be prepared, if invited, to assist such associations to fulfill their purposes under conditions which would be to our interest. The following principles should guide our actions in this respect:

1) Any association formed must be the result of a genuine desire on the part of the participating nations to cooperate for mutual benefit in solving the political, economic, social and cultural

problems of the area.

2) The United States must not take such an active part in the early stages of the formation of such an association that it will be subject to the charge of using the Asiatic nations to further United States ambitions .

3) The association, if it is to be a constructive force, must operate on the basis of mutual aid and self-help in all fields so that a true partnership may exist based on equal rights and equal obligations.

4) United States participation [words illegible] association formed will be in accord with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations dealing with regional arrangements.

b. The United States should act to develop and strengthen the security of the area from Communist external aggression or internal subversion. These steps should take into account any benefits to the security of Asia which may flow from the development of one or more regional groupings. The United States on its own initiative should now:

1) Improve the United States position with respect to Japan, the Ryukyus and the Philippines.

2) Scrutinize closely the development of threats from Communist aggression, direct or indirect, and be prepared to help within our means to meet such threats by providing political, economic, and military assistance and advice where clearly needed to supplement the resistance of the other governments in and out of the area which are more directly concerned.

3) Develop cooperative measures through multilateral or bilateral arrangements to combat Communist internal subversion.

4) Appraise the desirability and the means of developing in Asia some form of collective security arrangements, bearing in mind the following considerations:

a) The reluctance of India at this time to join in any anti-Communist security pact and the influence this will have among the other nations of Asia.

b) The necessity of assuring that any collective security arrangements which might be developed be based on the principle of mutual aid and on a demonstrated desire and ability to share in the burden by all the participating states.

c) The necessity of assuring that any such security arrangements would be consonant with the purposes of any regional association which may be formed in accordance with paragraph 3-a above.

d) The necessity of assuring that any such security arrangement would be in conformity with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter relating to individual and collective self-defense.

c. The United States should encourage the creation of an atmosphere favorable to economic recovery and development in non-Communist Asia, and to the revival of [words illegible] non-discriminatory lines. The policy of the United States should be adapted to promote, where possible, economic conditions that will contribute to political stability in friendly countries of Asia, but the United States should carefully avoid assuming responsibility for the economic welfare and development of that continent. . . .

h. The United States should continue to use its influence in Asia toward resolving the colonial-nationalist conflict in such a way as to satisfy the fundamental demands of the nationalist movement while at the same time minimizing the strain on the colonial powers who are our Western allies. Particular attention should be given to the problem of French Indo-China and action should be taken to bring home to the French the urgency of removing the barriers to the obtaining by [Bao Dai](#) or other non-Communist nationalist leaders of the support of a substantial proportion of the Vietnamese....

i. Active consideration should be given to means by which all members of the British

Commonwealth may be induced to play a more active role in collaboration with the United States in Asia. Similar collaboration should be obtained to the extent possible from other non-Communist nations having interests in Asia.

j. Recognizing that the non-Communist governments of South Asia already constitute a bulwark against Communist expansion in Asia, the United States should exploit every opportunity to increase the present Western orientation of the area and to assist, within our capabilities, its governments in their efforts to meet the minimum aspirations of their people and to maintain internal security."

Thus, in the closing months of 1949, the course of U.S. policy was set to block further communist expansion in Asia: by collective security if the Asians were forthcoming, by collaboration with major European allies and commonwealth nations, if possible, but bilaterally if necessary. On that policy course lay the Korean War of 1950-1953, the forming of the [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization](#) of 1954, and the progressively deepening U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

## B. THE U.S. ENTERS THE WAR

On December 30, 1949, the French signed over ten separate implementing agreements relating to the transfer of internal administration in Vietnam to Bao Dai's State of Vietnam, in accordance with the Elysee Agreement of March 8, 1949. By January, 1950, Mao's legions had reached Vietnam's northern frontier, and North Vietnam was moving into the Sino-Soviet orbit. A Department of State statement enunciated U.S. policy as of 20 January 1950:

"DEPT still hopeful Bao Dai will succeed in gaining increasing popular support at Ho's expense and our policy remains essentially the same; to encourage him and to urge FR toward further concessions. The start made by Bao Dai, the qualities exhibited by him, and his initial reception seem to have been better than we might have anticipated, even discounting optimism of FR sources. Transfer of power apparently well received. FR success in disarming and interning fleeing CHI Nationalists without serious intervention to the present by CHI COMMIES also encouraging.

"However, more recently, marked opposition has been encountered which demonstrates at least that Bao Dai's popular support has not yet widened. Increased Viet Minh MIL activity is disquieting. This CLD be special effort by Ho, timed to coincide with transfer of power and the arrival of CHI COMMIES armies on frontier, and to precede Bangkok Conference, or CLD be evidence of increasing strength reinforced by hopes of CHI COMMIE support, direct or indirect.

"DEPT has as yet no knowledge of negotiations between Ho and Mao groups although radio intercept of New China News Agency release of January 17 indicates that Ho has messaged the "GOVTS of the world" that "the GOVT of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is the only legal GOVT of the Vietnam people" and is "ready to establish DIPL relations with any GOVT which WLD be willing to cooperate with her on the basis of equality and mutual respect of national sovereignty and territory so as to defend world peace and democracy." Ho's radio making similar professions....

"Nature and timing of recognition of Bao Dai now under consideration here and with other GOVTS...."

First the Chinese Communists, and then the Soviets recognized the DRV. On 29 January 1950, the French National Assembly approved legislation granting autonomy to the State of Vietnam. On February 1, 1950, Secretary of State Acheson made the following public statement:

"The recognition by the Kremlin of Ho Chi Minh's communist movement in Indochina comes as a surprise. The Soviet acknowledgment of this movement should remove any illusions as to the "nationalist" nature of Ho Chi Minh's aims and reveals Ho in his true colors as the mortal enemy of native independence in Indochina.

"Although timed in an effort to cloud the transfer of sovereignty by France to the legal Governments of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, we have every reasonable [words illegible]

governments will proceed in their development toward stable governments representing the true nationalist sentiments of more than 20 million peoples of Indochina.

"French action in transferring sovereignty to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia has been in process for some time. Following French ratification, which is expected within a few days, the way will be open for recognition of these legal governments by the countries of the world whose policies support the development of genuine national independence in former colonial areas. Ambassador Jessup has already expressed to Emperor Bao Dai our best wishes for prosperity and stability in Vietnam, and the hope that closer relationship will be established between Vietnam and the United States."

Formal French ratification of Vietnamese independence was announced on 2 February 1950. President Truman approved U.S. recognition for Bao Dai the same date, and on 4 February, the American Consul General in Saigon was instructed to deliver the following message to Bao Dai:

"Your Imperial Majesty:

"I have Your Majesty's letter in which I am informed of the signing of the agreements of March 8, 1949 between Your Majesty, on behalf of Vietnam, and the President of the French Republic, on behalf of France. My Government has also been informed of the ratification on February 2, 1950 by the French Government of the agreements of March 8, 1949.

"Since these acts establish the Republic of Vietnam as an independent State within the French Union, I take this opportunity to congratulate Your Majesty and the people of Vietnam on this happy occasion.

"The Government of the United States of America is pleased to welcome the Republic of Vietnam into the community of peace-loving nations of the world and to extend diplomatic recognition to the Government of the Republic of Vietnam. I look forward to an early exchange of diplomatic representatives between our two countries...."

Recognition of Bao Dai was followed swiftly by French requests for U.S. aid. On May 8, 1950, Secretary of State Acheson released the following statement in Paris:

"The [French] Foreign Minister and I have just had an exchange of views on the situation in Indochina and are in general agreement both as to the urgency of the situation in that area and as to the necessity for remedial action. We have noted the fact that the problem of meeting the threat to the security of Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos which now enjoy independence within the French Union is primarily the responsibility of France and the Governments and peoples of Indochina. The United States recognizes that the solution of the Indochina problem depends both upon the restoration of security and upon the development of genuine nationalism and that United States assistance can and should contribute to these major objectives.

"The United States Government, convinced that neither national independence nor democratic evolution exist in any area dominated by Soviet imperialism, considers the situation to be such as to warrant its according economic aid and military equipment to the Associated States of Indochina and to France in order to assist them in restoring stability and permitting these states to pursue their peaceful and democratic development."

On May 11, 1950, the Acting Secretary of State made the following statement:

"A special survey mission, headed by R. Allen Griffin, has just returned from Southeast Asia and reported on economic and technical assistance needed in that area. Its over-all recommendations for the area are modest and total in the neighborhood of \$60 million. The Department is working on plans to implement that program at once.

"Secretary [Acheson](#), on Monday, in Paris, cited the urgency of the situation applying in the associated states of Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia. The Department is working jointly with ECA to implement the economic and technical assistance recommendations for Indochina as well as the other states of Southeast Asia and anticipates that this program will get underway in the immediate



future.

"Military assistance for Southeast Asia is being worked out by the Department of Defense in cooperation with the Department of State, and the details will not be made public for security reasons.

"Military assistance needs will be met from the President's emergency fund of \$75 million provided under MDAP for the general area of China.

"Economic assistance needs will be met from the ECA China Aid funds, part of which both Houses of Congress have indicated will be made available for the general area of China. Final legislative action is still pending on this authorization but is expected to be completed within the next week."

The United States thereafter was directly involved in the developing tragedy in Vietnam.

## President Johnson 31 March 1968 Speech

J. "I SHALL NOT SEEK, AND I WILL NOT ACCEPT . . ."

The President's speech to the nation on 31 March, 1968 began with a summary of his efforts to achieve peace in Vietnam over the years.

"Good evening, my fellow Americans.

"Tonight I want to speak to you of peace in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

"No other question so preoccupies our people. No other dream so absorbs the 250 million human beings who live in that part of the world. No other goal motivates American policy in Southeast Asia.

"For years, representatives of our government and others have travelled the world--seeking to find a basis for peace talks.

"Since last September, they have carried the offer that I made public at San Antonio.

"That offer was this:

"That the United States would stop its bombardment of [North Vietnam](#) when that would lead promptly to productive discussions and that we would assume that North Vietnam would not take military advantage of our restraint.

"[Hanoi](#) denounced this offer, both privately and publicly. Even while the search for peace was going on, North Vietnam rushed their preparations for a savage assault on the people, the government, and the allies of [South Vietnam](#)."

This attack during the [TET](#) holidays, the President indicated, failed to achieve its principal objectives:

"It did not collapse the elected government of South Vietnam or shatter its army--as the Communists had hoped.

"It did not produce a "general uprising" among the people of the cities as they had predicted.

"The Communists were unable to maintain control of any of the more than 30 cities that they attacked. And they took very heavy [casualties](#).

"But they did compel the South Vietnamese and their allies to move certain forces from the countryside, into the cities.

"They caused widespread disruption and suffering. Their attacks, and the battles that followed, made [refugees](#) of half a million human beings.

"The Communists may renew their attack any day.

"They are, it appears, trying to make 1968 the year of decision in South Vietnam--the year that brings, if not final victory or defeat, at least a turning point in the struggle.

"This much is clear:

"If they do mount another round of heavy attacks, they will not succeed in destroying the fighting power of South Vietnam and its allies.

"But tragically, this is also clear: many men--on both sides of the struggle --will be lost. A nation that has already suffered 20 years of warfare will suffer once again. Armies on both sides will take new casualties. And the war will go on.

"There is no need for this to be so."

In dramatically announcing the partial suspension of the bombing of North Vietnam as a new initiative designed to lead to peace talks, [President Johnson](#) did not voice any of the doubts of the

State Department cable of the previous night that this initiative was not expected to be fruitful. Indeed, the central theme of this portion of the speech was that our unilateral action was designed to lead to early talks. The President even designated the United States representatives for such talks.

"There is no need to delay the talks that could bring an end to this long and this bloody war.

"Tonight, I renew the offer I made last August--to stop the bombardment of North Vietnam. We ask that talks begin promptly, that they be serious talks on the substance of peace. We assume that during those talks Hanoi will not take advantage of our restraint.

"We are prepared to move immediately toward peace through negotiations.

"So, tonight, in the hope that this action will lead to early talks, I am taking the first step to de-escalate the conflict. We are reducing--substantially reducing--the present level of hostilities.

"And we are doing so unilaterally, and at once.

"Tonight, I have ordered our aircraft and our naval vessels to make no attacks on North Vietnam, except in the area north of the [DeMilitarized Zone](#) where the continuing enemy build-up directly threatens allied forward positions and where the movements of their troops and supplies are clearly related to that threat.

"The area in which we are stopping our attacks includes almost 90 percent of North Vietnams population, and most of its territory. Thus there will be no attacks around the principal populated areas, or in the food-producing areas of North Vietnam.

"Even this very limited bombing of the North could come to an early end--if our restraint is matched by restraint in Hanoi. But I cannot in good conscience stop all bombing so long as to do so would immediately and directly endanger the lives of our men and our allies. Whether a complete bombing halt becomes possible in the future will be determined by events.

"Our purpose in this action is to bring about a reduction in the level of violence that now exists.

"It is to save the lives of brave men--and to save the lives of innocent women and children. It is to permit the contending forces to move closer to a political settlement.

"And tonight, I call upon the United Kingdom and I call upon the [Soviet Union](#)--as Co-chairmen of the Geneva Conferences, and as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council--to do all they can to move from the unilateral act of de-escalation that I have just announced toward genuine peace in Southeast Asia.

"Now, as in the past, the United States is ready to send its representatives to any forum, at any time, to discuss the means of bringing this ugly war to an end.

"I am designating one of our most distinguished Americans, Ambassador [Averell Harriman](#), as my personal representative for such talks. In addition., I have asked Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, who returned from Moscow for consultation, to be available to join Ambassador Harriman at Geneva or any other suitable place--just as soon as Hanoi agrees to a conference.

"I call upon President [Ho Chi Minh](#) to respond positively, and favorably, to this new step toward peace."

If peace did not come through negotiations, however, the President indicated that our common resolve was unshakable and our common strength invincible. As evidence of this, he listed the achievements of the South Vietnamese nation.

"Tonight, we and the other allied nations are contributing 600,000 fighting men to assist 700,000 South Vietnamese troops in defending their little country.

"Our presence there has always rested on this basic belief: the main burden of preserving their freedom must be carried out by them--by the South Vietnamese themselves.

"We and our allies can only help to provide a shield--behind which the people of South Vietnam can survive and can grow and develop. On their efforts--on their determinations and resourcefulness--the outcome will ultimately depend.

"That small, beleaguered nation has suffered terrible punishment for more than twenty years.

"I pay tribute once again tonight to the great courage and endurance of its people. South Vietnam supports armed forces tonight of almost 700,000 men--and I call your attention to the fact that that is the equivalent of more than 10 million in our own population. Its people maintain their firm determination to be free of domination by the North.

"There has been substantial progress, I think, in building a durable government during these last three years. The South Vietnam of 1965 could not have survived the enemy's [Tet offensive](#) of 1968. The elected government of South Vietnam survived that attack--and is rapidly repairing the devastation that it wrought.

"The South Vietnamese know that further efforts are going to be required:

--to expand their own armed forces,

--to move back into the countryside as quickly as possible,

--to increase their taxes,

--to select the very best men that they have for civilian and military responsibility,

--to achieve a new unity within their constitutional government,

--and to include in the national effort all of those groups who wish to preserve South Vietnam's control over its own destiny.

"Last week President [Thieu](#) ordered the mobilization of 135,000 additional South Vietnamese. He plans to reach--as soon as possible--a total military strength of more than 800,000 men.

"To achieve this, the government of South Vietnam started the drafting of 19-year-olds on March 1st. On May 1st, the Government will begin the drafting of 18-year-olds.

"Last month, 10,000 men volunteered for military service--that was two and a half times the number of volunteers during the same month last year. Since the middle of January, more than 48,000 South Vietnamese have joined the armed forces--and nearly half of them volunteered to do so.

"All men in the South Vietnamese armed forces have had their tours of duty extended for the duration of the war, and reserves are now being called up for immediate active duty.

"President Thieu told his people last week:

"We must make greater efforts and accept more sacrifices because, as I have said many times, this is our country. The existence of our nation is at stake, and this is mainly a Vietnamese responsibility.

"He warned his people that a major national effort is required to root out corruption and incompetence at all levels of government.

"We applaud this evidence of determination on the part of South Vietnam. Our first priority will be to support their effort. . "We shall accelerate the re-equipment of South Vietnam's armed forces--in order to meet the enemy's increased firepower. This will enable them progressively to undertake a larger share of combat operations against the Communist invaders."

The token increase in U.S. troop deployments to South Vietnam which presaged for the first time a limit to our commitment and pointed to a change in ground strategy, an issue which had caused such great speculation in the press and controversy in Congress and within the Administration, received short mention in the speech. It seemed almost a footnote to the dramatic statements

which had preceded it.

"On many occasions I have told the American people that we would send to Vietnam those forces that are required to accomplish our mission there. So, with that as our guide, we have previously authorized a force level of approximately 525,000.

"Some weeks ago--to help meet the enemy's new offensive--we sent to Vietnam about 11,000 additional Marine and [airborne](#) troops. They were deployed by air in 48 hours, on an emergency basis. But the [artillery](#), tank, aircraft, and other units that were needed to work with and support these infantry troops in combat could not accompany them on that short notice.

"In order that these forces may reach maximum combat effectiveness, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended to me that we should prepare to send--during the next five months--support troops totalling approximately 13,500 men.

"A portion of these men will be made available from our active forces. The balance will come from Reserve Component units which will be called up for service."

The next portion of the President's speech detailed the cost of the Vietnam War and made a plea for Congressional action to reduce the deficit by passing the Surtax which had been requested almost a year before.

In summary, the President reiterated the U.S. objectives in South Vietnam, and gave his appraisal of what the U.S., in pursuit of those objectives, hoped to accomplish in Southeast Asia.

"I cannot promise that the initiative that I have announced tonight will be completely successful in achieving peace any more than the 30 others that we have undertaken and agreed to in recent years.

"But it is our fervent hope that North Vietnam, after years of fighting that has left the issue unresolved, will now cease its efforts to achieve a military victory and will join with us in moving toward the peace table.

"And there may come a time when South Vietnam--on both sides--are able to work out a way to settle their own differences by free political choice rather than by war.

"As Hanoi considers its course, it should be in no doubt of our intentions. It must not miscalculate the pressures within our democracy in this election year.

"We have no intention of widening this war.

"But the United States will never accept a fake solution to this long and arduous struggle and call it peace.

"No one can foretell the precise terms of an eventual settlement.

"Our objective in South Vietnam has never been the annihilation of the enemy. It has been to bring about a recognition in Hanoi that its objective--taking over the South by force--could not be achieved.

"We think that peace can be based on the [Geneva Accords of 1954](#)--under political conditions that permit the South Vietnamese--all the South Vietnamese--to chart their course free of any outside domination or interference, from us or from anyone else.

"So tonight I reaffirm the pledge that we made at Manila--that we are prepared to withdraw our forces from South Vietnam as the other side withdraws its forces to the North, stops the [infiltration](#), and the level of violence thus subsides.

"Our goal of peace and self-determination in Vietnam is directly related to the future of all of Southeast Asia--where much has happened to inspire confidence during the past 10 years. We have done all that we knew how to do to contribute and to help build that confidence...,

"Over time, a wider framework of peace and security in Southeast Asia may become possible. The

new cooperation of the nations in the area could be a foundation-stone. Certainly friendship with the nations of such a Southeast Asia is what the United States seeks--and that is all that the United States seeks.

"One day, my fellow citizens, there will be peace in Southeast Asia.

"It will come because the people of Southeast Asia want it--those whose armies are at war tonight, and those who, though threatened, have thus far been spared.

"Peace will come because Asians were willing to work for it--and to sacrifice for it--and to die by the thousands for it.

"But let it never be forgotten: peace will come also because America sent her sons to help secure it.

"It has not been easy--far from it. During the past four and a half years, it has been my fate and my responsibility to be commander-in-chief. I have lived--daily and nightly--with the cost of this war. I know the pain that it has inflicted. I know perhaps better than anyone the misgivings that it has aroused.

"Throughout this entire, long period, I have been sustained by a single principle:

--that what we are doing now, in Vietnam, is vital not only to the security of Southeast Asia, but it is vital to the security of every American.

"Surely we have treaties which we must respect. Surely we have commitments that we are going to keep. Resolutions of the Congress testify to the need to resist aggression in the world and in Southeast Asia.

"But the heart of our involvement in South Vietnam--under three Presidents, three separate Administrations--has always been America's own security.

"And the larger purpose of our involvement has always been to help the nations of Southeast Asia become independent and stand alone, self-sustaining as members of a great world community.

--At peace with themselves, and at peace with all others.

"With such an Asia, our country--and the world--will be far more secure than it is tonight.

"I believe that a peaceful Asia is far nearer to reality, because of what America has done in Vietnam. I believe that the men who endure the dangers of battle--fighting there for us tonight--are helping the entire world avoid far greater conflicts, far wider wars, far more destruction, than this one.

"I pray that it will not be rejected by the leaders of North Vietnam. I pray that they will accept it as a means by which the sacrifices of their own people may be ended. And I ask your help and your support, my fellow citizens, for this effort to reach across the battlefield toward an early peace."

Finally, the President addressed himself in a highly personal manner to the issue that had seemed uppermost in his mind throughout the preceding month of deliberation, reassessment and reappraisal of our Vietnam policy--the issue of domestic unity.

"Yet, I believe that we must always be mindful of this one thing, whatever the trials and the tests ahead. The ultimate strength of our country and our cause will lie not in powerful weapons or infinite resources or boundless wealth, but will lie in the unity of our people.

"This, I believe very deeply.

"Throughout my entire public career I have followed the personal philosophy that I am a free man, an American, a public servant and a member of my Party, in that order always and only.

"For 37 years in the service of our nation, first as a Congressman, as a Senator and as Vice President and now as your President, I have put the unity of the people first. I have put it ahead of

any divisive partisanship.

"And in these times as in times before, it is true that a house divided against itself by the spirit of faction, of party, of region, of religion, of race, is a house that cannot stand.

"There is division in the American house now. There is divisiveness among us all tonight. And holding the trust that is mine, as President of all the people, I cannot disregard the peril to the progress of the American people and the hope and the prospect of peace for all peoples.

"So, I would ask all Americans, whatever their personal interests or concern, to guard against divisiveness and all its ugly consequences.

"Fifty-two months and ten days ago, in a moment of tragedy and trauma, the duties of this office fell upon me. I asked then for your help and God's, that we might continue America on its course, binding up our wounds, healing our history, moving forward in new unity, to clear the American agenda and to keep the American commitment for all of our people.

"United we have kept that commitment. United we have enlarged that commitment.

"Through all time to come, I think America will be a stronger nation, a more just society, and a land of greater opportunity and fulfillment because of what we have all done together in these years of unparalleled achievement.

"Our reward will come in the life of freedom, peace, and hope that our children will enjoy through ages ahead.

"What we won when all of our people united just must not now be lost in suspicion, distrust, selfishness, and politics among any of our people."

Having eloquently stated the need for unity in a nation divided, the President then made the dramatic announcement which shocked and electrified the nation and the world, an announcement intended to restore unity to the divided nation:

"Believing this as I do, I have concluded that I should not permit the Presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year.

"With America's sons in the fields far away, with America's future under challenge right here at home, with our hopes and the world's hopes for peace in the balance every day, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office--the Presidency of your country.

"Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my Party for another term as your President.

"But let men everywhere know, however, that a strong, a confident, and a vigilant America stands ready tonight to seek an honorable peace--and stands ready tonight to defend an honored cause--whatever the price, whatever the burden, whatever the sacrifices that duty may require.

"Thank you for listening.

"Good night and God bless all of you."

## Second Draft of a Paper, "Action for South Vietnam" from Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton, 11/6/64

Second draft of a paper, "Action for [South Vietnam](#)" Assistant [Secretary of Defense McNaughton](#), November 6, 1964

Bundy Working Group

1. U.S. aims:

(a) To protect U.S. reputation as a counter-subversion guarantor.

(b) To avoid domino effect especially in Southeast Asia.

(c) To keep South Vietnamese territory from Red hands.

(d) To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods.

2. Present situation: The situation in South Vietnam is deteriorating. Unless new actions are taken, the new government will probably be unstable and ineffectual, and the VC will probably continue to extend their hold over the population and territory. It can be expected that, soon (6 months? two years?), (a) government officials at all levels will adjust their behavior to an eventual VC take-over, (b) defections of significant military forces will take place, (c) whole integrated regions of the country will be totally denied to the GVN, (d) neutral and/or left-wing elements will enter the government, (e) a popular-front regime will emerge which will invite the U.S. out, and (f) fundamental concessions to the VC and accommodations to the [DRV](#) will put South Vietnam behind the Curtain.

3. Urgency: "[Bien Hoa](#)" having passed, no urgent decision is required regarding military action against the DRV, but (a) such a decision, related to the general deteriorating situation in South Vietnam, should be made soon, and (b) in the event of another VC or DRV "spectacular," a decision (for at least a reprisal) would be urgently needed.

4. Inside South Vietnam: Progress inside SVN is important, but it is unlikely despite our best ideas and efforts (and progress, if made, will take at least several months). Nevertheless, whatever other actions might be taken, great efforts should be made within South Vietnam: (a) to strengthen the government, its bureaucracy, and its civil-military coordination and planning, (b) to dampen ethnic, religious, urban and civil-military strife by a broad and positive GVN program designed (with U.S. Team help) to enlist the support of important groups, and (c) to press the pacification program in the countryside.

5. Action against DRV: Action against [North Vietnam](#) is to some extent a substitute for strengthening the government in South Vietnam. That is, a less active VC (on orders from DRV) can be matched by a less efficient GVN. We therefore should consider squeezing North Vietnam.

6. Options open to us: We have three options open to us (all envision reprisals in the DRV for DRV/VC "spectaculars" against GVN as well as U.S. assets in South Vietnam):

OPTION A. Continue present policies. Maximum assistance within SVN and limited external actions in [Laos](#) and by the GVN covertly against North Vietnam. The aim of any reprisal actions would be to deter and punish large VC actions in the South, but not to a degree that would create strong international negotiating pressures. Basic to this option is the continued rejection of negotiating in the hope that the situation will improve.

OPTION B. Fast/full squeeze. Present policies plus a systematic program of military pressures against the North, meshing at some point with negotiation, but with pressure actions to be continued at a fairly rapid pace and without interruption until we achieve our central present objectives.

OPTION C. Progressive squeeze-and-talk. Present policies plus an orchestration of communications with [Hanoi](#) and a crescendo of additional military moves against [infiltration](#)



targets, first in Laos and then in the DRV, and then against other targets in North Vietnam. The scenario would be designed to give the U.S. the option at any point to proceed or not, to escalate or not, and to quicken the pace or not. The decision in these regards would be made from time to time in view of all relevant factors.

7. Analysis of OPTION A. [To be provided.]

8. Analysis of OPTION B. [To be provided.]

9. Analysis of OPTION C.

(a) Military actions. Present policy, in addition to providing for reprisals in DRV for DRV actions against the U.S., envisions

(1) 34A Airops and Marops,

(2) [deSoto](#) patrols, for intelligence purposes,

(3) South Vietnamese shallow ground actions in Laos when practicable, and

(4) T28 strikes against infiltration-associated targets in Laos. Additional actions should be:

PHASE ONE (in addition to reprisals in DRV for VC "spectaculars" in South Vietnam):

(5) U.S. strikes against infiltration associated targets in Laos.

PHASE TWO (in addition to reprisals in DRV against broader range of VC actions):

(6) Low-level reconnaissance in southern DRV,

(7) U.S./VNAF strikes against infiltration-associated targets in southern DRV.

PHASE THREE: Either continue only the above actions or add one or more of the following, making timely deployment of U.S. forces:

(8) Aerial mining of DRV ports,

(9) Naval quarantine of DRV, and

(10) U.S./VNAF, in "crescendo," strike additional targets on "94 target list."

South Vietnamese forces should play a role in any action taken against the DRV.

(b) Political actions. Establish immediately a channel for bilateral U.S.-DRV communication. This could be in Warsaw or via Seaborn in Hanoi. Hanoi should be told that we do not seek to destroy North Vietnam or to acquire a colony or base, but that North Vietnam must:

(1) Stop training and sending personnel to wage war in SVN and Laos.

(2) Stop sending arms and supplies to SVN and Laos.

(3) Stop directing and controlling military actions in SVN and Laos.

(4) Order the VC and PL to stop their insurgencies and military actions.

(5) Remove VM forces and cadres from SVN and Laos.

(6) Stop propaganda broadcasts to South Vietnam.

[(7) See that VC and PL stop attacks and incidents in SVN and Laos?]

[(8) See that VC and PL cease resistance to government forces?]

[(9) See that VC and PL turn in weapons and relinquish bases?]

[(10) See that VC and PL surrender for amnesty of expatriation?]

U.S. demands should be accompanied by offers

(1) to arrange a rice-barter deal between the two halves of Vietnam and

(2) to withdraw U.S. forces from South Vietnam for so long as the terms are complied with.

We should not seek wider negotiations--in the UN, in Geneva, etc.--but we should evaluate and pass on each negotiating opportunity as it is pressed on us.

(c) Information actions. The start of military actions against the DRV will have to be accompanied by a convincing world-wide public information program. (The information problem will be easier if the first U.S. action against the DRV is related in time and kind to a DRV or VC outrage or "spectacular," preferably against SVN as well as U.S. assets.)

(d) VC/DRV/Chicom/USSR reactions. [To be elaborated later.] The DRV and [China](#) will probably not invade South Vietnam, Laos or Burma, nor is it likely that they will conduct air strikes on these countries. The USSR will almost certainly confine herself to political actions. If the DRV or China strike or invade South Vietnam, U.S. forces will be sufficient to handle the problem.

(e) GVN reactions. Military action against the DRV could be counterproductive in South Vietnam because

(1) the VC could step up its activities,

(2) the South Vietnamese could panic,

(3) they could resent our striking their "brothers," and

(4) they could tire of waiting for results.

Should South Vietnam disintegrate completely beneath us, we should try to hold it together long enough to permit us to try to evacuate our forces and to convince the world to accept the uniqueness (and congenital impossibility) of the Vietnam case.

(f) Allied and neutral reactions. [To be elaborated later.]

(1) Even if OPTION C failed, it would, by demonstrating U.S. willingness to go to the mat, tend to bolster allied confidence in the U.S. as an ally.

(2) U.S. military action against the DRV will probably prompt military actions elsewhere in the world--e.g., Indonesia against Malaysia or Timor, or Turkey against Cyprus.

## Secretary McNamara's Position of May 19 on Bombing and Troops

Excerpts from draft memorandum for the President from the office of [Secretary of Defense McNamara](#) dated May 19, 1967, and headed "Future Actions in Vietnam." Text, provided in the body of the Pentagon study, is labeled "first rough draft--data and estimates have not been checked."

By the 19th of May the opinions of McNamara and his key aides with respect to the bombing and Westy's troop requests had crystallized sufficiently that another Draft Presidential Memorandum was written. It was entitled, "Future Actions in Vietnam," and was a comprehensive treatment of all aspects of the war--military, political, and diplomatic. It opened with an appraisal of the situation covering both North and [South Vietnam](#), the U.S. domestic scene and international opinion. The estimate of the situation in [North Vietnam](#) hewed very close to the opinions of the intelligence community already referred to. Here is how the analysis proceeded:

### C. NORTH VIETNAM

Hanoi's attitude towards negotiations has never been soft nor open-minded. Any concession on their part would involve an enormous loss of face. Whether or not the Polish and Burchett [Kosygin](#) initiatives had much substance to them, it is clear that Hanoi's attitude currently is hard and rigid. They seem uninterested in a political settlement and determined to match U.S. military expansion of the conflict. This change probably reflects these factors: (1) increased assurances of help from the Soviets received during [Pham Van Dong](#)'s April trip to Moscow; (2) arrangements providing for the unhindered passage of materiel from the [Soviet Union](#) through [China](#); and (3) a decision to wait for the results of the U.S. elections in 1968. Hanoi appears to have concluded that she cannot secure her objectives at the conference table and has reaffirmed her strategy of seeking to erode our ability to remain in the South. The Hanoi leadership has apparently decided that it has no choice but to submit to the increased bombing. There continues to be no sign that the bombing has reduced Hanoi's will to resist or her ability to ship the necessary supplies south. Hanoi shows no signs of ending the large war and advising the VC to melt into the jungles. The North Vietnamese believe they are right; they consider the [Ky](#) regime to be puppets; they believe the world is with them and that the American public will not have staying power against them. Thus, although they may have factions in the regime favoring different approaches, they believe that, in the long run, they are stronger than we are for the purpose. They probably do not want to make significant concessions, and could not do so without serious loss of face.

When added to the continuing difficulties in bringing the war in the South under control, the unchecked erosion of U.S. public support for the war, and the smoldering international disquiet about the need and purpose of such U.S. intervention, it is not hard to understand the DPM's statement that, "This memorandum is written at a time when there appears to be no attractive course of action." Nevertheless, 'alternatives' was precisely what the DPM had been written to suggest. These were introduced with a recommendation of where we stood militarily and what the Chiefs were recommending. With respect to the war in the North, the DPM states:

Against North Vietnam, an expansion of the bombing program ([ROLLING THUNDER](#) 56) was approved mid-April. Before it was approved, General [Wheeler](#) said, "The bombing campaign is reaching the point where we will have struck all worthwhile fixed targets except the ports. At this time we will have to address the requirement to deny the [DRV](#) the use of the ports." With its approval, excluding the port areas, no major military targets remain to be struck in the North. All that remains are minor targets, restrikes of certain major targets, and armed reconnaissance of the lines of communication (LOCs)--and, under new principles, mining the harbors, bombing [dikes](#) and locks, and invading North Vietnam with land armies. These new military moves against North Vietnam, together with land movements into [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#), are now under consideration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The broad alternative courses of action it considered were two:

Course A. Grant the request and intensify military actions outside the South--especially against the North. Add a minimum of 200,000 men--100,000 (2-1/3 [division](#) plus 5 tactical air squadrons) would be deployed in FY 1968. Another 100,000 (2-1/3 divisions and 8 tactical air squadrons) in FY 1969, and possibly more later to fulfill the JCS ultimate requirement for Vietnam and associated world-wide contingencies. Accompanying these force increases (as spelled out below) would be greatly intensified military actions outside South Vietnam--including in Laos and Cambodia but especially against the North.

Course B. Limit force increases to no more than 30,000; avoid extending the ground conflict beyond the borders of South Vietnam; and concentrate the bombing on the [infiltration](#) routes south of 20°. Unless the military situation worsens dramatically, add no more than 9 battalions of the approved program of 87 battalions. This course would result in a level of no more than 500,000 men (instead of the currently planned 470,000) on December 31, 1968. (See Attachment IV for details). A part of this course would be a termination of bombing in the Red River basin unless military necessity required it, and a concentration of all [sorties](#) in North Vietnam on the infiltration routes in the neck of North Vietnam, between 17° and 20°.

. . . This was the way the DPM developed the analysis of the war segment of course of action A:

#### BOMBING PURPOSES AND PAYOFFS

Our bombing of North Vietnam was designed to serve three purposes:

- (1) To retaliate and to lift the morale of the people in the South who were being attacked by agents of the North.
- (2) To add to the pressure on Hanoi to end the war.
- ( 3 ) To reduce the flow and/or to increase the cost of infiltrating men and material from North to South.

We cannot ignore that a limitation on bombing will cause serious psychological problems among the men, officers and commanders, who will not be able to understand why we should withhold punishment from the enemy. General [Westmoreland](#) said that he is "frankly dismayed at even the thought of stopping the bombing program." But this reason for attacking North Vietnam must be scrutinized carefully. We should not bomb for punitive reasons if it serves no other purpose--especially if analysis shows that the actions may be counterproductive. It costs American lives; it creates a backfire of revulsion and opposition by killing civilians; it creates serious risks; it may harden the enemy.

With respect to added pressure on the North, it is becoming apparent that Hanoi may already have "written off" all assets and lives that might be destroyed by U.S. military actions short of occupation or annihilation. They can and will hold out at least so long as a prospect of winning the "[war of attrition](#)" in the South exists. And our best judgment is that a Hanoi prerequisite to negotiations is significant retrenchment (if not complete stoppage of U.S. military actions against them--at the least, a cessation of bombing. In this connection, Consul-General Rice (Hong Kong 7581, 5/1/67) said that, in his opinion, we cannot by bombing reach the critical level of pain in North Vietnam and that, "below that level, pain only increases the will to fight." Sir Robert Thompson said to Mr. [Vance](#) on April 28 that our bombing, particularly in the Red River Delta, "is unifying North Vietnam ."

With respect to interdiction of men and materiel, it now appears that no combination of actions against the North short of destruction of the regime or occupation of North Vietnamese territory will physically reduce the flow of men and materiel below the relatively small amount needed by enemy forces to continue the war in the South. Our effort can and does have severe disruptive effects, which Hanoi can and does plan on and prestock against. Our efforts physically to cut the flow meaningfully by actions in North Vietnam therefore largely fail and, in failing, transmute attempted interdiction into pain, or pressure on the North (the factor discussed in the paragraph next above.) The lowest "ceiling" on infiltration can probably be achieved by concentration on the

North Vietnamese "funnel" south of 20° and on the Trail in Laos.

But what if the above analyses are wrong? Why not escalate the bombing and mine the harbors (and perhaps occupy southern North Vietnam) --on the gamble that it would constrict the flow, meaningfully limiting enemy action in the South, and that it would bend Hanoi? The answer is that the costs and risks of the actions must be considered.

The primary costs of course are U.S. lives: The air campaign against heavily defended areas costs us one pilot in every 40 sorties. In addition, an important but hard-to-measure cost is domestic and world opinion: There may be a limit beyond which many Americans and much of the world will not permit the United States to go. The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1,000 non-combatants a week, while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not a pretty one. It could conceivably produce a costly distortion in the American national consciousness and in the world image of the United States--especially if the damage to North Vietnam is complete enough to be "successful."

The most important risk, however, is the likely Soviet, [Chinese](#) and North Vietnamese reaction to intensified US air attacks, harbor-mining, and ground actions against North Vietnam.

#### LIKELY COMMUNIST REACTIONS

At the present time, no actions--except air strikes and [artillery](#) fire necessary to quiet hostile batteries across the border--are allowed against Cambodian territory. In Laos, we average 5,000 attack sorties a month against the infiltration routes and base areas, we fire artillery from South Vietnam against targets in Laos, and we will be providing 3-man leadership for each of 20 12-man U.S.-Vietnamese [Special Forces](#) teams that operate to a depth of 20 kilometers into Laos. Against North Vietnam, we average 8,000 or more attack sorties a month against all worthwhile fixed and LOC targets; we use artillery against ground targets across the [DMZ](#); we fire from naval vessels at targets ashore and afloat up to 19°; and we mine their inland waterways, estuaries . . . up to 20°.

Intensified air attacks against the same types of targets, we would anticipate, would lead to no great change in the policies and reactions of the Communist powers beyond the furnishing of some new equipment and manpower. China, for example, has not reacted to our striking MIG fields in North Vietnam, and we do not expect them to, although there are some signs of greater Chinese participation in North Vietnamese air defense.

Mining the harbors would be much more serious. It would place Moscow in a particularly galling dilemma as to how to preserve the Soviet position and prestige in such a disadvantageous place. The Soviets might, but probably would not, force a confrontation in Southeast Asia--where even with minesweepers they would be at as great a military disadvantage as we were when they blocked the corridor to Berlin in 1961, but where their vital interest, unlike ours in Berlin (and in Cuba), is not so clearly at stake. Moscow in this case should be expected to send volunteers, including pilots, to North Vietnam; to provide some new and better weapons and equipment; to consider some action in [Korea](#), Turkey, Iran, the Middle East or, most likely, Berlin, where the Soviets can control the degree of crisis better; and to show across-the-board hostility toward the U.S. (interrupting any ongoing conversations on ABMs, non-proliferation, etc.). China could be expected to seize upon the harbor-mining as the opportunity to reduce Soviet political influence in Hanoi and to discredit the USSR if the Soviets took no military action to open the ports. Peking might read the harbor-mining as indicating that the U.S. was going to apply military pressure until North Vietnam capitulated, and that this meant an eventual invasion. If so, China might decide to intervene in the war with combat troops and [air power](#), to which we would eventually have to respond by bombing Chinese airfields and perhaps other targets as well. Hanoi would tighten belts, refuse to talk, and persevere--as it could without too much difficulty. North Vietnam would of course be fully dependent for supplies on China's will, and Soviet influence in Hanoi would therefore be reduced. (Ambassador Sullivan feels very strongly that it would be a serious mistake, by our actions against the port, to tip Hanoi away from Moscow and toward Peking. )

To U.S. ground actions in North Vietnam, we would expect China to respond by entering the war with both ground and air forces. The Soviet Union could be expected in these circumstances to take all actions listed above under the lesser provocations and to generate a serious confrontation with the United States at one or more places of her own choosing.

The arguments against Course A were summed up in a final paragraph:

Those are the likely costs and risks of COURSE A. They are, we believe, both unacceptable and unnecessary. Ground action in North Vietnam, because of its escalatory potential, is clearly unwise despite the open invitation and temptation posed by enemy troops operating freely back and forth across the DMZ. Yet we believe that, short of threatening and perhaps toppling the Hanoi regime itself, pressure against the North will, if anything, harden Hanoi's unwillingness to talk and her settlement terms if she does. China, we believe, will oppose settlement throughout. We believe that there is a chance that the Soviets, at the brink, will exert efforts to bring about peace; but we believe also that intensified bombing and harbor-mining, even if coupled with political pressure from Moscow, will neither bring Hanoi to negotiate nor affect North Vietnam's terms.

With Course A rejected, the DPM turned to consideration of the leveling-off proposals of Course B. The analysis of the deescalated bombing program of this option proceeded in this manner:

The bombing program that would be a part of this strategy is, basically, a program of concentration of effort on the infiltration routes near the south of North Vietnam. The major infiltration-related targets in the Red River basin having been destroyed, such interdiction is now best served by concentration of all effort in the southern neck of North Vietnam. All of the sorties would be flown in the area between 17° and 20°. This shift, despite possible increases in anti-aircraft capability in the area, should reduce the pilot and aircraft loss rates by more than 50 per cent. The shift will, if anything, be of positive military value to General Westmoreland while taking some steam out of the popular effort in the North.

The above shift of bombing strategy, now that almost all major targets have been struck in the Red River basin, can to military advantage be made at any time. It should not be done for the sole purpose of getting Hanoi to negotiate, although, that might be a bonus effect. To maximize the chances of getting that bonus effect, the optimum scenario would probably be (1) to inform the Soviets quietly that within a few days the shift would take place, stating no time limits but making no promises to return to the Red River basin to attack targets which later acquire military importance (any deal with Hanoi is likely to be midwived by Moscow); (2) to make the shift as predicted, without fanfare; and (3) to explain publicly, when the shift had become obvious, that the northern targets had been destroyed, and that that had been militarily important, and that there would be no need to return to the northern areas unless military necessity dictated it. The shift should not be huckstered. Moscow would almost certainly pass its information on to Hanoi, and might urge Hanoi to seize the opportunity to de-escalate the war by talks or otherwise. Hanoi, not having been asked a question by us and having no ultimatum-like time limit, would be in a better posture to answer favorably than has been the case in the past. The military side of the shift is sound, however, whether or not the diplomatic spillover is successful.

In a section dealing with diplomatic and political considerations, the DPM outlined the political view of the significance of the struggle as seen by the U.S. and by Hanoi. It then developed a conception of large U.S. interests in Asia around the necessity of containing China. This larger interest required settling the Vietnam war into perspective as only one of three fronts that required U.S. attention (the other two being Japan-Korea and India-Pakistan). In the overall view, the DPM argued, long-run trends in Asia appeared favorable to our interests:

The fact is that the trends in Asia today are running mostly for, not against, our interests (witness Indonesia and the Chinese confusion); there is no reason to be pessimistic about our ability over the next decade or two to fashion alliances and combinations (involving especially Japan and India) sufficient to keep China from encroaching too far. To the extent that our original intervention and our existing actions in Vietnam were motivated by the perceived need to draw the line against

Chinese expansionism in Asia, our objective has already been attained, and COURSE B will suffice to consolidate it!

With this perspective in mind the DPM went on to reconsider and restate U.S. objectives in the Vietnam contest under the heading "Commitment and Hopes Distinguished":

The time has come for us to eliminate the ambiguities from our minimum objectives--our commitments--in Vietnam. Specifically, two principles must be articulated, and policies and actions brought in line with them: (1) Our commitment is only to see that the people of South Vietnam are permitted to determine their own future. (2) This commitment ceases if the country ceases to help itself.

It follows that no matter how much we might hope for some things, our commitment is not:

--to expel from South Vietnam regroupes, who are South Vietnamese (though we do not like them),

--to ensure that a particular person or group remains in power, nor that the power runs to every corner of the land (though we prefer certain types and we hope their writ will run throughout South Vietnam),

--to guarantee that the self-chosen government is non-Communist (though we believe and strongly hope it will be), and

--to insist that the independent South Vietnam remain separate from North Vietnam ( though in the short-run, we would prefer it that way).

(Nor do we have an obligation to pour in effort out of proportion to the effort contributed by the people of South Vietnam or in the face of coups, corruption, apathy or other indications of Saigon failure to cooperate effectively with us.)

We are committed to stopping or offsetting the effect of North Vietnam's application of force in the South, which denies the people of the South the ability to determine their own future. Even here, however, the line is hard to draw. Propaganda and political advice by Hanoi (or by Washington) is presumably not barred; nor is economic aid or economic advisors. Less clear is the rule to apply to military advisors and war materiel supplied to the contesting factions.

The importance of nailing down and understanding the implications of our limited objectives cannot be overemphasized. It relates intimately to strategy against the North, to troop requirements and missions in the South, to handling of the Saigon government, to settlement terms, and to US domestic and international opinion as to the justification and the success of our efforts on behalf of Vietnam.

This articulation of American purposes and commitments in Vietnam pointedly rejected the high blown formulations of U.S. objectives in NSAM 88 ["an independent non-communist South Vietnam", "defeat the Viet Cong", etc.] and came forcefully to grips with the old dilemma of the U.S. involvement dating from the Kennedy era: only limited means to achieve excessive ends. Indeed, in the following section of specific recommendations, the DPM urged the President to, "issue a NSAM nailing down U.S. policy as described herein." The emphasis in this scaled down set of goals, clearly reflecting the frustrations of failure, was South Vietnamese self-determination. The DPM even went so far as to suggest that, "the South will be in position, albeit imperfect, to start the business of producing a full-spectrum government in South Vietnam." What this amounted to was a recommendation that we accept a compromise outcome. Let there be no mistake these were radical positions for a senior U.S. policy official within the Johnson Administration to take. They would bring the bitter condemnation of the Chiefs and were scarcely designed to flatter the President on the success of his efforts to date. That they represented a more realistic mating of U.S. strategic objectives and capabilities is another matter.

The scenario for the unfolding of the recommendations in the DPM went like this:

(4) June: Concentrate the bombing of North Vietnam on physical interdiction of men and materiel. This would mean terminating, except where the interdiction objective clearly dictates otherwise, all bombing north of 20° and improving interdiction as much as possible in the infiltration "funnel" south of 20° by concentration of sorties and by an all-out effort to improve detection devices, denial weapons, and interdiction tactics.

(5) July: Avoid the explosive Congressional debate and U.S. Reserve call-up implicit in the Westmoreland troop request. Decide that, unless the military situation worsens dramatically, U.S. deployments will be limited to Program 4-plus (which according to General Westmoreland, will not put us in danger of being defeated, but will mean slow progress in the South). Associated with this decision are decisions not to use large numbers of U.S. troops in the Delta and not to use large numbers of them in grassroots pacification work.

(6) September: Move the newly elected Saigon government well beyond its National Reconciliation program to seek a political settlement with the non-Communist members of the NLF--to explore a cease-fire and to reach an accommodation with the non-communist South Vietnamese who are under the VC banner; to accept them as members of an opposition political party, and, if necessary, to accept their individual participation in the national government--in sum, a settlement to transform the members of the VC from military opponents to political opponents.

(7) October: Explain the situation to the Canadians, Indians, British, UN and others, as well as nations now contributing forces, requesting them to contribute border forces to help make the inside-South Vietnam accommodation possible, and--consistent with our desire neither to occupy nor to have bases in Vietnam--offering to remove later an equivalent number of U.S. forces. (This initiative is worth taking despite its slim chance of success.)

Having made the case for de-escalation and compromise, the DPM ended on a note of candor with a clear statement of its disadvantages and problems:

The difficulties with this approach are neither few nor small: There will be those who disagree with the circumscription of the U.S. commitment (indeed, at one time or another, one U.S. voice or another has told the Vietnamese, third countries, the U.S. Congress, and the public of "goals" or "objectives" that go beyond the above bare-bones statement of our "commitment" ); some will insist that pressure, enough pressure, on the North can pay off or that we will have yielded a blue chip without exacting a price in exchange for our concentrating on interdiction; many will argue that denial of the larger number of troops will prolong the war, risk losing it and increase the casualties of the Americans who are there; some will insist that this course reveals weakness to which Moscow will react with relief, contempt and reduced willingness to help, and to which Hanoi will react by increased demands and truculence; others will point to the difficulty of carrying the Koreans, Filipinos, Australians and New Zealanders with us; and there will be those who point out the possibility that the changed U.S. tone may cause a "rush for the exits" in Thailand, in Laos and especially inside South Vietnam, perhaps threatening cohesion of the government, morale of the army, and loss of support among the people. Not least will be the alleged impact on the reputation of the United States and of its President. Nevertheless, the difficulties of this strategy are fewer and smaller than the difficulties of any other approach.



## Special Estimate

SPECIAL ESTIMATE PROBABLE COMMUNIST REACTIONS TO CERTAIN POSSIBLE U.S. COURSES OF ACTION IN [INDOCHINA](#) THROUGH 1954  
SE-53

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The Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 15 December 1953. The FBI abstained, the subject being outside of its jurisdiction.

The following member organizations of the Intelligence Advisory Committee participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.

### CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

#### THE PROBLEM\*

To estimate the probable reactions of Communist China and the [U.S.S.R.](#) to:

- a. The commitment in Indochina, before the end of 1954, of U.S. ground, air, and naval forces on a scale sufficient to defeat decisively the field forces of the [Viet Minh](#).
- b. The commitment in Indochina, before the end of 1954, of U.S. ground, air, and naval forces on a scale sufficient to hold the Viet Minh in check until such time as U.S.-developed Vietnamese forces could decisively defeat the field forces of the Viet Minh.

#### ASSUMPTIONS\*

For both a. and b. above:

1. No [Chinese](#) Communist intervention in force in Indochina had taken place.
2. Commitment of U.S. forces had been publicly requested by the French and Vietnamese governments.
3. At the time of the U.S. commitment [French Union forces](#) still retained essentially their present position in the [Tonkin](#) Delta.
4. Communist China and the U.S.S.R. would have prior knowledge of the U.S. intent to commit its forces in Indochina.
5. Following the U.S. commitment, there would be a phased withdrawal of French forces from Indochina.
6. The U.S. will warn the Chinese Communists that if they openly intervene\*\* in the fighting in Indochina, the U.S. will not limit its military action to Indochina.

\* The Problem and the Assumptions have been provided to the intelligence community as a basis for the estimate.

\*\* For the purposes of this estimate, open intervention is defined as the commitment of substantial Chinese Communist combat forces, under any guise.

## ESTIMATE

1. We believe that the Communists would assume that the purpose of committing U.S. forces in Indochina was the decisive defeat of the Viet Minh. Consequently, we believe that Communist reactions to such a U.S. commitment would be substantially the same whether it were designed to defeat the Viet Minh with U.S. forces (Problem a.) or eventually with U.S.-trained Vietnam forces (Problem b.).

### In the Event of a Pending U.S. Commitment

2. We do not believe that Communist China, upon learning of a forthcoming commitment by the U.S., would immediately intervene openly with substantial forces in Indochina. The acceptance by Communist China of an armistice in [Korea](#), its policies to date with respect to Indochina, and its present emphasis on domestic problems seem to indicate a desire at this time to avoid open intervention in the Indochina war or expansion of the conflict to Communist China. U.S. warnings against Chinese Communist intervention in force\*\*\* probably would have a strong deterrent effect. Moreover, the political advantage to be gained by portraying the U.S. as an "aggressor" would probably appear both to Communist China and the U.S.S.R. to outweigh the military advantage of moving large Chinese Communist forces into Indochina before the arrival of U.S. forces.

\*\*\* Such warnings would reinforce the warning already given by [Secretary of State Dulles](#), in his American Legion Speech at St. Louis, 2 September 1953:

"Communist China has been and now is training, equipping and supplying the Communist forces in Indochina. There is the risk that, as in Korea, Red China might send its own army into Indochina. The Chinese Communist regime should realize that such a second aggression could not occur without grave consequences which might not be confined in Indochina. I say this soberly in the interest of peace and in the hope of preventing another aggressor miscalculation."

3. In addition, Communist leadership would probably estimate that they would have time to take a number of steps which, without a serious risk of expanding the war to China, might deter a U.S. military commitment or seriously impair its effectiveness. Such steps might include:

- a. Increasing logistic and rear area support to the Viet Minh.
- b. Covertly committing Chinese troops to operate as "Viet Minh guerrillas."
- c. Encouraging intensified Viet Minh guerrilla and sabotage operations in Indochina, particularly in and around the Tonkin Delta, designed to inflict such damage on the French Union position as to increase the difficulties of the U.S. operation.
- d. Building up Chinese Communist strength in south China, including Hainan.
- e. Seeking by diplomatic and propaganda means in the U.N. and elsewhere to forestall U.S. action, to gain the support of non-Communist countries, and to exploit differences between the U.S. and its allies over preparations for this operation.
- f. Concluding a defense pact with the Viet Minh.

Although, in response to a US military commitment in Indochina, the Communists might threaten to renew hostilities in Korea, we believe that they would not actually take such action as they probably estimate that renewed aggression in Korea would result in expanding the conflict to Communist China itself.

### Actual U.S. Commitment

4. In the initial stages of an actual U.S. military commitment, the Communists might not feel compelled to intervene openly in force immediately. They would recognize the difficulties which the U.S. forces would face in operating in the Indochina climate and terrain. They would also realize that the xenophobia of the indigenous population of Indochina might be effectively exploited to the disadvantage of U.S. forces by Communist propaganda; the Chinese Communists would therefore

prefer that the U.S. rather than themselves be confronted with this antiforeign attitude. They might estimate that, with increased aid from Communist China, the Viet Minh forces, by employing harassing and infiltrating tactics and avoiding major engagements, could make any U.S. advance at the least slow and difficult. It is probable, therefore, that the Chinese Communists would initially follow a cautious military policy while they assessed the scale, nature, and probable success of the U.S. action, the effect of such action on Vietnamese national morale and military capabilities, the subsequent military and political moves of the French, the temper of U.S. opinion, the reactions of U.S. allies and the neutralist states, and the position of the U.N.. Even at this early stage, however, the Chinese Communists would probably take strong actions short of open intervention in an effort to prevent the U.S. from destroying the Viet Minh armed forces.\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\* The Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State, believes that the timing of the Communist reaction to the commitment of U.S. forces in Indochina cannot be estimated with any degree of assurance. He therefore believes that a decision by the Communists to follow a cautious policy in the initial stages of the U.S. action should be presented as a possibility, rather than as a probability.

5. In addition to the steps outlined in paragraph 3 above, the Chinese Communists, at this early stage of U.S. commitment, would probably provide an increased number of military advisors, possibly including commanders for major Viet Minh units. Moreover, Peiping might covertly furnish limited air support for Viet Minh ground forces, but would be unlikely to undertake air operations which it estimated would provoke U.S. retaliation against Communist China itself other than retaliation against those airfields from which such air attacks were launched.

6. If the leaders of Communist China and the U.S.S.R. came to believe that a protracted stalemate in Indochina was likely, they would probably not openly commit Chinese Communist ground, naval, or air forces to an intervention in force in Indochina, nor would they renew hostilities in Korea or commit new acts of armed aggression elsewhere in the Far East. Peiping and Moscow would probably believe that a long and indecisive war in Indochina could be exploited politically and that, in time, U.S. and Vietnamese will to fight might be worn down.

7. If at any time, however, the leaders of Communist China and the U.S.S.R. came to believe that a decisive defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces was likely, they would be faced with the decision whether Communist China should intervene openly in force in order to avert this development.

8. The following considerations might induce the Communists to decide in favor of open intervention in force:

a. Decisive defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces would be a grave blow to Communist prestige throughout the world and would seriously diminish prospects for the expansion of Communism in Asia.

b. A U.S. military commitment in Indochina might form part of a larger plan, possibly involving, in the minds of the Communists, the resurgence of Chinese Nationalist strength, aimed at the destruction of the Chinese Communist regime. In any case, decisive defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces would bring U.S. power to the borders of China.

c. Whatever the initial intention, successful U.S. military action in Indochina might encourage the U.S. to increase pressure on other points of the Communist periphery.

d. Many observers, particularly in the Asian neutralist states, would consider the U.S. in the wrong in Indochina and would condone Chinese Communist intervention as a move to "liberate Indochina from American imperialism." These sentiments could be effectively exploited by Communist propaganda.

e. The U.S., despite its warnings, might not retaliate strongly against Communist China, because it would fear that such retaliation would alienate its NATO allies, result in wider military deployment of US forces, cause Peiping to invoke the Sino-Soviet treaty, and thereby increase the danger of

general war.

f. By intervening openly in force the Chinese Communists might be able to prevent indefinitely both the successful accomplishment of the U.S. mission and the disengagement of substantial U.S. forces from Indochina.

9. On the other hand, the following considerations might deter the Communists from deciding to intervene openly in force:

a. It would be more important to concentrate upon domestic problems including strengthening of Communist China's economy.

b. There would be a grave risk of U.S. reprisals against Communist China and possibly of general war.

c. Indochina is remote from the U.S.S.R. and the centers of power in Communist China. Accordingly, the establishment of a strong U.S. position in Indochina would not constitute, to the same degree as in Korea, a threat to Chinese Communist and Soviet power in the Far East.

d. Short of actual intervention, the Chinese Communists could acquire a position of strength by reinforcing and rehabilitating the military facilities on Hainan. This position would dominate the Gulf of Tonkin, and pose a distinct threat to sea-air lines of communications of U.S. forces in Indochina and to rear bases.

e. The loss in prestige involved in the defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces could in part be offset by depicting the Viet Minh as an indigenous liberation movement. Moreover, its armed forces could be preserved on Chinese soil where they could exercise constant military and political pressure on the forces of the US and the Associated States.

f. The military and political nature of the Indochina war is such that even if the US defeated the Viet Minh field forces, guerrilla action could probably be continued indefinitely and preclude the establishment of complete non-Communist control over that area.

g. Under such circumstances, the US might have to maintain a military commitment in Indochina for years to come. Heavy US commitments in Indochina over the long run might cause concern to US allies and might create divergencies between the US and neutralist states.

10. The Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believe that the Communist reaction to commitment of US forces in Indochina would largely depend upon US posture prior to, and at the same time of, such commitment. If the US posture made manifest to the Communists that US naval and air retaliatory power would be fully applied to Communist China, then Peiping and Moscow would seek to avoid courses of action which would bring about such retaliation. In such circumstances, the chances are better than even that the Chinese Communists would not openly intervene in Indochina, even if they believed that failure to intervene would mean the defeat at that time of the Viet Minh field forces in Indochina. Therefore the Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believe that in weighing the arguments set forth in paragraphs 8 and 9 Chinese Communist leaders, in such circumstances, would estimate that it was more advantageous to them to support a guerrilla action in Indochina and tie down large US forces in such a war, than to risk US retaliatory action against China itself which open intervention would involve. However, the Communists would almost certainly continue to support the remnants of the Viet Minh, including re-equipping these remnant forces on the Chinese side of the border and possibly augmenting them with Chinese "volunteers" so that Viet Minh resistance could be continued indefinitely. Moreover, they would pursue their objectives in the rest of Southeast Asia by all means short of open military intervention.

11. The Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State, the Director of Naval Intelligence, the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Intelligence, Department of the Army, and the Director of Intelligence, USAF, believe that the condition of "decisive defeat of the field forces of the Viet Minh" prescribed

for considering this problem would necessarily result in such a serious setback to Communist prestige, security, and expansionism as to lead to the following conclusions. In weighing the arguments presented in paragraphs 8 and 9, the Communist leaders in both Peiping and Moscow would probably give greatest consideration to: (a) the loss of prestige, the threat to Bloc security, and the setback to Communist expansionism in Southeast Asia involved in a decisive defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces and, (b) the risk of direct US action against Communist China. To the Communists, the consequences of the decisive defeat of the Viet Minh armed forces would be both certain and far reaching. In appraising the possible nature and scale of direct US action against the China mainland, the Communists would weigh any US warnings of probable consequences of intervention, the temper of US and free world opinion, and the probable US desire not to expand a local action. It is unlikely that the Communists' appraisal would lead them to the conviction that the US reaction to their intervention in Indochina would take the form of extensive and intense warfare against Communist China. In any case, their overriding suspicion of the ultimate motive of US forces in strength on or near the borders of Communist China would strongly influence their courses of action. Thus, the thought foremost in their minds would most probably be that failure to dislodge US military forces from the Chinese border would lead to increasing challenges to Communist power elsewhere. We therefore believe that the chances are probably better than even that the Communists would accept the risk involved and that the Chinese Communists would intervene openly and in force in an effort to save the Communist position in Indochina.

## State 279

STATE TO LODGE 29 August 1963

Deeply appreciate your 375 which was a most helpful clarification. We fully understand enormous stakes at issue and the heavy responsibilities which you and [Harkins](#) will be carrying in the days ahead and we want to do everything possible from our end to help.

Purpose of this message is to explore further question of possible attempt to separate [Diem](#) and the Nhus. In your telegram you appear to treat Diem and the Nhus as a single package whereas we had indicated earlier to the Generals that if the Nhus were removed the question of retaining Diem would be up to them. My own personal assessment is (and this is not an instruction) that the Nhus are by all odds the greater part of the problem in [Vietnam](#), internally, internationally and for American public opinion. Perhaps it is inconceivable that the Nhus could be removed without taking Diem with them or without Diem's abandoning his post. In any event, I would appreciate your comment on whether any distinction can or should be drawn as between Diem and Counsellor and [Madame Nhu](#).

The only point on which you and General Harkins have different views is whether an attempt should be made with Diem to eliminate the Nhus and presumably take other steps to consolidate the country behind a winning effort against the [Viet Cong](#). My own hunch, based in part on the report of [Kattenburg](#)'s conversations with Diem is that such an approach could not succeed if it were cast purely in terms of persuasion. Unless such a talk included a real sanction such as a threatened [withdrawal](#) of our support, it is unlikely that it would be taken completely seriously by a man who may feel that we are inescapably committed to an anti-Communist Vietnam. But if a sanction were used in such a conversation, there would be a high risk that this would be taken by Diem as a sign that action against him and the Nhus was imminent and he might as a minimum move against the Generals or even take some quite fantastic action such as calling on [North Vietnam](#) for assistance in expelling the Americans.

It occurs to me, therefore, that if such an approach were to be made it might properly await the time when others were ready to move immediately to constitute a new government. If this be so, the question then arises as to whether an approach to insist upon the expulsion of the Nhus should come from Americans rather than from the Generals themselves. This might be the means by which the Generals could indicate that they were prepared to distinguish between Diem and the Nhus. In any event, were the Generals to take this action it would tend to protect succeeding Vietnam administrations from the charge of being wholly American puppets subjected to whatever anti-American sentiment is inherent in so complex a situation.

I would be glad to have your further thoughts on these points as well as your views on whether further talks with Diem are contemplated to continue your opening discussions with him. You will have received formal instructions on other matters through other messages. Good luck.

Cablegram from Ambassador [Lodge](#) to Secretary [Rusk](#), 29 August 1963.

We are launched on a course from which there is no respectable turning back: the overthrow of the Diem government. There is no turning back in part because U.S. prestige is already publicly committed to this end in large measure and will become more so as the facts leak out. In a more fundamental sense there is no turning back because there is no possibility, in my view, that the war can be won under a Diem administration, still less that Diem or any member of the family can govern the country in a way to gain the support of the people who count, i.e., the educated class in and out of government service, civil and military--not to mention the American people. In the last few months (and especially days) they have in fact positively alienated these people to an incalculable degree. So that I am personally in full agreement with the policy which he was instructed to carry out by last Sunday's telegram.

2. The chance of bringing off a Generals' coup depends on them to some extent, but it depends at least as much on us.

3. We should proceed to make all-out effort to get Generals to move promptly. To do so we should have authority to do following:

(a) That General Harkins repeat to Generals personally message previously transmitted by CAS officers. This should establish their authenticity. General Harkins should have order on this.

(b) If nevertheless Generals insist on public statement that all U.S. aid to VN through Diem regime has been stopped, we would agree, on express understanding that Generals will have started at same time. (We would seek to persuade Generals that it would be better to hold this card for use in event of stalemate. We hope it will not be necessary to do this at all.)

(c) VNese Generals doubt that we have the will power, courage and determination to see this thing through. They are haunted by the idea that we will run out on them even though we have told them pursuant to instructions, that the game had started.

5. We must press on for many reasons. Some of these are:

(a) Explosiveness of the present situation which may well lead to riots and violence if issue of discontent with regime is not met. Out of this could come a pro-Communist or at best a neutralist set of politicians.

(b) The fact that war cannot be won with the present regime.

(c) Our own reputation for steadfastness and our unwillingness to stultify ourselves.

(d) If proposed action is suspended, I believe a body blow will be dealt to respect for us by VNese Generals. Also, all those who expect U. S. to straighten out this situation will feel let down. Our help to the regime in past years inescapably gives a responsibility which we cannot avoid.

6. I realize that this course involves a very substantial risk of losing VN. It also involves some additional risk to American lives. I would never propose it if I felt there was a reasonable chance of holding VN with Diem.

[Point 7 unavailable.]

8 . . . Gen. Harkins thinks that I should ask Diem to get rid of the Nhus before starting the Generals' action. But I believe that such a step has no chance of getting the desired result and would have the very serious effect of being regarded by the Generals as a sign of American indecision and delay. I believe this is a risk which we should not run. The Generals distrust us too much already. Another point is that Diem would certainly ask for time to consider such a far-reaching request. This would give the ball to Nhu.

9. With the exception of par. 8 above Gen. Harkins concurs in this telegram.

Reprinted from *The New York Times*

Cable by U.S. General in [Saigon](#) to [Taylor](#) on End of August Plot

Cablegram from Gen. [Paul D. Harkins](#), United States commander in Saigon, to Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 31 1963.

(saw Khiem: he stated Big Minh had stopped planning at this time, and was working on other methods; others had called off planning also, himself and Khanh, following Minh. He knew Thao was making plans--but that few of military trusted him because of his VC background--and that he might still be working for the VC. The Generals were not ready as they did not have enough forces under their control compared to those under President and now in Saigon. He indicated they, the Generals, did not want to start anything they could not successfully finish.

. . . At a meeting yesterday, Mr. Nhu said he now went along with everything the U.S. wants to do, and even had the backing of Pres. [Kennedy](#). I said this was news to me. Khiem said he wondered if Nhu was again trying to flush out the generals. He intimated the generals do not have too much trust in Nhu and that he's such a friend of Mr. Richardson the generals wonder if Mr. Nhu and

Mme. Nhu were on the CIA payroll....

. . . I asked if someone couldn't confront the Nhus with the fact that their absence from the scene was the key to the overall solution. He replied that for anyone to do that would be self-immolation-- he also went on to say he doubted if the Nhus and Diem could be split.



## Statement of Policy 25 June 1952

25 June 1952 STATEMENT OF POLICY by the [NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL](#) on UNITED STATES OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO .SOUTHEAST ASIA\*

\*Southeast Asia is used herein to mean the area embracing Burma, [Thailand](#), [Indochina](#), Malaya and Indonesia.

### OBJECTIVE

1. To prevent the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the communist orbit, and to assist them to develop the will and ability to resist communism from within and without and to contribute to the strengthening of the free world.

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

2. Communist domination, by whatever means, of all Southeast Asia would seriously endanger in the short term, and critically endanger in the longer term, United States security interests.

a. The loss of any of the countries of Southeast Asia to communist control as a consequence of overt or covert [Chinese](#) Communist aggression would have critical psychological, political and economic consequences. In the absence of effective and timely counteraction, the loss of any single country would probably lead to relatively swift submission to or an alignment with communism by the remaining countries of this group. Furthermore, an alignment with communism of the rest of Southeast Asia and India, and in the longer term, of the Middle East (with the probable exceptions of at least Pakistan and Turkey) would in all probability progressively follow. Such widespread alignment would endanger the stability and security of Europe.

b. Communist control of all of Southeast Asia would render the U.S. position in the Pacific offshore island chain precarious and would seriously jeopardize fundamental U.S. security interests in the Far East.

c. Southeast Asia, especially Malaya and Indonesia, is the principal world source of natural rubber and tin, and a producer of petroleum and other strategically important commodities. The rice exports of Burma and Thailand are critically important to Malaya, Ceylon and Hong Kong and are of considerable significance to [Japan](#) and India, all important areas of free Asia.

d. The loss of Southeast Asia, especially of Malaya and Indonesia, could result in such economic and political pressures in Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to communism.

3. It is therefore imperative that an overt attack on Southeast Asia by the Chinese Communists be vigorously opposed. In order to pursue the military courses of action envisaged in this paper to a favorable conclusion within a reasonable period, it will be necessary to divert military strength from other areas thus reducing our military capability in those areas, with the recognized increased risks involved therein, or to increase our military forces in being, or both.

4. The danger of an overt military attack against Southeast Asia is inherent in the existence of a hostile and aggressive Communist China, but such an attack is less probable than continued communist efforts to achieve domination through subversion. The primary threat to Southeast Asia accordingly arises from the possibility that the situation in Indochina may deteriorate as a result of the weakening of the resolve of, or as a result of the inability of the governments of [France](#) and of the Associated States to continue to oppose the Viet Minh rebellion, the military strength of which is being steadily increased by virtue of aid furnished by the Chinese Communist regime and its allies.

5. The successful defense of [Tonkin](#) is critical to the retention in non-Communist hands of mainland Southeast Asia. However, should Burma come under communist domination, a communist military advance through Thailand might make Indochina, including Tonkin, militarily

indefensible. The execution of the following U.S. courses of action with respect to individual countries of the area may vary depending upon the route of communist advance into Southeast Asia.

6. Actions designed to achieve our objectives in Southeast Asia require sensitive selection and application, on the one hand to assure the optimum efficiency through coordination of measures for the general area, and on the other, to accommodate to the greatest practicable extent to the individual sensibilities of the several governments, social classes and minorities of the area.

#### COURSES OF ACTION

##### |Southeast Asia

7. With respect to Southeast Asia, the United States should:

- a. Strengthen propaganda and cultural activities, as appropriate, in relation to the area to foster increased alignment of the people with the free world.
- b. Continue, as appropriate, programs of economic and technical assistance designed to strengthen the indigenous non-communist governments of the area.
- c. Encourage the countries of Southeast Asia to restore and expand their commerce with each other and with the rest of the free world, and stimulate the flow of the raw material resources of the area to the free world.
- d. Seek agreement with other nations, including at least France, the U.K., [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#), for a joint warning to Communist China regarding the grave consequences of Chinese aggression against Southeast Asia, the issuance of such a warning to be contingent upon the prior agreement of France and the UK to participate in the courses of action set forth in paragraphs 10c, 12, 14f (1) and (2), and 15c (1) and (2), and such others as are determined as a result of prior trilateral consultation, in the event such a warning is ignored.
- e. Seek U.K. and French agreement in principle that a naval blockade of Communist China should be included in the minimum courses of action set forth in paragraph 10c below.
- f. Continue to encourage and support closer cooperation among the countries of Southeast Asia, and between those countries and the United States, [Great Britain](#), France, the [Philippines](#), Australia, New Zealand, South Asia and Japan.
- g. Strengthen, as appropriate, covert operations designed to assist in the achievement of U.S. objectives in Southeast Asia.
- h. Continue activities and operations designed to encourage the overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia to organize and activate anticommunist groups and activities within their own communities, to resist the effects of parallel pro-communist groups and activities and, generally, to increase their orientation toward the free world.
- i. Take measures to promote the coordinated defense of the area, and encourage and support the spirit of resistance among the peoples of Southeast Asia to Chinese Communist aggression and to the encroachments of local communists.
- j. Make clear to the American people the importance of Southeast Asia to the security of the United States so that they may be prepared for any of the courses of action proposed herein.

##### Indochina

8. With respect to Indochina the United States should:

- a. Continue to promote international support for the three Associated States.
- b. Continue to assure the French that the U.S. regards the French effort in Indochina as one of great strategic importance in the general international interest rather than in the purely French interest, and as essential to the security of the free world, not only in the Far East but in the Middle

East and Europe as well.

c. Continue to assure the French that we are cognizant of the sacrifices entailed for France in carrying out her effort in Indochina and that, without overlooking the principle that France has the primary responsibility in Indochina, we will recommend to the Congress appropriate military, economic and financial aid to France and the Associated States.

d. Continue to cultivate friendly and increasingly cooperative relations with the Governments of France and the Associated States at all levels with a view to maintaining and, if possible, increasing the degree of influence the U.S. can bring to bear on the policies and actions of the French and Indochinese authorities to the end of directing the course of events toward the objectives we seek. Our influence with the French and Associated States should be designed to further those constructive political, economic and social measures which will tend to increase the stability of the Associated States and thus make it possible for the French to reduce the degree of their participation in the military, economic and political affairs of the Associated States.

e. Specifically we should use our influence with France and the Associated States to promote positive political, military, economic and social policies, among which the following are considered essential elements:

(1) Continued recognition and carrying out by France of its primary responsibility for the defense of Indochina.

(2) Further steps by France and the Associated States toward the evolutionary development of the Associated States.

(3) Such reorganization of French administration and representation in Indochina as will be conducive to an increased feeling of responsibility on the part of the Associated States.

(4) Intensive efforts to develop the armies of the Associated States, including independent logistical and administrative services.

(5) The development of more effective and stable Governments in the Associated States.

(6) [Land reform](#), agrarian and industrial credit, sound rice marketing systems, labor development, foreign trade and capital formation.

(7) An aggressive military, political, and psychological program to defeat or seriously reduce the [Viet Minh](#) forces.

(8) U.S.-French cooperation in publicizing progressive developments in the foregoing policies in Indochina.

9. In the absence of large scale Chinese Communist intervention in Indochina, the United States should:

a. Provide increased aid on a high priority basis for the [French Union forces](#) without relieving French authorities of their basic military responsibility for the defense of the Associated States in order to:

(1) Assist in developing indigenous armed forces which will eventually be capable of maintaining internal security without assistance from French units.

(2) Assist the French Union forces to maintain progress in the restoration of internal security against the Viet Minh.

(3) Assist the forces of France and the Associated States to defend Indochina against Chinese Communist aggression.

b. In view of the immediate urgency of the situation, involving possible large-scale Chinese Communist intervention, and in order that the United States may be prepared to take whatever action may be appropriate in such circumstances, make the plans necessary to carry out the

courses of action indicated in paragraph 10 below.

c. In the event that information and circumstances point to the conclusion that France is no longer prepared to carry the burden in Indochina, or if France presses for an increased sharing of the responsibility for Indochina, whether in the UN or directly with the U.S. Government, oppose a French withdrawal and consult with the French and British concerning further measures to be taken to safeguard the area from communist domination.

10. In the event that it is determined, in consultation with France that Chinese Communist forces (including volunteers) have overtly intervened in the conflict in Indochina, or are covertly participating to such an extent as to jeopardize retention of the Tonkin Delta area by French Union forces, the United States should take the following measures to assist these forces in preventing the loss of Indochina, to repel the aggression and to restore peace and security in Indochina.

a. Support a request by France or the Associated States for immediate action by the United Nations which would include a UN resolution declaring that Communist China has committed an aggression, recommending that member states take whatever action may be necessary, without geographic limitation, to assist France and the Associated States in meeting the aggression.

b. Whether or not UN action is immediately forthcoming, seek the maximum possible international support for, and participation in, the minimum courses of military action agreed upon by the parties to the joint warning. These minimum courses of action are set forth in sub-paragraph c immediately below.

c. Carry out the following minimum courses of military action, either under the auspices of the UN or in conjunction with France and the United Kingdom and any other friendly governments:

(1) A resolute defense of Indochina itself to which the United States would provide such air and naval assistance as might be practicable.

(2) Interdiction of Chinese Communist communication lines including those in China.

(3) The United States would expect to provide the major forces for task (2) above; but would expect the U.K. and France to provide at least token forces therefor and to render such other assistance as is normal between allies, and France to carry the burden of providing, in conjunction with the Associated States, the ground forces for the defense of Indochina.

11. In addition to the courses of action set forth in paragraph 10 above, the United States should take the following military actions as appropriate to the situation:

a. If agreement is reached pursuant to paragraph 7-e, establishment in conjunction with the UK and France of a naval blockade of Communist China.

b. Intensification of covert operations to aid anti-communist guerrilla forces operating against Communist China and to interfere with and disrupt Chinese Communist lines of communication and military supply areas.

c. Utilization, as desirable and feasible, of anti-communist Chinese forces, including Chinese Nationalist forces in military operations in Southeast Asia, [Korea](#), or China proper.

d. Assistance to the [British](#) to cover an evacuation from Hong Kong, if required.

e. Evacuation of French Union civil and military personnel from the Tonkin delta, if required.

12. If, subsequent to aggression against Indochina and execution of the minimum necessary courses of action listed in paragraph 10-c above, the United States determines jointly with the U.K. and France that expanded military action against Communist China is rendered necessary by the situation, the United States should take air and naval action in conjunction with at least France and the U.K. against all suitable military targets in China, avoiding insofar as practicable those targets in areas near the boundaries of the [U.S.S.R.](#) in order not to increase the risk of direct Soviet involvement.

13. In the event the concurrence of the United Kingdom and France to expanded military action against Communist China is not obtained, the United States should consider taking unilateral action.

## Taylor's Briefing of Key Officials on Situation in November 1964

Excerpts from prepared briefing by Ambassador Taylor, "The Current Situation in [South Vietnam](#)-- November 1964" delivered to the "principals"--the senior officials to whom the Southeast Asia working group reported--at a Washington meeting on November 27 1964.

After a year of changing and ineffective government, the counter-insurgency program country-wide is bogged down and will require heroic treatment to assure revival. Even in the [Saigon](#) area, in spite of the planning and the special treatment accorded the [Hop Tac](#) plan, this area also is lagging. The northern provinces of South Viet-Nam which a year ago were considered almost free of [Viet-Cong](#) are now in deep trouble. In the Quang Ngai-Binh Dinh area, the gains of the Viet-Cong have been so serious that once more we are threatened with a partition of the country by a Viet-Cong salient driven to the sea. The pressure on this area has been accompanied by continuous sabotage of the railroad and of Highway 1 which in combination threaten an economic strangulation of northern provinces.

This deterioration of the pacification program has taken place in spite of the very heavy losses inflicted almost daily on the Viet-Cong and the increase in strength and professional competence of the Armed Forces of South Viet-Nam. Not only have the Viet-Cong apparently made good their losses, but of late, have demonstrated three new or newly expanded tactics: the use of stand-off mortar fire against important targets, as in the attack on the [Bien Hoa](#) airfield; economic strangulation on limited areas; finally, the stepped-up [infiltration](#) of [DRV](#) military personnel moving from the north. These new or improved tactics employed against the background of general deterioration offer a serious threat to the pacification program in general and to the safety of important bases and installations in particular.

Perhaps more serious than the downward trend in the pacification situation, because it is the prime cause, is the continued weakness of the central government. Although the [Huong](#) government has been installed after executing faithfully and successfully the program laid out by the [Khanh](#) government for its own replacement, the chances for the long life and effective performance of the new line-up appear small. Indeed, in view of the factionalism existing in Saigon and elsewhere throughout the country it is impossible to foresee a stable and effective government under any name in anything like the near future. Nonetheless, we do draw some encouragement from the character and seriousness of purpose of Prime Minister Huong and his cabinet and the apparent intention of General Khanh to keep the Army out of politics at least for the time being.

As our programs plod along or mark time, we sense the mounting feeling of war weariness and hopelessness which pervade South Viet-Nam, particularly in the urban areas. Although the provinces for the most part appear steadfast, undoubtedly there is chronic discouragement there as well as in the cities. Although the military leaders have not talked recently with much conviction about the need for "marching North," assuredly many of them are convinced that some new and drastic action must be taken to reverse the present trends and to offer hope of ending the insurgency in some finite time.

The causes for the present unsatisfactory situation are not hard to find. It stems from two primary causes, both already mentioned above, the continued ineffectiveness of the central government, and the other, the increasing strength and effectiveness of the Viet-Cong and their ability to replace losses.

While, in view of the historical record of South Viet-Nam, it is not surprising to have these governmental difficulties, this chronic weakness is a critical liability to future plans. Without an effective central government with which to mesh the U.S. effort the latter is a spinning wheel unable to transmit impulsion to the machinery of the GVN. While the most critical governmental weaknesses are in Saigon, they are duplicated to a degree in the provinces. It is most difficult to find adequate provincial chiefs and supporting administrative personnel to carry forward the complex programs which are required in the field for successful pacification. It is true that when one regards the limited background of the provincial chiefs and their associates, one should

perhaps be surprised by the results which they have accomplished, but unfortunately, these results are generally not adequate for the complex task at hand or for the time schedule which we would like to establish.

As the past history of this country shows, there seems to be a national attribute which makes for factionalism and limits the development of a truly national spirit. Whether this tendency is innate or a development growing out of the conditions of political suppression under which successive generations have lived is hard to determine. But it is an inescapable fact that there is no national tendency toward team play or mutual loyalty to be found among many of the leaders and political groups within South Viet-Nam. Given time, many of these [words illegible] undoubtedly change for the better, but we are unfortunately pressed for time and unhappily perceive no short term solution for the establishment of stable and sound government.

The ability of the Viet-Cong continuously to rebuild their units and to make good their losses is one of the mysteries of this guerrilla war. We are aware of the recruiting methods by which local boys are induced or compelled to join the Viet-Cong ranks and have some general appreciation of the amount of infiltration personnel from the outside. Yet taking both of these sources into account, we still find no plausible explanation of the continued strength of the Viet-Cong if our data on Viet-Cong losses are even approximately correct. Not only do the Viet-Cong units have the recuperative powers of the phoenix, but they have an amazing ability to maintain morale. Only in rare cases have we found evidences of bad morale among Viet-Cong prisoners or recorded in captured Viet-Cong documents.

Undoubtedly one cause for the growing strength of the Viet-Cong is the increased direction and support of their campaign by the government of [North Viet-Nam](#). This direction and support take the form of endless radioed orders and instructions, and the continuous dispatch to South Viet-Nam of trained cadre and military equipment over infiltration routes by land and by water. While in the aggregate, this contribution to the guerrilla campaign over the years must represent a serious drain on the resources of the DRV, that government shows no sign of relaxing its support of the Viet-Cong. In fact, the evidence points to an increased contribution over the last year, a plausible development, since one would expect the DRV to press hard to exploit the obvious internal weaknesses in the south.

If, as the evidence shows, we are playing a losing game in South Viet-Nam, it is high time we change and find a better way. To change the situation, it is quite clear that we need to do three things: first, establish an adequate government in SVN; second, improve the conduct of the [counterinsurgency](#) campaign; and finally, persuade or force the DRV to stop its aid to the Viet-Cong and to use its directive powers to make the Viet-Cong desist from their efforts to overthrow the government of South Viet-Nam....

In bringing military pressure to bear on North Viet-Nam, there are a number of variations which are possible. At the bottom of the ladder of escalation, we have the initiation of intensified covert operations, anti-infiltration attacks in [Laos](#), and reprisal bombings mentioned above as a means for stiffening South Vietnamese morale. From this level of operations, we could begin to escalate progressively by attacking appropriate targets in North Viet-Nam. If we justified our action primarily upon the need to reduce infiltration, it would be natural to direct these attacks on infiltration-related targets such as staging areas, training facilities, communications centers and the like. The tempo and weight of the attacks could be varied according to the effects sought. In its final forms, this kind of attack could extend to the destruction of all important fixed targets in North Viet-Nam and to the interdiction of movement on all lines of communication.

. . . We reach the point where a decision must be taken as to what course or courses of action we should undertake to change the tide which is running against us. It seems perfectly clear that we must work to the maximum to make something out of the present Huong government or any successor thereto. While doing so, we must be thinking constantly of what we would do if our efforts are unsuccessful and the government collapses. Concurrently, we should stay on the

present in-country program, intensifying it as possible in proportion to the current capabilities of the government. To bolster the local morale and restrain the Viet-Cong during this period, we should step up the 34-A operations, engage in bombing attacks and armed recce in the Laotian corridor and undertake reprisal bombing as required. It will be important that United States forces take part in the Laotian operations in order to demonstrate to South Viet-Nam our willingness to share in the risks of attacking the North.

If this course of action is inadequate, and the government falls then we must start over again or try a new approach. At this moment, it is premature to say exactly what these new measures should be. In any case, we should be prepared for emergency military action against the North if only to shore up a collapsing situation.

If, on the other hand as we hope, the government maintains and proves itself, then we should be prepared to embark on a methodical program of mounting air attacks in order to accomplish our pressure objectives vis-a-vis the DRV and at the same time do our best to improve in-country pacification program. We will leave negotiation initiatives to [Hanoi](#). Throughout this period, our guard must be up in the Western Pacific, ready for any reaction by the DRV or of Red [China](#). Annex I suggests the train of events which we might set in motion.



## The Joint Chiefs of Staff Washington 25, D.C.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE [SECRETARY OF DEFENSE](#)

Subject: Preparation of Department of Defense Views Regarding Negotiation on [Indochina](#) for the Forthcoming Geneva Conference

1. This memorandum is in response to your memorandum dated 5 March 1954, subject as above.
2. In their consideration of this problem, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have viewed UNITED STATES OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA (NSC 5405), in the light of developments since that policy was approved on 16 January 1954, and they are of the opinion that, from the military point of view, the statement of policy set forth there remains entirely valid. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirm their views concerning the strategic importance of Indochina to the security interests of the United States and the Free World in general, as reflected in NSC 54`05. They are firmly of the belief that the loss of Indochina to the Communists would constitute political and military setback of the most serious consequences.
3. With respect to the possible course of action enumerated in paragraph of your memorandum, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submit the following views:
  - a. Maintenance of the status quo. In the absence of a very substantial improvement in the French Union military situation, which could best be accomplished by the aggressive prosecution of military operations, it is highly improbable that Communist agreement could be obtained to a negotiated settlement which would be consistent with basic United States objectives in Southeast Asia. Therefore, continuation of the fighting with the objective of seeking a military victory appears as the only alternative to acceptance of a compromise settlement based upon one or more of the possible other courses of action upon which the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been specifically requested in your memorandum.
  - b. Imposition of a cease-fire. The acceptance of a cease-fire in advance of a satisfactory settlement would, in all probability, lead to a political stalemate attended by a concurrent and irretrievable deterioration of the Franco-Vietnamese military position. (See paragraph 27 of NSC 5405.)
  - c. Establishment of a coalition government. The acceptance of a settlement based upon the establishment of a coalition government in one or more of the Associated States would open the way for the ultimate seizure of control by the Communists under conditions which might preclude timely and effective external assistance in the prevention of such seizure. (See subparagraph 26b of NSC 5405.)
  - d. Partition of the country. The acceptance of a partitioning of one or more of the Associated States would represent at least a partial victory for the Viet Minh, and would constitute recognition of a Communist territorial expansion achieved through force of arms. Any partition acceptable to the Communists would in all likelihood include the [Tonkin](#) Delta area which is acknowledged to be the keystone of the defense of mainland Southeast Asia, since in friendly hands it cuts off the most favorable routes for any massive southward advance towards central and southern Indochina and [Thailand](#). (See paragraph 4 of NSC 5405.) A partitioning involving Vietnam and [Laos](#) in the vicinity of the 16th Parallel, as has been suggested (See State cable from London, No. 3802, dated 4 March 1954), would cede to Communist control approximately half of Indochina, its people and its resources, for exploitation in the interests of further Communist aggression; specifically, it would extend the Communist dominated area to the borders of Thailand, thereby enhancing the opportunities for Communist [infiltration](#) and eventual subversion of that country. Any cession of Indochinese territory to the Communists would constitute a retrogressive step in the [Containment](#) Policy, and would invite similar Communist tactics against other countries of Southeast Asia.
  - e. Self-determination through free elections. Such factors as the prevalence of illiteracy, the lack of suitable educational media, and the absence of adequate communications in the outlying areas

would render the holding of a truly representative plebiscite of doubtful feasibility. The Communists, by virtue of their superior capability in the field of propaganda, could readily pervert the issue as being a choice between national independence and French Colonial rule. Furthermore, it would be militarily infeasible to prevent widespread intimidation of voters by Communist partisans. While it is obviously impossible to make a dependable forecast as to the outcome of a free election, current intelligence leads the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the belief that a settlement based upon free elections would be attended by almost certain loss of the Associated States to Communist control.

4. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that any negotiated settlement which would involve substantial concessions to the Communists on the part of the Governments of [France](#) and the Associated States, such as in c and d above, would be generally regarded by Asian peoples as a Communist victory, and would cast widespread doubt on the ability of anti-Communist forces ultimately to stem the tide of Communist control in the Far East. Any such settlement would, in all probability, lead to the loss of Indochina to the Communists and deal a damaging blow to the national will of other countries of the Far East to oppose Communism.

5. Should Indochina be lost to the Communists, and in the absence of immediate and effective counteraction on the part of the Western Powers which would of necessity be on a much greater scale than that which could be decisive in Indochina, the conquest of the remainder of Southeast Asia would inevitably follow. Thereafter, longer term results involving the gravest threats to fundamental United States security interests in the Far East and even to the stability and security of Europe could be expected to ensue. (See paragraph 1 of NSC 5405.)

6. Orientation of [Japan](#) toward the West is the keystone of United States policy in the Far East. In the judgment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the loss of Southeast Asia to Communism would, through economic and political pressures, drive Japan into an accommodation with the Communist Bloc. The communization of Japan would be the probable ultimate result.

7. The rice, tin, rubber, and oil of Southeast Asia and the industrial capacity of Japan are the essential elements which Red China needs to build a monolithic military structure far more formidable than that of Japan prior to World War II. If this complex of military power is permitted to develop to its full potential, it would ultimately control the entire Western and Southwestern Pacific region and would threaten South Asia and the Middle East.

8. Both the United States and France have invested heavily of their resources toward the winning of the struggle in Indochina. Since 1950 the United States has contributed in excess of 1.6 billion dollars in providing logistic support. France is reported to have expended, during the period 1946-1953, the equivalent of some 4.2 billion dollars. This investment, in addition to the heavy casualties sustained by the French and Vietnamese, will have been fruitless for the anti Communist cause, and indeed may redound in part to the immediate benefit of the enemy, if control of a portion of Indochina should now be ceded to the Communists. While the additional commitment of resources required to achieve decisive results in Indochina might be considerable, nevertheless this additional effort would be far less than that which would be required to stem the tide of Communist advance once it had gained momentum in its progress into Southeast Asia.

9. If, despite all United States efforts to the contrary, the French government elects to accept a negotiated settlement which, in the opinion of the United States, would fail to provide reasonably adequate assurance of the future political and territorial integrity of Indochina, it is considered that the United States should decline to associate itself with such a settlement, thereby preserving freedom of action to pursue directly with the governments of the Associated States and with other allies (notably the United Kingdom) ways and means of continuing the struggle against the Viet Minh in Indochina without participation of the French. The advantages of so doing would, from the military point of view, outweigh the advantage of maintaining political unity of action with the French in regard to Indochina.

10. It is recommended that the foregoing views be conveyed to the Department of State for

consideration in connection with the formulation of a United States position on the Indochina problem for the forthcoming Conference and for any conversation with the governments of the United Kingdom, France, and, if deemed advisable, with the governments of the Associated States preliminary to the conference. In this connection, attention is particularly requested to paragraphs 25 and 26 of NSC 5405; it is considered to be of the utmost importance that the French Government be urged not to abandon the aggressive prosecution of military operations until a satisfactory settlement has been achieved.

11. It is further recommended that, in order to be prepared for possible contingencies which might arise incident to the Geneva Conference, the [National Security Council](#) considers now the extent to which the United States would be willing to commit its resources in support of the Associated States in the effort to prevent the loss of Indochina to the Communists either:

a. In concert with the French; or

b. In the event the French elect to withdraw, in concert with other allies or, if necessary, unilaterally.

12. In order to assure ample opportunity for the Joint Chiefs of Staff to present their views on these matters, it is requested that the Military Services be represented on the Department of Defense working team which, in coordination with the Department of State, will consider all U.S. position papers pertaining to the Geneva discussions on Indochina.

## U.S. Ambassador's 1960 Analysis of Threats to Saigon Regime

As indicated our 495 and 538 [Diem](#) regime confronted by two separate but related dangers. Danger from demonstrations or coup attempt in [Saigon](#) could occur earlier; likely to be predominantly non-Communist in origin but Communists can be expected to endeavor infiltrate and exploit any such attempt. Even more serious danger is gradual [Viet Cong](#) extension of control over countryside which, if current Communist progress continues, would mean loss free Viet-nam to Communists. These two dangers are related because Communist successes in rural areas embolden them to extend their activities to Saigon and because non-Communist temptation to engage in demonstrations or coup is partly motivated by sincere desire prevent Communist take-over in Viet-nam.

Essentially sets of measures required to meet these two dangers. For Saigon danger essentially political and psychological measures required. For countryside danger security measures as well as political, psychological and economic measures needed. However both sets measures should be carried out simultaneously and to some extent individual steps will be aimed at both dangers.

Security recommendations have been made in our 539 and other messages, including formation internal security council, centralized intelligence, etc. This message therefore deals with our political and economic recommendations. I realize some measures I am recommending are drastic and would be most [word illegible] for an ambassador to make under normal circumstances. But conditions here are by no means normal. Diem government is in quite serious danger. Therefore, in my opinion prompt and even drastic action is called for. I am well aware that Diem has in past demonstrated astute judgment and has survived other serious crises. Possibly his judgment will prove superior to ours this time, but I believe nevertheless we have no alternative but to give him our best judgment of what we believe is required to preserve his government. While Diem obviously resented my frank talks earlier this year and will probably resent even more suggestions outlined below, he has apparently acted on some of our earlier suggestions and might act on at least some of the following:

1. I would propose have frank and friendly talk with Diem and explain our serious concern about present situation and his political position. I would tell him that, while matters I am raising deal primarily with internal affairs, I would like to talk to him frankly and try to be as helpful as I can be giving him the considered judgment of myself and some of his friends in Washington on appropriate measures to assist him in present serious situation. (Believe it best not indicate talking under instructions.) I would particularly stress desirability of actions to broaden and increase his [word illegible] support prior to 1961 presidential elections required by constitution before end April. I would propose following actions to President:
2. Psychological shock effect is required to take initiative from Communist propagandists as well as non-Communist oppositionists and convince population government taking effective measures to deal with present situation, otherwise we fear matters could get out of hand...
3. Make public announcement of disbandment of [Can Lao](#) party or at least its surfacing, with names and positions of all members made known publicly. Purpose this step would be to eliminate atmosphere of fear and suspicion and reduce public belief in favoritism and corruption, all of which party's semicovert status has given rise to.
4. Permit National Assembly wider legislative initiative and area of genuine debate and bestow on it authority to conduct, with appropriate publicity, public investigations of any department of government with right to question any official except President himself...
5. Require all government officials to declare publicly their property and financial holdings and give National Assembly authority to make public investigation of these declarations in an effort to dispel rumors of corruption.
6. [Words illegible] of [word illegible] control over content of the Vietnamese publication [word illegible] magazines, radio, so that the [words illegible] to closing the gap between government and

[words illegible] ideas from one to the other. To insure that the press would reflect, as well as lead, public opinion without becoming a means of upsetting the entire GVN [word illegible], it should be held responsible to a self-imposed code of ethics or "canon" of press-conduct.

7. [Words illegible] to propaganda campaign about new 3-year development plan in effort convince people that government genuinely aims at [word illegible] their welfare. (This suggestion [word illegible] of course upon assessment of soundness of development plan, which has just reached us.)

8. Adopt following measures for immediate enhancement of peasant support of government: (A) establish mechanism for increasing price peasant will receive for paddy crop beginning to come on market in December, either by direct subsidization or establishment of state purchasing mechanism; (B) institute modest payment for all corvee labor; (C) subsidize agrovillage families along same lines as land resettlement families until former on feet economically; (D) increase compensation paid to youth corps. If Diem asks how these measures are to be financed I shall suggest through increased taxes or increased deficit financing, and shall note that under certain circumstances reasonable deficit financing becomes a politically necessary measure for governments. I should add that using revenues for these fundamental and worthy purposes would be more effective than spending larger and larger sums on security forces, which, while they are essential and some additional funds for existing security forces may be required, are not complete answer to current problems.

9. Propose suggest to Diem that appropriate steps outlined above be announced dramatically in his annual state of union message to National Assembly in early October. Since Diem usually [word illegible] message in person this would have maximum effect, and I would recommend that it be broadcast live to country.

10. At [words illegible] on occasion fifth anniversary establishment [Republic of Vietnam](#) on October 26, it may become highly desirable for President [Eisenhower](#) to address a letter of continued support to Diem. Diem has undoubtedly noticed that Eisenhower letter recently delivered to [Sihanouk](#). Not only for this reason, but also because it may become very important for us to give Diem continued reassurance of our support. Presidential letter which could be published here may prove to be very valuable.

Request any additional suggestions department may have and its approval for approach to Diem along lines paras 1 to 9.

We believe U.S. should at this time support Diem as best available Vietnamese leader, but should recognize that overriding U.S. objective is strongly anti-Communist Vietnamese government which can command loyal and enthusiastic support of widest possible segments of Vietnamese people, and is able to carry on effective fight against Communist guerrillas. If Diem's position in country continues deteriorate as result failure adopt proper political, psychological, economic and security measures, it may become necessary for U.S. government to begin consideration alternative courses of action and leaders in order achieve our objective. [Document 98]

Reprinted from New York Times

Excerpts from "A Program of Action for [South Vietnam](#)," 8 May 1961 [Ed. Note: Date questionable], presented to [President Kennedy](#) by an interdepartmental task force comprising representatives from the Departments of State and Defense, the [Central Intelligence Agency](#), the International Cooperation Administration, the United States Information Agency and the Office of the President.

## 2. MILITARY:

a. The following military actions were approved by the President at the NSC meeting of 29 April 1961:

(1) Increase the [MAAG](#) as necessary to insure the effective implementation of the military portion

of the program including the training of a 20,000-man addition to the present G.V.N. armed forces of 150,000. Initial appraisal of new tasks assigned CHMAAG indicate that approximately 100 additional military personnel will be required immediately in addition to the present complement of 685.

(2) Expand MAAG responsibilities to include authority to provide support and advice to the Self-Defense Corps with a strength of approximately 40,000.

(3) Authorize MAP support for the entire Civil Guard force of 68,000. MAP support is now authorized for 32,000; the remaining 36,000 are not now adequately trained and equipped.

(4) Install as a matter of priority a radar surveillance capability which will enable the G.V.N. to obtain warning of Communist overflights being conducted for intelligence or clandestine air supply purposes. Initially, this capability should be provided from U.S. mobile radar capability.

(5) Provide MAP support for the Vietnamese Junk Force as a means of preventing Viet Cong clandestine supply and [infiltration](#) into South Vietnam by water. MAP support, which was not provided in the Counter-Insurgency Plan, will include training of junk crews in Vietnam or at U.S. bases by U.S. Navy personnel.

b. The following additional actions are considered necessary to assist the G.V.N. in meeting the increased security threat resulting from the new situation along the [Laos](#)-G.V.N. frontier:

(1) Assist the G.V.N. armed forces to increase their border patrol and insurgency suppression capabilities by establishing an effective border intelligence and patrol system, by instituting regular aerial surveillance over the entire frontier area, and by applying modern technological area-denial techniques to control the roads and trails along Vietnam's borders. A special staff element (approximately 6 U.S. personnel), to concentrate upon solutions to the unique problems of Vietnam's borders, will be activated in MAAG, Vietnam, to assist a similar special unit in the RVNAF which the G.V.N. will be encouraged to establish; these two elements working as an integrated team will help the G.V.N. gain the support of nomadic tribes and other border inhabitants, as well as introduce advanced techniques and equipment to strengthen the security of South Vietnam's frontiers.

(2) Assist the G.V.N. to establish a Combat Development and Test Center in South Vietnam to develop, with the help of modern technology, new techniques for use against the Viet Cong forces. (Approximately 4 U.S. personnel.)

(3) Assist the G.V.N. forces with health, welfare and public work projects by providing U.S. Army civic action mobile training teams, coordinated with the similar civilian effort. (Approximately 14 U.S. personnel.)

(4) Deploy a Special Forces Group (approximately 400 personnel) to Nha Trang in order to accelerate G.V.N. Special Forces training. The first increment, for immediate deployment in Vietnam, should be a Special Forces company (52 personnel).

(5) Instruct JCS, CINCPAC, and MAAG to undertake an assessment of the military utility of a further increase in the G.V.N. forces from 170,000 to 200,000 in order to create two new division equivalents for deployment to the northwest border region. The parallel political and fiscal implications should be assessed....

#### 4. ECONOMIC:

I. Objective: Undertake economic programs having both a short-term immediate impact as well as ones which contribute to the longer range economic viability of the country.

a. Undertake a series of economic projects designed to accompany the counter-insurgency effort, by the following action:

(1) Grant to ICA the authority and funds to move into a rural development-civic action program.

Such a program would include short-range, simple, impact projects which would be undertaken by teams working in cooperation with local communities. This might cost roughly \$3 to \$5 million, mostly in local currency. Directors of field teams should be given authority with respect to the expenditure of funds including use of dollar instruments to purchase local currency on the spot.

b. Assist Vietnam to make the best use of all available economic resources, by the following action:

(1) Having in mind that our chief objective is obtaining a full and enthusiastic support by the G.V.N. in its fight against the Communists, a high level team preferably headed by Assistant Secretary of the Treasury John Leddy, with State and ICA members, should be dispatched to Saigon to work out in conjunction with the Ambassador a plan whereby combined U.S. and Vietnamese financial resources can best be utilized. This group's terms of reference should cover the broad range of fiscal and economic problems. Authority should be given to make concessions necessary to achieve our objectives and to soften the blow of monetary reform. Ambassador Nolting and perhaps the Vice President should notify Diem of the proposed visit of this group stressing that their objective is clearly to maximize the joint effort rather than to force the Vietnamese into inequitable and unpalatable actions.

(2) As a part of the foregoing effort, an assessment should be undertaken of the fiscal and other economic implications of a further force increase from 170,000 to 200,000 (as noted in the Military section above).

c. Undertake the development of a long-range economic development program as a means of demonstrating U.S. confidence in the economic and political future of the country by the following action:

(1) Authorize Ambassador Nolting to inform the G.V.N. that the U.S. is prepared to discuss a long-range joint five-year development program which would involve contributions and undertakings by both parties.

#### 5. PSYCHOLOGICAL:

a. Assist the G.V.N. to accelerate its public information program to help develop a broad public understanding of the actions required to combat the Communist insurgents and to build public confidence in the G.V.N.'s determination and ability to deal with the Communist threat.

b. The U.S. Country Team, in coordination with the G.V.N. Ministry of Defense, should compile and declassify for use of media representatives in South Vietnam and throughout the world, documented facts concerning Communist infiltration and terrorists' activities and the measures being taken by the G.V.N. to counter such attacks.

c. In coordination with CIA and the appropriate G.V.N. Ministry, USIS will increase the flow of information about unfavorable conditions in North Vietnam to media representatives.

d. Develop agricultural pilot-projects throughout the country, with a view toward exploiting their beneficial psychological effects. This project would be accomplished by combined teams of Vietnamese Civic Action personnel, Americans in the Peace Corps, Filipinos in Operation Brotherhood, and other Free World nationals.

e. Exploit as a part of a planned psychological campaign and rehabilitation of Communist Viet Cong prisoners now held in South Vietnam. Testimony of rehabilitated prisoners, stressing the errors of Communism, should be broadcast to Communist-held areas, including North Vietnam, to induce defections. This rehabilitation program would be assisted by a team of U.S. personnel including U.S. Army (Civil Affairs, Psychological Warfare and Counter-Intelligence), USIS, and USOM experts.

f. Provide adequate funds for an impressive U.S. participation in the Saigon Trade Fair of 1962.

#### 6. COVERT ACTIONS:

- a. Expand present operations in the field of intelligence, unconventional warfare, and political-psychological activities to support the U.S. objective as stated.
- b. Initiate the communications intelligence actions, CIA and ASA personnel increases, and funding which were approved by the President at the NSC meeting of 29 April 1961.
- c. Expand the communications intelligence actions by inclusion of 15 additional Army Security Agency personnel to train the Vietnamese Army in tactical COMINT operations....

#### 7. FUNDING:

- a. As spelled out in the funding annex, the funding of the counter-insurgency plan and the other actions recommended in this program might necessitate increases in U.S. support of the G.V.N. budget for FY 61 of as much as \$58 million, making up to a total of \$192 million compared to \$155 million for FY 60. The U.S. contribution for the G.V.N. Defense budget in FY 62 as presently estimated would total \$161 million plus any deficiency in that budget which the G.V.N. might be unable to finance. The exact amount of U.S. contributions to the G.V.N. Defense budgets for FY 61 and FY 62 are subject to negotiation between the U.S. and the G.V.N.
- b. U.S. military assistance to G.V.N., in order to provide the support contemplated by the proposed program would total \$140 million, or \$71 million more than now programmed for Vietnam in the U.S. current MAP budget for FY 62....

#### ANNEX 6

##### Covert Actions

- a. Intelligence: Expand current positive and counter- intelligence operations against Communist forces in South Vietnam and against North Vietnam. These include penetration of the Vietnamese Communist mechanism, dispatch of agents to North Vietnam and strengthening Vietnamese internal security services. Authorization should be given, subject to existing procedures, for the use in North Vietnam operations of civilian air crews of American and other nationality, as appropriate, in addition to Vietnamese. Consideration should be given for overflights of North Vietnam for photographic intelligence coverage, using American or Chinese Nationalists crews and equipment as necessary.
- b. Communications Intelligence: Expand the current program of interception and direction-finding covering Vietnamese Communist communications activities in South Vietnam, as well as North Vietnam targets. Obtain further USIB authority to conduct these operations on a fully joint basis, permitting the sharing of results of interception, direction finding, traffic analysis and cryptographic analysis by American agencies with the Vietnamese to the extent needed to launch rapid attacks on Vietnamese Communist communications and command installations.

This program should be supplemented by a program, duly coordinated, of training additional Vietnamese Army units in intercept and direction-finding by the U.S. Army Security Agency. Also, U.S. Army Security Agency teams could be sent to Vietnam for direct operations, coordinated in the same manner--Approved by the President at the NSC meeting of 29 April 1961.

- a. Unconventional Warfare: Expand present operations of the First Observation Battalion in guerrilla areas of South Vietnam, under joint MAAG-CIA sponsorship and direction. This should be in full operational collaboration with the Vietnamese, using Vietnamese civilians recruited with CIA aid.

In Laos, infiltrate teams under light civilian cover to Southeast Laos to locate and attack Vietnamese Communist bases and lines of communications. These teams should be supported by assault units of 100 to 150 Vietnamese for use on targets beyond capability of teams. Training of teams could be a combined operation by CIA and U.S. Army Special Forces.

In North Vietnam, using the foundation established by intelligence operations, form networks of resistance, covert bases and teams for sabotage and light harassment. A capability should be



created by MAAG in the South Vietnamese Army to conduct Ranger raids and similar military actions in North Vietnam as might prove necessary or appropriate. Such actions should try to avoid any outbreak of extensive resistance or insurrection which could not be supported to the extent necessary to stave off repression.

Conduct overflights for dropping of leaflets to harass the Communists and to maintain morale of North Vietnamese population, and increase gray broadcasts to North Vietnam for the same purposes.

d. Internal South Vietnam: Effect operations to penetrate political forces, government, armed services and opposition elements to measure support of government, provide warning of any coup plans and identify individuals with potentiality of providing leadership in event of disappearance of President Diem.

Build up an increase in the population's participation in and loyalty to free government in Vietnam, through improved communication between the government and the people, and by strengthening independent or quasi-independent organizations of political, syndical or professional character. Support covertly the GVN in allied and neutral countries, with special emphasis on bringing out GVN accomplishments, to counteract tendencies toward a "political solution" while the Communists are attacking GVN. Effect, in support, a psychological program in Vietnam and elsewhere exploiting Communist brutality and aggression in North Vietnam.

e. The expanded program outlined above was estimated to require an additional 40 personnel for the CIA station and an increase in the CIA outlay for Vietnam of approximately \$1.5 million for FY 62, partly compensated by the withdrawal of personnel from other areas. The U.S. Army Security Agency actions to supplement communications intelligence will require 78 personnel and approximately \$ 1.2 million in equipment. The personnel and fund augmentations in this paragraph were approved by the President at the NSC meeting of 29 April 1961.

f. In order adequately to train the Vietnamese Army in tactical COMIT operations, the Army Security Agency estimates that an additional 15 personnel are required. This action has been approved by the U.S. Intelligence Board.



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## **The Three Servicemen's Memorial**

Frederick E. Hart's seven-foot bronze statue, The Three Servicemen, was added near the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#) wall in 1984, dedicated on Veterans Day. A flagpole to fly the American flag was also added at that time.

The entire Memorial was conveyed to the U.S. Department of the Interior by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund on November 11, 1984. The VVMF retains certain rights and responsibilities under a Memorandum of Conveyance, signed by President Reagan, to maintain the Memorial in conjunction with the National Park Service.

## The Vietnam Veterans Memorial

(Source: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Fact Sheet.)

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a 500-foot, chevron-shaped wall, composed of 140 tablets of polished black granite set into the earth, along Constitution Avenue on the Washington Mall in Washington, D.C. The granite was mined in Bangalore, India, and then cut and fabricated in Barre, Vermont.

58,191 names are engraved on the mirror-like surface of the Memorial, the names of U.S. military personnel in the order they were taken from us. The first name is Major Dale R. Buis from El Reno, Oklahoma. The last name is Richard Vande Geer from Columbus, Ohio. The Memorial is 10 feet tall at its vertex. The chronological list begins there and runs to the east end of the Wall. The chronology resumes at the beginning of the west wall, and continues to the vertex again, where the first killed in 1959 meet the last killed in 1975. The confirmed dead are marked with a diamond; missing in action with a cross. Those whose remains have been positively identified have a diamond superimposed on the cross. If an MIA returns alive, a circle, as a symbol of life, will be inscribed around the cross. There are no circles, unfortunately, on the Wall currently. Directories are located at both approaches to the Wall. Each book lists the names inscribed on the Memorial in alphabetical order, their rank, service branch, date of birth and [casualty](#), city of record, plus the line and panel where the name is located.

Jan. C. Scruggs, a decorated infantry veteran of the Vietnam War, launched the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc., (VVMF) in 1979, to build a national monument honoring the service people who served in the United States' longest armed conflict.

On July 1, 1980, legislation was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter, granting the VVMF a two-acre site near the Lincoln Memorial on the Washington Mall. The VVMF conducted an open competition judged by a jury of eight internationally recognized architecture and sculpture experts to determine the design of the Memorial. The rules stated that the design must be reflective and contemplative; harmonious with the site; inscribed with the names of the dead and missing; and that it must make no political statement about the war. A total of 1,421 entries were submitted. Maya Ying Lin submitted the winning design. She was an architecture student at Yale University at the time.

Despite controversy and numerous setbacks, the Wall was built on schedule for dedication November 13, 1982. The dedication salute lasted five days, and drew more than 200,000 visitors.

The Wall is the most visited monument in Washington, D.C., drawing more than 2.5 million visitors every year. Visitors often leave personal mementos at the base of the memorial, which are collected daily, catalogued and transferred to the humidity-and-temperature-controlled Museum and Archaeological Storage Facility (MARS) in Glen Dale, Maryland. National Park Service Rangers and volunteers at the Memorial help visitors locate names on the Wall, answer questions, and do name rubbings.

Working with the National Park Service, who provide daily, routine maintenance, groundskeeping, and security, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund provides funding for: renovations and improvements to the Memorial; the addition of names and status changes; catastrophic insurance; assistance to the NPS volunteers at the Memorial; and coordination and co-sponsorship with the NPS of the annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies at the Memorial.

A small quantity of polished granite panels are now being stored at Quantico [Marine](#) Base, in case panels sometime need to be replaced. The panels are mounted onto outdoor frames, so that they weather consistently with the existing Wall. The VVMF plans to obtain enough granite to completely replace the Memorial in case of catastrophe.

## The Vietnam Women's Memorial

(Source: Vietnam Women's Memorial Project, Inc., Fact Sheet)

The Vietnam Women's Memorial, a bronze sculpture honoring the women who served in the Vietnam War, portrays three women helping a wounded male soldier. The sculpture, designed by Glenna Goodacre of Santa Fe, New Mexico, is positioned about 300 feet (90 m) from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall, on the Washington Mall in Washington, D.C.

The Vietnam Women's Memorial Project (VWMP) was started in 1984, to spearhead organizational and fundraising efforts to create a women's memorial, and to gather and make available information about the women who had served in Vietnam. In the words of the VWMP: "The memorial is for America to remember that in the wrenching times of the Vietnam War, her daughters also answered the nation's call."

The U.S. Senate authorized the memorial project in 1988. The sculpture was installed on November 1, 1993, and dedicated on Veterans Day, November 11, 1993. Vice President Al Gore dedicated the memorial, speaking of the war and the estimated 11,500 military women who served there, mainly as [nurses](#), nearly all as volunteers. Gore said, "In the tense, sometimes confusing peace that followed, we never listened to their story, and we never properly thanked them. Dedicating this memorial gives us occasion to do both." (Facts on File, Vol. 53; No. 2765, November 25, 1993.) Eight women in the U.S. military were killed in the Vietnam War. Their names appear on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall. An unknown number, in the thousands, of civilian women also served in Vietnam as news correspondents, in the Red Cross, the USO, the American Friends Service Committee, Catholic Relief Services, and in other humanitarian organizations. Like their military counterparts, many of these women were wounded in the crossfire. An estimated 20 civilian women were killed in Vietnam.

When the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project was organized in 1984, Project leaders (all volunteers) were struck by the lack of information about the women who had served during the Vietnam era. Veterans groups and the government had few records of them-- there were no networks established and no easy way to find out where those women were. Although the VWMP and others continue to research available documentation, there is still no official, accurate record of the number of women who served during the Vietnam era. The VWMP hopes to eventually contribute its research findings about Vietnam women veterans to the Library of Congress.



## Vietnam War Statistics

### AMERICANS

**Killed in Action:** 58,192, including eight women. The Wall includes Missing In Action and eight women [nurses](#).

**Wounded:** 304,000 Missing in Action: 2,227 are still unaccounted for. "Unaccounted for" is an official Department of Defense term and includes 40 civilians.

**Prisoners of War** returned by [North Vietnam](#) (1973): 566 military, 25 civilian.

### SOUTH VIETNAMESE

**Soldiers Killed in Action:** estimated at 300,000 Soldiers

**Wounded in Action:** estimated at 600,000

**Civilians Killed:** estimates are as high as 1 million Battles occurred in many areas of Vietnam where it was not possible to keep accurate count of the numbers killed or wounded, civilian or military. Villages were often left to themselves after battles and the estimates of civilians killed is much higher than for soldiers killed, largely because of the bombing and [napalm](#) on areas of [South Vietnam](#) that were controlled by the National Liberation Front.

**Civilians Wounded:** estimates are more than 1 million since there are always many more wounded in war than killed. Many lost limbs. Some continue to be injured by land mines buried in the ground which explode when the ground is plowed for planting.

**Civilian Refugees:** perhaps as many as ten million. The war caused large movements of people from their home areas. Some military operations were specifically designed to remove people from places the government could not control, to deny food and resources the residents might provide to the National Liberation Front or the [Viet Cong](#).

### ALLIED SOLDIERS

**Koreans Killed in Action:** 4,407

**Thais Killed in Action:** 351

**[Australians](#) and [New Zealanders](#) Killed in Action:** 469

### NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VIET CONG

**Soldiers Killed in Action:** perhaps close to one million.

**Soldiers Wounded in Action:** more than one million.

**Soldiers Missing in Action:** 300,000. These figures are rough estimates by people who are well informed, but acknowledge that it is impossible to know with any degree of precision. Vietnam had poor communications and records were often destroyed in the war.

### COST OF THE WAR TO THE UNITED STATES

**\$164 Billion** (Source: Abstract of the United States)

## **BOMBS DROPPED**

More bombs were dropped on Vietnam, North and South, than in all the theaters of World War II  
(Source: America's Longest War by George Herring.)

## Vietnam War-Related Organizations

(Source: Portions of information from *The Encyclopedia of Associations*, 1994. Gale Research Inc.: Detroit, MI.)

**1. American Ex-Prisoners of War (XPW) 3201 E. Pioneer Pky., No. 40 Arlington, TX 76010  
Phone: (817)649-2979**

Founded: 1942. Former military prisoners of war and civilian internees. Seeks to: acquaint the public with the needs, problems, and handicaps associated with prisoners of war; promote research in the fields connected with injuries, diseases, and syndromes stemming from imprisonment; advocate and foster complete and effective reconditioning programs for ex-prisoners of war. Conducts lobbying activities in Washington, D.C. to assist ex-POWs. Maintains historical archives and MedSearch files; local groups maintain museums.

**2. American Legion (AL) 700 N. Pennsylvania St. Indianapolis, IN 46204 Phone: (317)630-1200**

Publications: *American Legion Magazine*, monthly.

Founded: 1919. Honorably discharged wartime veterans, male and female, of the U.S. armed forces. Sponsors baseball competition, national high-school oratorical contest, and children's services; cosponsors National Education Week. Maintains museum and library of 10,000 volumes. Bestows awards.

**3. Black Veterans for Social Justice (BVSJ) 686 Fulton St. Brooklyn, NY 11217 Phone: (718)935-1116**

Founded: 1979. Black veterans. To aid black veterans obtain information about: their rights, ways to upgrade a less-than-honorable discharge, and V.A. benefits due them and their families. Seeks to prohibit discrimination against black veterans. Provides educational programs; facilitates veterans' sharing of skills acquired while in service. Services include counseling and community workshops on veterans' issues and a program to provide services to veterans in local prisons. Assists veterans who have suffered from the effects of [Agent Orange](#). Provides children's services; offers placement service; maintains speakers' bureau.

**4. Disabled American Veterans (DAV) 3725 Alexandria Pike Cold Spring, KY 41076-1799  
Phone: (606)441-7300**

Publication: *DAV Magazine*, monthly.

Founded: 1920. Veterans with service-related disabilities. Major activity is service to disabled veterans and their families. Employs National Service Officers in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offices in 49 states and Puerto Rico to act as free-of-charge attorneys-in-fact, counsel and process veterans' claims for compensation and benefits. Provides services in areas including emergency relief, disaster relief, employment, legislation, advocacy, and transportation. Presents annual awards for Employment of Disabled Veterans and Disabled Veteran of the Year, as well as 219 four-year scholarships to children of disabled veterans.

**5. Friends of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (FVVM) 2030 Clarendon Blvd., Ste. 412  
Arlington, VA 22201 Phone: (703)525-1107**

Publication: *Among Friends*, quarterly newsletter.

Founded: 1986. Families, friends, and fellow veterans of those listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. Seeks to: assist visitors to the Memorial; assure that the historical significance and emotional legacy of the Vietnam War are not forgotten; maintain the Memorial as America's primary symbol of honor for Vietnam veterans. Sponsors: In Touch Project, a locator service designed to facilitate direct communication between those who knew a person whose name is on the Wall; Remember Them Project, which gathers biographical information and

oral histories relating to persons listed on the Wall; In Memory, which honors those who served and died as a result of the war but whose names are not on the Memorial, including civilians who died in Vietnam; In Honor, a service which flies an American flag at the Memorial in honor of a person, unit, or special date. Sends name rubbings to people who are unable to visit the Memorial. Plans an audio tour of the Memorial, an oral history of it, an interdisciplinary study, and a visiting volunteer program. Maintains speakers' bureau and biographical archives; conducts educational workshops.

**6. Gamewardens of Vietnam Association (GVA) P.O. Box 5523 Virginia Beach, VA 23455-0523 Phone: (804)489-1076**

Publication: *River Patrol Force Newsletter*, annual.

Founded: 1968. Veterans of the U.S. Navy River Patrol Force, Task Force 116, Operation Gamewarden, Brown Water Navy, who served in Vietnam 1966-1971. Seeks to preserve the memory of Operation Gamewarden and to maintain friendships formed by those serving in the task force. Honors the memories of veterans killed in Vietnam. Promotes projects to assist members and their families; bestows three annual scholarships to children and grandchildren of River Patrol Force veterans. Maintains library of 300 books on Vietnam and the U.S. Navy's role in the Vietnam War.

**7. Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV) 2065 Kurtz St. San Diego, CA 92110 Phone: (619)291-5846** Founded: 1971. Seeks to improve the welfare and morale of hospitalized veterans and aid in their mental and physical rehabilitation. Sends craft kits to occupational therapy and recreational departments at V.A. hospitals and U.S. Armed Service Military hospitals around the U.S.; acts to supplement the hospitals' own programs.

**8. Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project (HVWP) 5920 Nall, Rm. 102 Mission, KS 66202 Phone: (913)432-1214**

Publication: *HVWP in Action*, semiannual newsletter; *Veterans' Voice*, 3/year, magazine of prose, poetry, artwork, and cartoons submitted by hospitalized veterans.

Founded: 1946. Individuals and organizations united to encourage hospitalized veterans to write for pleasure and rehabilitation during their hospital stays. Maintains speakers' bureau and slide program with commentary. Bestows monetary awards for prose, poetry, cartoons, drawings, and photographs. Conducts writing sessions in hospitals.

**9. Ladies Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. 406 W. 34th St. Kansas City, MO 64111 Phone: (816)756-3390** Founded: 1914. A national volunteer service organization, the more than 770,000 women members are relatives of VFW-eligible veterans. Acts as the guiding organization behind many VFW volunteer efforts. Major fundraising efforts for cancer research and to aid cancer victims.

**10. National Association for Black Veterans (NAVB) P.O. Box 11432 Milwaukee, WI 53211 Phone: (414)342-8387** Publication: *Eclipse*, monthly newsletter.

Founded: 1970. Black and other minority veterans, primarily those who fought in Vietnam. Represents the interests of minority veterans before the Veterans Administration. Operates Metropolitan Veterans Service to obtain honorable discharges for minority and low-income veterans who in the organization's view unjustly received less than honorable discharge. Defends incarcerated veterans through its Readjustment Counseling Program; operates a job creation program; offers services to geriatric and homeless veterans. Conducts workshops to acquaint lawyers and clinicians with problems associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Sponsors a geriatric seminar and training program. Operates library of military regulations; compiles statistics; bestows awards; maintains speakers' bureau.

**11. National Association of Concerned Veterans (NACV) Southern Connecticut State University Veterans Office 501 Crescent St. New Haven, CT 06515 Phone: (203)397-4329**

Publication: *New Veteran News*, bimonthly. Founded: 1967. State veterans organizations and collegiate veterans organizations on campuses. Purpose is to improve veterans affairs (education, medical, social, and economic) by studying legislation and proposing adjustments, and by informing veterans, mainly Vietnam veterans, of their rights and benefits through state and local member clubs. Bestows awards.

**12. National Veteran's Outreach Program (NVOP) 206 San Pedro, Ste. 200 San Antonio, TX 78205 Phone: (210)223-4088**

Founded: 1973. A program of the American G.I. forum of United States, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor. Provides training to veterans. Identifies veterans in need of aid. Counsels veterans in making smooth transitions to the civilian community and mobilizes and coordinates all available resources serving veterans. Works with the private sector and local, state, and national employment services in order to place veterans in jobs. Offers V.A. benefit counseling and outreach follow-up and referral, including field counseling, home contacts, public service announcements, and street leaflet distribution.

**13. National Vietnam Veterans Coalition (NVVC) 1100 Connecticut Ave., NW, Ste. 1200 Washington, D.C. 20036 Phone: (202)338-6882**

Publication: *National Vietnam Veterans Newsletter*, periodic.

Founded: 1983. Coalition of Vietnam veterans' organizations representing 325,000 Vietnam veterans. Fosters public appreciation for the service of Vietnam veterans; supports maximum relief for Agent Orange victims; seeks the return of POWs and accountability for MIAs; encourages the appointment of Vietnam veterans to government policy making positions; works to secure job programs for Vietnam veterans and to obtain political support for them from the national political parties; promotes judicial review of V.A. benefits decisions. Bestows awards; maintains charitable programs.

**14. Operation Appreciation (OA) 225 N. Washington St. Alexandria, VA 22314 Phone: (703)549-0311** Founded: 1985. Participants include veterans and other citizens concerned with showing appreciation to disabled veterans. Helps hospitalized disabled veterans by raising funds on their behalf and by encouraging the public to send cards to boost their morale. Assists lobbyists' efforts to increase disabled veterans' benefits.

**15. Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) 801 18th St. NW Washington, D.C. 20006 Phone: (202)872-1300**

Publication: *Paraplegia News*, monthly.

Founded: 1946. Veterans who have incurred an injury or disease affecting the spinal cord and causing paralysis. Through a national service program, assists all veterans, dependents, and survivors in obtaining V.A. benefits due them; works for federal benefits of various kinds. Sponsors wheelchair sporting events in table tennis, basketball, swimming, bowling, archery, and track and field. Promotes legislation to create accessibility to establishments and facilities for individuals with a handicap. Provides aid in locating suitable housing, vocational training, and employment services. Sponsors research, rehabilitation, and educational programs. Founded the Spinal Cord Research Foundation to fund spinal cord research projects and fellowships. Presents awards annually for individual achievement.

**16. Saigon Mission Association (SMA) 6934 Willow Oak Dr. San Antonio, TX 78249-1514 Phone: (210)558-6865**

Publication: *Newsletter*, quarterly.

Founded: 1975. People who were affiliated with or supported the U.S. government during its involvement in Vietnam, including members of the military, state department officials, other U.S. government employees, and Vietnamese refugees. Seeks to: promote friendship and cooperation

among Americans who served in Vietnam, Vietnamese who worked for contractors, members of the Vietnamese armed forces, and their respective families; pool knowledge concerning communications and support for those still in Vietnam; establish a sponsorship program to support Vietnamese families and individuals remaining in Vietnam or living in refugee camps. Provides assistance to Vietnamese people leaving Vietnam.

**17. Vietnam Combat Veterans (VCV) 1267 Alma Ct. San Jose, CA 95112 Phone: (408)288-6305** Founded: 1980. Works to make the public aware of American airmen and soldiers who are POW/MIAs in Southeast Asia; seeks the return of POW/MIAs to the U.S.; sponsors a traveling display of a half-scale model of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. Provides emergency housing assistance to Vietnam veterans and their families. Offers job referrals and crisis counseling services; conducts research into governmental programs that affect veterans; sponsors seminars and public announcements on the POW/MIA issue. Bestows awards; maintains speakers' bureau.

**18. Vietnam Era Veterans in Congress (VVIC) 2335 Rayburn Washington, D.C. 20515 Phone: (202)225-5905**

Founded: 1978. A bipartisan group of U.S. Senators and Representatives who served in the armed forces during the Vietnam era. Seeks to enact legislation which benefits Vietnam veterans in the areas of health care, employment, and psychological readjustment; notes that official statistics show that Vietnam veterans have significantly higher than average rates of divorce, suicide, alcoholism, and emotional problems. Also known as the Vietnam Veterans in Congress Caucus.

**19. Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) 406 W. 34th St. Kansas City, MO 64111 Phone: (816)756-3390** Publications: *Communicator*, monthly; *VFW Magazine*, monthly except July.

Founded: 1899. Veterans with honorable discharge from the U.S. armed forces who have earned an officially recognized overseas campaign medal; veterans from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Somalia, The Persian Gulf War, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, and other small expeditionary campaigns. Organized originally to secure rights and benefits for veterans of the Spanish-American War (1898), the organization seeks to: insure national security through maximum military strength; speed the rehabilitation of America's disabled veterans-in-need; and assist the families of disabled veterans and veterans-in-need. Sponsors charitable programs; maintains a museum.

**20. Veterans of the Vietnam War (VVnW) 760 Jumper Rd. Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702-8033 Phone: (717)825-7215; (800)VIETNAM**

Publication: *The Veteran Leader*, bimonthly newsletter.

Founded: 1980. VVnW was formed by a group of Vietnam veterans to bring the Vietnam veteran into the community of veterans generally, and into American society. To serve veterans of the Vietnam era, all veterans, civilians who served in Vietnam in support of U.S. forces, and concerned citizens in support of all veterans. The VVnW is concerned with: Veterans' Health Initiatives, public awareness of the POW/MIAs, Agent Orange research and health care, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, helping incarcerated veterans with unique problems, and public education on the Vietnam War. VVnW maintains FIND-A-VET, a computerized locator service; creates shelters for homeless veterans and their families through the United Veterans Beacon House Project; and sponsors (800)VIETNAM, a telephone hotline through which a caller can be referred to available services or just talk to a "live" human being when they are experiencing the difficulties of every day living. VVnW bestows Veteran of the Year and Volunteer of the Year awards. Maintains speakers' bureau and a library; compiles statistics.

**21. Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) 7 W. 7th St., Ste. 1990 Cincinnati, OH 45202 Phone: (513)721-VHPA** Publications: *Annual Reunion Photo Book*; *VHPA Membership Directory*, annual.

Founded: 1983. U.S. veterans and others who flew helicopters in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Seeks to perpetuate a spirit of camaraderie among members. Maintains reference library of books, periodicals, business records, and archival materials related to U.S. Army flight school, Vietnam helicopter units, and current flying. Compiles statistics.

**22. Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) P.O. Box 408594 Chicago, IL 60640 Phone: (312)761-8248**

Publication: *The Veteran*, bimonthly newspaper.

Founded: 1967. Works for: improved V.A. conditions and job opportunities; eliminating the possibility of future military conflicts such as Vietnam; testing and treatment for Agent Orange poisoning, and self-help information for those suffering from it; and discharge upgrading for Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. Offers counseling.

**23. Vietnam Veterans Agent Orange Victims (VVAOVI) P.O. Box 2465 Darien, CT 06820-0465 Phone: (203)656-0003; (800)521-0198** Founded: 1977. Vietnam veterans and their families who have suffered from the effects of Agent Orange (Dioxin) poisoning. (Agent Orange is a herbicide that was used in Vietnam from 1962 through 1972; and huge quantities have been sprayed in the U.S.) Provides referral services; offers legal, medical, and V.A. counseling. Monitors local and state herbicide use and alternatives to herbicide brush management; lobbies the government; attempts to alleviate the suffering of those adversely affected by Dioxin. Conducts research; educates the public on herbicides; sponsors seminars in prisons for incarcerated Vietnam veterans; compiles statistics on the effects of Dioxin. Maintains speakers' bureau and a small library of books and over 300 medical surveys and studies.

**24. Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) 1224 "M" St., NW Washington, D.C. 20005-5183 Phone: (202)628-2700**

Publication: *VVA Veteran*, monthly.

Founded: 1978. First congressionally chartered, nationwide veterans service organization formed specifically for Vietnam veterans. Objectives: to work for the employment, educational benefits, improved psychological assistance, and health care of Vietnam veterans. Provides referral services and research and public information programs to help veterans develop positive identification with their Vietnam service and with fellow veterans. Offers annual training for veterans service representatives. Formerly was the Council for Vietnam Veterans.

**25. Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc. (VVMF) 815 15th St., NW, Ste. 600 Washington, D.C. 20005 Phone: (202)393-0090** Founded: 1979. Organized to build a national monument honoring the service people who served in the Vietnam War, the VVMF achieved that goal, and works with the National Park Service to maintain the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The VVMF provides funding for renovations and improvements to the Memorial; addition of names and status changes to the Wall; and catastrophic insurance. It assists the NPS at the Memorial and coordinates and co-sponsors, with the NPS, the annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies at the Wall. The organization also works to educate the public about the importance of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the veterans of the Vietnam War. Programs include educational seminars and the distribution of informational materials.

**26. Vietnam Women's Memorial Project, Inc. (VWMP) 2001 "S" St., NW, Ste. 302 Washington, D.C. 20009 Phone: (202)328-7253**

Founded: 1984. Works to identify and document women who served in Vietnam during the war, and to educate the public regarding the contributions of women during the Vietnam War. Worked for the addition of a monument to women who served in Vietnam to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.; helps maintain the sculpture. Maintains speakers' bureau.

**27. Vietnow National (VN) 1835 Broadway Rockford, IL 61104 Phone: (800)837-8669**

Publications: *Newsletter*, monthly. *VietNow Magazine*, bimonthly.

Founded: 1980. Vietnam era (1957-1975) veterans; interested civilians and other veterans are associate members. Purpose is to provide a forum through which veterans can help one another with problems such as drug abuse, delayed stress syndrome, unemployment, and health problems associated with Agent Orange exposure. Attempts to educate the public about POW/MIAs. Bestows an annual scholarship. Conducts educational and charitable programs; maintains speakers' bureau.





# Chronology

## 1st Century B.C.

Chinese Han dynasty incorporates "Nam Viet" region into [China](#).


## 40 A.D.

Trung sisters lead rebellion against Chinese and declare an independent state.


## 1428

Vietnamese independence recognized by Chinese after revolt by Vietnamese Emperor [Le Loi](#).

## 1858-1884

 [France](#) extends colonial rule throughout Vietnam, [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#), eventually creating the [Indochina](#) Union.

## 1890

 [Ho Chi Minh](#) born in central Vietnam.

## 1919

As part of the post World War I settlements, Ho Chi Minh tries to see President Woodrow Wilson in Paris about the issue of Vietnamese independence. Wilson does not agree to meet.


## 1927

Formation of Vietnam Nationalist Party. Suppressed by French colonial government.

## 1930

 Ho Chi Minh forms Indochinese Communist Party.

## 1945

 [Japan](#), which had occupied Vietnam in 1941, is defeated in World War II and Ho Chi Minh declares independence on September 2.

## 1946

French warships bombard Haiphong, beginning the first Indochina War (1946-1954).

## 5/7/54

 Defeat of French military at [Dien Bien Phu](#).


## 7/7/54

 [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) is appointed prime minister by Vietnamese Emperor [Bao Dai](#).

## 7/21/54

[Geneva Accords](#) signed in Geneva, Switzerland. Vietnam is divided into North and South until planned elections in 1956 to decide the issue of unification. Elections are never held.


## 10/24/54

 President [Eisenhower](#) pledges U.S. support to Ngo Dinh Diem in a non-communist [South Vietnam](#).


## July 1955

Diem rejects Geneva Accords and refuses to participate in nationwide elections over the issue of unification with the North.

## **July 1955**

 Ho Chi Minh accepts Soviet aid.

## **10/23/55**

 Ngo Dinh Diem defeats Bao Dai in rigged election, declares [Republic of Vietnam](#) with himself as president.

## **7/20/56**

Deadline to settle issue of reunification between North and South Vietnam passes.  
January 1957 Soviet Union proposes permanent division of Vietnam.

## **May 1957**

Ngo Dinh Diem arrives for a 10-day visit to U.S. during which [President Eisenhower](#) affirms American Support.

October 1957 Communist insurgency in South Vietnam begins. [Hanoi](#) organizes armed units in the [Mekong Delta](#).

## **1958**

Guerrilla activities spread in South Vietnam.

## **April 1959**

 President Eisenhower links U.S. vital interests to survival of a non-communist South Vietnam.


## **11/11/60**

Unsuccessful army coup against [Ngo Dinh Diem](#).

## **12/20/60**

Hanoi leaders form National Liberation Front (NLF) to operate in South Vietnam. Its Members are referred to as [Viet Cong](#), or VC by non-Communists in the south.

## **December 1961**

 [President Kennedy](#) pledges increased aid to the South Vietnamese government.  
December 1961 U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam reaches 3200.

## **2/8/62**

U.S. sets up [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam](#) (MACV) under General [Paul D. Harkins](#).  
September 1962 Introduction of [strategic hamlet](#) program in an attempt to isolate NLF, or Viet Cong from the general population.


## **12/31/62**

U.S. personnel in South Vietnam reaches 11,300.

## **1/2/63**

NLF forces combat larger and better equipped South Vietnamese units at Ap Dac in the [Mekong Delta](#).


## **6/11/63**

 The [Buddhist](#) monk [Thich Quang Duc](#) immolates himself in a [Saigon](#) street to protest the Diem regime.

## **8/21/63**

[Ngo Dinh Nhu](#), brother of Ngo Dinh Diem, orders attacks on Buddhist temples.

**8/22/63**

 [Henry Cabot Lodge](#) arrives as new ambassador to Saigon.

**11/1/63**

Coup led by generals [Tran Van Don](#) and [Duong Van Minh](#) overthrows Diem regime.

**11/2/63**

[Ngo Dinh Diem](#) and his brother [Ngo Dinh Nhu](#) are assassinated by South Vietnamese military.

**11/22/63**

 President [Kennedy](#) is assassinated; [Lyndon Johnson](#) becomes president.

**December 1963**


American military advisors in South Vietnam reaches 15,000 and the Saigon government receives \$500 million in U.S. aid. 489 Americans are killed or wounded.

**6/2/64**

Honolulu conference results in an agreement to increase aid to South Vietnam. Pentagon prepares plans to bomb [North Vietnam](#).

8/2/64 U.S. charges that [U.S.S. Maddox](#) and [Turner Joy](#) were attacked by North Vietnamese vessels.

**8/7/64**

 [U.S. Congress](#) passes [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) giving [President Johnson](#) wide powers to escalate the war. Vote: Senate 88 - 2; House 416 - 0.

**12/19/64**

First nationwide protest against war in Vietnam.


**12/31/64**

23,000 U.S. military advisors and [Special Forces](#) units are in South Vietnam.

**1/1/65 and 2/7/65**

NLF attacks American and South Vietnamese military installations in Binh Gia and [Pleiku](#).

**2/24/65**

 President Johnson orders bombing of North Vietnam. [Operation Rolling Thunder](#) will continue from March 2, 1965 until October 31, 1968.

**3/8/65**

Two U.S. [Marine](#) battalions arrive by landing craft at [Da Nang](#) --the first American combat units to arrive in Vietnam.


**4/7/65**

President [Johnson](#), in an address at Johns Hopkins University, offers [Ho Chi Minh](#) participation in a Southeast Asian development plan in exchange for peace.

**4/8/65**

North Vietnamese Prime Minister [Pham Van Dong](#) rejects Johnson's proposal on grounds that it leaves out a political settlement.

**June 1965**

 Air Vice Marshal [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) becomes premier with General [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) as head of state.

#### **6/26/65**

American command reports that [Viet Cong](#) have put five South Vietnamese combat regiments and nine battalions out of action in recent months.

#### **7/28/65**

President Johnson approves General [Westmoreland](#)'s request for 44 additional combat battalions.

#### **12/31/65**

U.S. military strength in South Vietnam is at 184,300.

#### **March 1966**

50,000 antiwar demonstrators march in New York City.


#### **December 1966**

 U.S. [troop](#) strength is at almost 400,000.


#### **1966**

During 1966, 5,008 Americans were killed and 30,093 wounded.


#### **4/4/67**

 Reverend [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) delivers his "Beyond Vietnam" speech at Riverside Church, New York.

#### **4/15/67**

 Hundreds of thousands march in New York City and San Francisco in largest peace demonstrations in U. S. history. [Draft](#) cards burned by 17 men.


#### **August 1967**

 Secretary [McNamara](#) testifies before Senate subcommittee that bombing of North Vietnam is ineffective.

#### **10/16 -21/67**

Antidraft demonstrations in U.S.; the largest are at the Army Induction Center in Oakland, California.

#### **10/21-22/67**

 Some hundred thousand war protesters march on the Pentagon.


#### **12/31/67**

 U.S. military strength in Vietnam at 475,000. Cost for the year: \$21 billion.

#### **1/31/68**

 [Tet Offensive](#) by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong begins.


#### **2/68 -3/68**

 General [Westmoreland](#) requests additional 206,000 troops. [Clark Clifford](#), who has succeeded [Robert McNamara](#) as [Secretary of Defense](#), advises President Johnson to deny the request.

#### **3/16/68**

Hundreds of villagers massacred by American troops in the hamlet of [My Lai](#).

**3/31/68**

 President Johnson announces partial bombing halt and offers talks. In speech, says he will not run for re-election.

**May 1968**

North Vietnamese diplomats arrive in Paris to start talks with American delegation, headed by [Averell Harriman](#).

**December 1968**

 U.S. military strength at 540,000.

**1968**

 U.S. spent \$30 billion on the war, 14,314 Americans were killed and 150,000 wounded.


**5/4/69**

 President [Nixon](#) proposes simultaneous [withdrawal](#) of North Vietnamese and American forces. Policy is called "[Vietnamization](#)".


**6/8/69**

 President Nixon announces withdrawal of 25,000 American troops from Vietnam.

**August 1969**

 [National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger](#) begins first of a series of secret meetings with North Vietnamese representatives.

**10/15/69**

 Massive anti-war demonstrations in Washington.

**11/15/69**

More anti-war demonstrations in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco.


**11/16/69**

[My Lai](#) massacre reported.

**12/31/69**

Troop strength down to 479,500, from 540,000 in December 1968.  
4/30/70 American and South Vietnamese forces invade Cambodia to attack Communist [sanctuaries](#).

**5/4/70**

 Demonstrations across the U.S. National Guardsmen kill four students at [Kent State University](#) in Ohio.

**12/31/70**

American troops strength down to 280,000 men, from 479,500 in December 1969.


**6/13/71**

*The New York Times* begins publishing the [Pentagon Papers](#).

**3/30/72**

 North Vietnamese offensive begins in South Vietnam, first major ground offensive since 1968.

**10/8/72**

 Peace talks held in Paris between [Secretary of State Henry Kissinger](#) and Hanoi negotiator [Le Duc Tho](#) produces a tentative agreement; however South Vietnamese President Thieu opposes the terms.

**12/18/72**

President Nixon orders bombing of areas around [Hanoi](#) and Haiphong. Raid continues for eleven days. Communists agree to resume negotiations when bombing stops.

**1/27/73**

 Secretary Kissinger and Le Duc Tho sign a peace agreement.

**2/73 - 3/73**

U.S. draft ended; 590 American [prisoners of war](#) released by Hanoi.

**3/29/73**

U.S. combat troops withdrawn from South Vietnam; some support troops still in place. June 1974 Communist buildup of men and supplies proceeds in South Vietnam.

**1/6/75**

Communists capture Phuoc Long province, north of Saigon.

**3/75 - 4/75**

Saigon government under President Thieu rapidly loses territory, including major cities, to [North Vietnamese army](#).

**4/21/75**

President [Thieu](#) resigns and leaves the country, transfers power to General [Duong Van Minh](#).

**4/29/75**

 Remaining Americans evacuated from Saigon.

**4/30/75**

 Communist forces capture Saigon.

**1/21/77**

One day after his inauguration, President Jimmy Carter pardons most of the 10,000 Vietnam War draft evaders.


**December 1978**

 Thousands of "boat people" begin to flee Vietnam.

**Veterans Day, 1982**

 [Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall](#) dedicated in Washington, D.C.

**Veterans Day, 1984**

 The Three Servicemen Statue addition to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. dedicated.























**Veterans Day, 1986**

 The Vietnam Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C. dedicated.

## Pentagon Documents Selection

1. [Origins of the U.S. Involvement in Vietnam](#)
2. [February 13, 1952 National Security Council Staff Study on United States Objectives in Southeast Asia \\*](#)
3. [25 June 1952 Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on U.S. Objectives in Southeast Asia.\\*](#)
4. [Special Estimate -- Probable Communist Reactions to Certain Possible US Courses of Action in Indochina through 1954.](#)
5. [The Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense on Department of Defense Views Regarding Negotiation at the Geneva Conference](#)
6. [Summary of Geneva Conference Accords](#)
7. [The Secretary of Defense, Washington, 16 March 1964 - Memorandum for the President, Subject: South Vietnam](#)
8. [Second draft of a paper, "Action for South Vietnam", Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton, Nov. 6, 1964](#)
9. [McNaughton -- Action for South Vietnam](#)
10. [Ambassador Taylor's briefing of key governmental officials on Nov. 27, 1964 regarding the current situation in South Vietnam. \(Excerpts\)](#)
11. ["A Policy of Sustained Reprisal," memo to President Lyndon B. Johnson from McGeorge Bundy, Presidential assistant for national security, Feb. 7, 1965](#)
12. [Draft memo for President Lyndon B. Johnson, "Action Recommended for Vietnam from Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Oct. 14, 1966.](#)
13. [Excerpts from Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum, signed by Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman, to Secretary of Defense, Oct. 14, 1966..](#)
14. [Excerpts from a conversation on April 27, 1967 between President Johnson and Generals Wheeler and Westmoreland](#)
15. [Excerpts from draft memo for the President from the office of Secretary of Defense McNamara dated May 19, 1967, and headed "Future Actions in Vietnam."](#)
16. ["Year-End Wrap-Up Cable" from Adm. U. S. Grant Sharp, commander in chief of Pacific forces, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff dated Jan. 1, 1968.](#)
17. ["I SHALL NOT SEEK, AND I WILL NOT ACCEPT . . ." The President's speech to the nation on 31 March \[1968\].](#)



-  Key moments in the Vietnam War.
-  1953- President Dwight [Eisenhower](#), The U.S. must help the French against [Ho Chi Minh](#).
-  1965- Army Captain Ted Danielsen briefing new men in his [company](#), part of the [First Cavalry Division](#), (Airmobile).
-  1965- Helicopter assault in the [Central Highlands](#).
-  1965 - Making contact with the enemy.
-  1965- Memorial service held near [Pleiku](#) for men killed in [First Cavalry Division](#).
-  1967- The American military had its own radio station in Vietnam.
-  1967- Army Captain Hershel Gober was an adviser to Vietnamese troops in the [Mekong Delta](#). His songs about the war became popular with General Westmoreland.
-  1967- What it's like just to the rear of forward troops when they run into a North Vietnamese position in a mountainous area.
-  1967- Commander Robin H. McGlohn describes a bombing mission.
-  1967- Commander McGlohn describes being shot down and rescued inside North Vietnam.
-  1967- [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), speaking against the war at a rally in New York City on April 15.
-  1967- Antiwar activist [David Dellinger](#) at a peace rally on October 21 before marching on the Pentagon.
-  1967- North Vietnamese shell the U.S. [Marine](#) base at [Khe Sanh](#) in the fall.
-  1968-[Viet Cong](#) forces launch [Tet Offensive](#) January 31. One of their targets was the United States Embassy in [Saigon](#). Military police and security guards search for remaining Viet Cong.
-  1968- [President Johnson](#) announces he will not run again for President.
-  1971- Senator [Mike Mansfield](#) speaks against the war in June.
-  1971-Vietnam veterans throw their medals back on the steps of the Capitol, Washington, D.C.
-  1972- American advisers to the South Vietnamese army retreat as North Vietnamese advance across the [Demilitarized Zone](#) between North and South Vietnam in April. Long range [artillery](#) has set their headquarters on fire.
-  1975- Vietnamese and Americans leave for evacuation flights from [Saigon](#) as the North Vietnamese advance on the city in the spring.
-  1975- North Vietnamese troops arrive in Saigon in April. Troops head down the main avenue toward the South Vietnamese Presidential Palace.
-  1976- Vietnamese "boat people" arrive at refugee camp in 1976 on the Gulf of Thailand. Steve Young, there for the International Rescue Committee, translates.

 1982- The [Vietnam Memorial](#) in Washington, D.C.

**Vietnam Documents: American and Vietnamese Views of the War**  
(Selected Documents)

**MILITARY COMMITMENT AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES**

1. [Declaration of Independence of Democratic Republic of Vietnam HO CHI MINH \(September 2, 1945\).](#)
2. [Report of U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Covert Operations Team in Vietnam, 1953.](#)
3. [President Eisenhower Explains the Domino Theory, April 1954.](#)
4. [Manifesto of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation.](#)
5. [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, U.S. CONGRESS \(August 7, 1964\).](#)
6. [Hanoi Statement on the Tonkin Gulf Incident, September 1964.](#)
7. [Aggression from the North U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE WHITE PAPER \(February 1965\)](#)
8. [Johns Hopkins Speech, LYNDON B. JOHNSON \(April 7, 1965\)](#)
9. [On the U.S. Escalation of the War NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT OF SOUTH VIETNAM \(1968\).](#)
10. [American Foreign Policy and International Law DEAN RUSK \(1965\)](#)
11. [Message to the American People, HO CHI MINH \(December 23, 1966\)](#)
12. [Robert F. Kennedy Calls Vietnam an Unwinnable War \(February 8, 1968\)](#)
13. [North Vietnams Analysis of Tet \(March 1968\)](#)
14. [Message from General Wheeler to All Pacific Commanders \(March 30, 1968\)](#)

**ANTIWAR MOVEMENT**

15. [Leaflet, March on Washington STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY \(April 17, 1965\)](#)
16. [Bring the War Home! STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY \(1969\)](#)
17. [History of the Organization VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR](#)
18. [Peoples Peace Treaty](#)

**CONTINUING INVOLVEMENT**

19. [Vietnamization Will Shorten the War RICHARD M. NIXON \(1969\)](#)
20. [Vietnamization Will Extend the War GEORGE MCGOVERN \(1970\)](#)
21. [Address on Cambodia RICHARD M. NIXON \(April 30, 1970\)](#)
22. [To Mobilize and Unite All Anti-U.S. Forces in the Country and the World TRUONG CHINH \(1972\)](#)
23. [Appeal to Congress for Emergency Aid HENRY KISSINGER \(April 15, 1975\)](#)

**OLIVE BRANCHES**

24. [Address to the Nation LYNDON B. JOHNSON \(March 31, 1968\)](#)

25. [The Provisional Revolutionary Government Seven-Point Peace Plan \(July 1, 1971\)](#)
26. [U.S. Peace Proposal \(October 11, 1971\)](#)
27. [Paris Peace Treaty](#)
28. [Letter from President Nixon to Premier Pham Van Dong \(February 1, 1973\)](#)

