Part 8: Introduction to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Background. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is one of the most emotional sites administered by the National Park Service. It is a place of great reverence, not unlike a cemetery, where friends, loved ones, and veterans come to grieve, remember, and reconcile.

This unique memorial has deeply influenced visitors since its dedication in 1982, but the character of the memorial is changing. It seems a victim of its own popularity, as today we host more tourists than veterans and family members. As a result, we encounter insensitive and unknowing visitors more frequently now than in the 1980s.

Fewer visitors seem to understand the somber nature of the place. You will wonder if the memorial's profound message is as clear as it used to be. Do those who jog, skate, or enjoy their ice cream treats in the memorial come to pay their respects or is this just another tourist destination to them? You will meet some of the thousands of visitors who pause only long enough to ask for their personal souvenir name rubbings to remind them of their five-minute visit to "The Wall." Sadly, not all of them will truly honor the people whose names they take away. Their indifference may be the result of a national healing process as we move beyond the horrors of Vietnam. If visitors bring no meaning of their own to the memorial, we must provide meaning.

Experiencing an ever-increasing number of dispassionate visitors today, it is difficult to believe how moving, emotional, therapeutic, and important this memorial can be to others, especially veterans, friends, and family members of the deceased. Moreover, the memorial will always be home to a certain melancholy on holidays like Veterans Day and Memorial Day. On these national days of remembrance, you will commonly assist veterans and family members as they come to reconcile their losses and pay their respects.

We expect you to maintain a proper balance within the memorial: preserve the dignity of this place and still meet the needs of casual visitors. One minute you may dissuade a group of noisy 1st graders from chasing each other through the memorial and the next you may find yourself helping a group of survivors lay a wreath to remember their fallen comrades.

Prepare to have your interpretive skills challenged at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Although the memorial does not commemorate war, it is impossible to completely separate this place from the turbulent events that caused it to be. Your challenge here is to inspire those who don't

know about the sacrifices and contributions of the warriors and those who supported them. Remember that you are here to interpret and explain the history, symbolism, and organization of the memorial, not argue the history, correctness, or folly of the war.

Daily and Standing Operating Procedures for Duty at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. At the beginning of your shift, you will report to the Information Kiosk at the west end of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Beginning-of-shift procedures. As with our other sites, you will:

- Open the kiosk
- Disarm any alarms
- Make beginning entries in the site logbook
- Execute a checklist to assess the condition of the cultural resource

Pay special interest to the condition of the "Directories of Names" and any artifacts placed along "the wall" or at the statues that may be subject to theft by the callous visitor. Spot clean the wall if you find any unsightly bird droppings or large, dirty areas. Position the "No Food/ No Drink/ No Smoking" signs at appropriate positions to discourage visitors from taking these items into the restricted area of the memorial.

End-of-shift procedures. Return all equipment to the kiosk that was removed during the morning such as ladders, brochure box, signs, etc. Turn off all computer equipment and lights. Arm the motion sensing alarm and secure the building.

Special Instructions. It is imperative that you safeguard and catalogue any artifacts that people leave in the memorial. This is especially true during inclement weather or if the item appears to have significant value or appears highly pilferable. Follow the procedures listed in SOP # 2-VVM. Artifact Collection, available in the SOP annex, Annex D of this guide.

Special Equipment. This site has the following special items which require attention:

Video Display/ Computer Equipment. A desktop computer runs a software program that contains the directory of names found on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall. This CPU and appropriate power connections are located under the shelf in the kiosk, inside the sliding-door cabinet. A small, rolled-paper printer is connected to the CPU. Replace the ribbon and paper roll as required, noting the position of the old ones before removing them. Simply install them in reverse order of the way you remove them. If there are no replacement paper rolls or ribbons, contact a Supervisory Park Ranger at Survey Lodge.

Alarms. See your Lead Ranger for alarm codes and procedures. Before you open the booth, view the Alarm Activation LED to see if is lit.

Ladders. If you remove a ladder from the kiosk and position it near the VVM wall, it is your responsibility to ensure that visitors do not injure themselves on it or damage the memorial with it. If you have to leave the area of the wall of names, move the ladder away from the wall so visitors will not use it in your absence.

Twenty Most Frequently Asked Questions.

1) **How many names are on the Memorial?** At the dedication in 1982, there were 57,939 names inscribed on the Memorial. 287 names have been added since then, and as of Memorial Day, 2001, the memorial wall contained 58,226 names. Many names have been added pursuant to a correction or clarification of military records. Other additions recognize those military personnel who were wounded during the Vietnam War but died of their wounds after the memorial was dedicated.

2) **How can I find a name on the memorial wall?** Use one of the Directories of Names located on the tables at the east and west walkways. The books list casualty names in alphabetical order. The recorded panel and line numbers will reveal a name's location on the wall. Visitors can purchase their own Directory of Names by calling 202-347-2054.

3) **How are the names arranged?** The names are in chronological order, according to the date of casualty (which is not necessarily the date of death). The chronological listing begins below the inscription of the year ***1959***, carved at the top of Panel 1 East (1E), just to the right of the intersection of the two walls. The list continues down each panel, like you would read a book, then to the right, to the end of the East Wall. It resumes at the end of the West Wall at Panel 70 W (70W) and continues to the right to Panel 1 West (1W), with the last of our losses annotated just above the date ***1975***, inscribed at the very bottom of the granite panel.

4) **Where are the bathrooms?** The nearest bathrooms are in the lower lobby of the Lincoln Memorial. There are also bathrooms just past the Vietnam Women's Memorial statue, near Constitution Gardens lake.

5) **What are the numbers at the bottom of the panels?** These are sequential panel numbers that allow us to find specific names listed in the alphabetical directories. The wall reaching to the right as you look at the memorial's names is the East Wall, numbered 1E-70E; the wall to the left is the West Wall, numbered 70W-1W.

6) **What do the symbols in front of the names mean?** Each name is preceded (on the West Wall) or followed (on the East Wall) by a symbol designating that person's status. The diamond symbol denotes that the service member's death was confirmed; the plus sign (or cross) denotes the person was missing at the end of the war and remains missing and unaccounted for. The diamond symbol is superimposed over the plus sign when a formerly missing service member's remains are returned or otherwise accounted for; and a circle will be inscribed around the plus sign should a missing serviceman ever return alive.

7) **Are there names of people on the Memorial who are still alive?** Yes. As many as 38 living people have their names on the wall. The list of fatalities provided by the Department of Defense had clerical errors that indicated these people had been killed. These names have been removed from the "Directory of Names," however there is no current plan to remove these names from the wall. This may explain why you can find a name on the wall which does not appear in the Directory.

8) **Where is the nearest pay phone?** There are several public phones just to the west of the Korean War Veterans Memorial entrance, along French Drive, by the refreshment trailer. There is a pay phone near the restrooms and refreshment kiosk at Constitution Gardens, just a 3-5 minute walk east of the VVM wall.

9) **Where can I get a taxi?** There is a taxi stand along French Drive by the refreshment trailer and the Korean War Veterans Memorial. Also, taxis frequently stop along Constitution Avenue, near 21st Street and the north side of the memorial.

10) **Where can I get food/ drinks?** There is a refreshment trailer along French Drive. The closest restaurants would be up 23rd Street, in a little shopping center just past Virginia Avenue, or at 21st Street and I Street to the north.

    There are several water fountains in the area: one between the Vietnam Veterans Information/ Ranger kiosk and the Reflecting Pool, one just east of the Vietnam Women's Memorial (nurses) statue, and one in the Lincoln Memorial.

11) **Do they add names to the memorial wall?** Yes. There are numerous events that will cause the VVMF to add names. For example, if the Department of Defense determines that someone has recently died due to the effects of a wound they received during the war, their name is added. Or if new information comes to light revealing one's death during the war years, those veterans' names are added as well.

12) **Where is the Korean War Veterans Memorial?** Go south about five minutes, just around to the other side of the Reflecting Pool.

13) **Where is the nearest Metro?** Foggy Bottom station is the closest underground, 8 blocks (.6 miles) to the north at 23rd Street and I Street. Arlington Cemetery station is about 3/4 mile and the Smithsonian station is almost 1 1/4 mile.

14) **When was this built?** The memorial wall was dedicated on November 13th, 1982. The other elements came later, in 1984 and 1993.

15) **What do the years 1959 and 1975 mean**? These are the years of the first and last official losses in the designated combat zone. Since the wall was dedicated, the Department of Defense has approved the addition of names of individuals killed in 1956, 1957, and 1958.

16) **Can I get a rubbing of someone's name?** We can usually provide you a slip of paper and loan you a pencil so you can do your own name rubbing. Rangers or NPS Volunteers will assist you if the names are too high for you to reach. We ask that you actually know the person whose name you are etching. These are not supposed to be simple souvenirs—we hope you have a personal connection to the individual on the wall so as not to trivialize their sacrifice.

17) **Are the Three Servicemen statues based on real Vietnam War veterans?** No. Artist Frederick Hart wanted to convey an honest and accurate image of Vietnam-era soldiers. He conducted exhaustive research into how servicemen dressed and what equipment they carried, but he did not model the figures after specific combat veterans. He

reportedly did use a young, non-Vietnam era Marine as a model for one statue and several other non-veteran models to help create composites for the remaining two statues.

18) **Who designed the memorial?** 21-yeral old Maya Lin, a Yale architectural student, won the competition, over 1,420 other entries.

19) **Who did the statues?** The late Frederick Hart sculpted The Three Servicemen. Glenna Goodacre designed the Vietnam Women's Memorial statue.

20) **What do you do with all of the items that people leave at the wall?** We collect these items daily, after identifying when and where they were found along the wall. Our employees then transfer the items to a museum curator with the Museum and Archaeological Regional Storage Facility (MARS), Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection.

Description of the Cultural Resource.

Origins of the Memorial. The memorial was established by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc. (VVMF), a nonprofit, charitable organization incorporated on April 27, 1979.

The VVMF, led by Jan Scruggs, a wounded Vietnam veteran from Colombia, Maryland, wanted Vietnam veterans to have a tangible object that captured the empathy of the American people for these maligned warriors who selflessly did what their government asked them to do. VVMF officials hoped to begin a process of national reconciliation by commemorating the service and sacrifices of these veterans while avoiding the controversial and divisive issue of U.S. policy in Vietnam.

Congressional Resolutions. Significant initial support came from U.S. Senators Charles McC. Mathias, Jr., of Maryland and John W. Warner of Virginia. On November 8, 1979, Senator Mathias introduced legislation to authorize a site of national park land for the memorial.

One of the most important goals stated by the sponsors was to have the memorial constructed upon a prominent site. They also envisioned that it would be part of a large, park-like space. They therefore requested the western end of Constitution Gardens. On July 1, 1980, Congress passed Public Law 96-297 which authorized construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on a two-acre section of the northwest quadrant of Constitution Gardens. This law would place the memorial near the Lincoln Memorial.

Funding. Senator Warner of Virginia helped raise the first significant financial contributions and launch the national fund-raising campaign. The VVMF was able to raise more than $8,000,000 from private sources. Corporations, foundations, unions, veterans groups, and civic organizations all contributed, but most importantly, more than 275,000 individual Americans donated the bulk of the money needed to build the Memorial. No federal money was used in the project.

Design Competition. In October, 1980, VVMF officials announced a national design competition open to any U.S. citizen over 18 years of age. The members of VVMF set these four major criteria for design submissions:

(1) be reflective and contemplative in

character

(2) harmonize with its surroundings, especially the neighboring national memorials

(3) contain the names of all who died or remain missing

(4) make no political statement about the war

By December 29, 1981, there were 2,573 registrants, and the competition became the largest of its kind ever held in the United States. By March 31, 1981 the deadline for submissions, 1,421 design entries had been submitted. All entries were judged anonymously by a jury of eight internationally recognized artists and designers, who had been selected by VVMF. On May 1, 1981, the jury presented its unanimous selection for first prize, which was accepted and adopted enthusiastically by VVMF.

The Winning Design and Designer. The winning design was authored by Maya Ying Lin of Athens, Ohio, who at the time was a 21 year old Yale University senior and architectural student. She is the daughter of two creative spirits: her father is a ceramicist and her mother is a poet. In August of 1981, the VVMF selected a building company and architectural firm that would convert Ms. Lin's design into formal plans and turn her vision into a physical structure. Ms. Lin became a design consultant to that architect of record, Cooper-Lecky.

Architect's Ideas, Intent, and Theme. In a fall 1982 essay, May Lin explained how she came to design this memorial. She formulated her design to meet the final design project for a funereal architecture class. Her essay included the following revelations:

In researching earlier monuments and memorials, I realized most carried larger, more general messages about a leader's victory or accomplishments rather than the lives lost. In fact, at the national level, individual lives were seldom dealt with, until you arrived at the memorials for World War I.

…The images of these monuments were extremely moving. They captured emotionally what I felt memorials should be: honest about the reality of war, and about the loss of life in war…

One particular memorial I came across made a strong impression on me. It was a monument to the missing soldiers of the World War I battle of the Somme, by Sir Edwin Lutyens in Thiepval, France. The monument includes more than 70,000 names of people who were listed as missing. To walk past those names and realize those lost lives--that is the strength of the design.

Maya Lin and her classmates began their projects without knowing the exact details of the memorial competition. When she learned that the design must be apolitical, it did not greatly change her vision. She admits she consciously decided not to research the war or the politics that revolved around it.

She described her rationale:

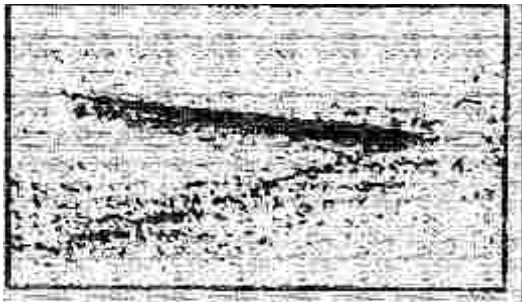
> *I felt the politics had eclipsed the veterans, their service and their lives.*
>
> *I wanted to create a memorial that everyone would be able to respond to, regardless of whether one thought our country should or should not have participated in the war.*

Armed with those ideas and beliefs, she visited the memorial site. She stepped into the grassy park at Constitution Gardens and says she:

> *had a simple impulse to cut into the earth. I imagined taking a knife and cutting the earth, opening it up, an initial violence and pain that in time would heal. The grass would grow back, but the initial cut would remain a pure flat surface in the earth with a polished, mirrored surface. The need for the names to be on the memorial would become the memorial; there was no need to embellish the design further. The people and their names would allow everyone to respond and remember.*

After her visit to the site, Maya Ying Lin sketched her idea. She used a series of simple, non-architectural drawings to convey her ideas.

Her drawings were so simple and "painterly" that one juror called them "naïve." The adjacent drawing is adapted from one of her drawings, illustrating how simplistic and pure her design was.



Ms. Lin believed it was her text that won the design competition for her. She submitted the following statement with her March, 1981 design submission:

> *Walking through this park-like area, the memorial appears as (a) rift in the earth, a long, polished, black stone wall, emerging from and receding into the earth. Approaching the memorial, the ground slopes gently downward and the low walls emerging on either side, growing out of the earth, extend and converge at a point below and ahead.*
>
> *Walking into this grassy site contained by the walls of the memorial we can barely make out the carved names upon the memorial's walls. These names, seemingly infinite in number, convey the sense of overwhelming numbers, while unifying these individuals into a whole.*
>
> *The memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition to be understood as we move into and out of it. The passage itself is gradual; the descent to the origin slow, but it is at the origin that the memorial is to be fully understood.*
>
> *At the intersection of these walls, on the right side, is carved the date of the first*

death. It is followed by the names of those who died in the war, in chronological order. These names continue on this wall appearing to recede into the earth at the wall's end. The names resume on the left wall as the wall emerges from the earth, continuing back to the origin where the date of the last death is carved at the bottom of this wall.

Thus the war's beginning and end meet; the war is 'complete,' coming full-circle, yet broken by the earth that bounds the angle's open side, and continued within the earth itself.

As we turn to leave, we see these walls stretching into the distance, directing us to the Washington Monument, to the left, and the Lincoln Memorial, to the right, thus bringing the Vietnam Memorial into an historical context.

We the living are brought to a concrete realization of these deaths.
Brought to a sharp awareness of such a loss, it is up to each individual to resolve or come to terms with this loss. For death, is in the end a personal and private matter, and the area contained with this memorial is a quiet place, meant for personal reflection and private reckoning.

The black granite walls, each two hundred feet long, and ten feet below ground at their lowest point (gradually ascending toward ground level) effectively act as a sound barrier, yet are of such a height and length so as not to appear threatening or enclosing.

The actual area is wide and shallow, allowing for a sense of privacy, and the sunlight from the memorial's southern exposure along with the grassy park surrounding and within its walls, contribute to the serenity of the area. Thus this memorial is for those who have died, and for us to remember them.

The memorial's origin is located approximately at the center of the site; its legs each extending two hundred feet towards the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. The walls, contained on one side by the earth, are ten feet below ground at their point of origin, gradually lessening in height, until they finally recede totally into the earth, at their ends. The walls are to be made of a hard, polished black granite, with the names to be carved in a simple Trojan letter. The memorial's construction involves recontouring the area within the wall's boundaries, so as to provide for an easily accessible descent, but as much of the site as possible should be left untouched. The area should remain as a park, for all to enjoy.

Chronology of the Memorial.

April 27, 1979: VVMF was incorporated.

July 1, 1980: Public Law 96-297 authorized construction of VVM on quadrant of Constitution Gardens land.

October, 1980: VVMF announced design competition.

May 8, 1981: VVMF design jury selected winning design by Maya Lin.

January 1982: VVMF officials agreed to add a flag staff and sculpture to the memorial site.

March 11, 1982: Federal authorities granted final approval to design and plans.

March 16, 1982: Work began at the site

March 26, 1982: Organizers held formal groundbreaking ceremony.

July 1982: VVMF selected Washington sculptor Frederick Hart to design the mandated, traditional sculpture of servicemen to be placed at the site.

October 13, 1982: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts unanimously accepted the proposed sculpture and flag staff.

Late October 1982: Workers completed construction at the site.

November 13, 1982: The Memorial was dedicated during Veterans Day tribute.

Veterans Day, 1984: Dedication of Frederick Hart's Three Servicemen.

Veterans Day, 1993: Dedication of Glenna Goodacre's Vietnam Women's Memorial.

Memorial Statistics:

Material for statues: Bronze

Cost: $ 12.4 million (total raised for all elements)

The wall of names**:**

Length of each half of the wall: 246’ 8"

Angle of intersection of the two halves of the wall: 125.12 degrees

Number of concrete pilings that support wall: 140

Depth of pilings: driven approximately 35 feet to bedrock

Height of wall at the vertex: 10.15 feet

Stone for the walls, safety curbs and walkways: black granite

Source of stone: quarried near Bangalore, India.

Location where stone cutting and fabrication was done: Barre, Vermont.

Number of inscribed panels in each half of the wall: 70

Most lines per panel: 137

Fewest lines per panel: 1

Average number of names per line: 5

Height of each name: approximately .53 inches

Depth of each name: .015 inches

Typeset used for names: Optima.

Inscriptions and the Names. There are two inscriptions on the wall that help convey the purpose and organization of the wall of names:

To the right of the vertex where the two walls meet is the inscription:

1959
IN HONOR OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES WHO SERVED IN THE VIETNAM WAR. THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES AND OF THOSE WHO REMAIN MISSING ARE INSCRIBED IN THE ORDER THEY WERE TAKEN FROM US.

At the end of the cascade of names, to the left of the vertex, is the inscription:

1975
OUR NATION HONORS THE COURAGE, SACRIFICE AND DEVOTION TO DUTY AND COUNTRY OF ITS VIETNAM VETERANS. THIS MEMORIAL WAS BUILT WITH PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. NOVEMBER 11, 1982

The Names. Designer Lin intentionally arranged the names in an almost circular manner. The seemingly endless stream of names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall are derived from the Department of Defense (DoD) compilation of combat zone casualties according to Presidential Executive Order #11216, handed down by President Lyndon B. Johnson on April 24, 1965.

The Executive Order specified Vietnam and adjacent coastal waters as a combat zone. This zone was expanded to include Laos, Cambodia, and areas in Thailand that contained air force bases. DoD Instruction 7730.22, "Reports of U.S. Casualties In Combat Areas," January 20, 1967, and March 20, 1973, provided that the casualties to be reported were all those occurring within the designated combat areas and those deaths occurring anywhere as the result or aftermath of an initial casualty occurring in a combat area.

In February 1981, DoD supplied the VVMF with a computer database representing the casualty list which included those known dead or missing in action. The list included casualties from battle or hostile causes and those from accidental causes. After a lengthy process of cross checking the lists and working with each branch of the military, the VVMF used its discretion in adding some names that had been overlooked, but which still met the criteria.

The VVMF recognized that names might be added to the memorial after it was constructed and was gratified that DoD set up a mechanism to review individual cases of deaths some months or years after being wounded in Vietnam. Names are still added if DoD determines that a service member has died pursuant to his combat-related wounds.

There are those who argue that the memorial wall does not include every name that it should. The wall does not contain the names of those veterans who died of cancer related to Agent Orange poisoning. Nor does it list names of those who committed suicide because of unbearable effects of post traumatic stress disorder. These veterans will be recognized when a new plaque is added to the memorial, most likely in 2001. Some have calculated that it would take another two or more entire walls to include inscriptions of the names in those two categories alone.

The names appear in order, by date of casualty, beginning at Panel 1E and running to 70E, then 70W to 1W. If more than one person was lost on any given day, then the names are alphabetized within that group.

Names that have been added since the wall's dedication are inscribed as close as possible to the victim's date of casualty, but because they are subject to spatial limitations, they may not appear in strict chronological order.

Personnel Status Symbology. Each name is preceded (on the west wall) or followed (on the east wall) by a symbol designating that person's status:

υ The diamond symbol denotes that the serviceman's or servicewomen's death was confirmed.

: The plus sign (some prefer "cross") denotes the nearly 2,000 men whom DoD classifies as missing.

Φ The diamond symbol, superimposed over the plus sign or "cross" denotes that a formerly missing person's remains have been returned or their death has otherwise been positively determined.

⊙ A circle, almost as a symbol of life, will be inscribed around the plus sign or "cross" if a missing man returns alive. Sadly, this has not happened in the history of the memorial.

The names (except for those that have been inscribed since the dedication) and inscriptions were gritblasted in Memphis, Tennessee, using stencils produced through a photographic process. The names were typeset in Atlanta, Georgia from a computer tape of the official Vietnam casualty list.

A Statistical Sampling of the Names. One of our Volunteers in Parks (himself a Vietnam War veteran) authored a book that contains a wealth of statistics about the names. The following is a portion of what he tallied for posterity:

Women's Names: There are eight (8) names of women, all nurses, 7 from the Army and 1 from the Air Force.

Medal of Honor recipient's names: 151 Medal of Honor recipients' names are on the Wall.

Chaplain's Names on the Wall: 16 total: 7 Catholic, 7 Protestant, and 2 Jewish clergy are listed on the Wall.

Persons with homes of record outside the United States: More than 100 of those listed on the VVM wall claimed other places as their home of record (this is not necessarily their place of birth or actual residence). Keep in mind that these people were members of the United States Armed Forces at the time of their sacrifice--they were not serving as members of a foreign military organization! These include:

Australia	1	Italy	1
Bahama Islands	1	Jamaica	2
Bolivia	1	Japan	2
Brazil	1	Mexico	5
Canada	56	New Zealand	2
Columbia	1	Pacific	1
Costa Rica	1	Panama	2
England	3	Peru	1
France	2	Philippines	27
Germany	7	Puerto Rico	12
Ireland	1	Switzerland	1

Adding names to the VVM wall. The Department of Defense (DoD) is the proponent for any additions or corrections to the official list of war casualties, and thus, any changes to the names on the wall. DoD must make an official determination in those cases involving people who died of combat injuries suffered in the designated theater of

operations for Vietnam before their names can be added to the Memorial.

The VVMF coordinates for these servicemembers' names to be gritblasted into the wall and also arranges for status symbol changes on the wall when remains of missing-in-action (MIA) servicemen are identified by the active DoD task force. The VVMF bears the cost of additional inscriptions.

If individuals want to have someone's name added to the VVM wall, they must contact the relevant service branch, listed below:

Army :
Commander, TAPC-PED-A, U.S. Total Army Personnel Command, Alexandria, VA 22331-0482. Tom Ellis, 703-325-5304; 703-325-7960; fax 703-325-5315.

Air Force :
Executive Office for Inquiries, Headquarters Air Force Manpower and Personnel Center, Randolph Air Force Base, TX 71850. 1-800-531-5501; fax 512-652-3805.

Marine Corps:
Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, Casualty Section, MHP-10, 2 Navy Annex, Washington, DC 20380-1775. 703-696-1177; fax 703-696-2072.

Navy :
Bureau of Naval Personnel (PERS-663), Navy Department, Washington, DC 20370-5663. 703-687-3979; fax 703-614-3345.

Alterations and Additions to the Original Design. There was a storm of controversy in early 1982 over Maya Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Some citizens, veterans, and political supporters felt that the memorial wall was "a black gash of shame" or a "giant tombstone." These opponents felt her design was too unconventional, non-traditional, or even dishonorable. It was too abstract for those who wanted American military forces to be portrayed in a patriotic, heroic, and life-like way.

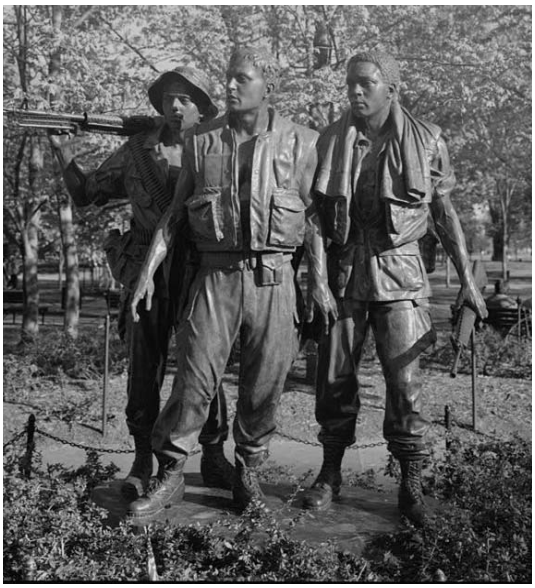
The controversy over the already approved Lin design escalated. Secretary of the Interior James Watt held up construction of the memorial on National Park land until the opponents' concerns had been properly addressed.

In order to appease critics and obtain the construction permit, members of the VVMF agreed to add more traditional elements to the site: a sculpture and a flag staff, prominently located at the entry to the memorial. They hoped these would augment Lin's abstract design: the statue would provide a realistic depiction of Vietnam servicemen and the U.S. flag would symbolize the veterans' courage and devotion to country.

The flag. The American flag flies around the clock from a 50-foot, lighted bronze staff. The cast bronze base contains the emblems of the five services and the following inscription:

> **"This flag represents the service rendered to our country by the veterans of the Vietnam War. The flag affirms the principles of freedom for which they fought and their pride in having served under difficult circumstances."**

The Statues.



The Three Servicemen. This sculpture of three warriors was dedicated on Veterans Day, 1984. It was designed and sculpted by the late Frederick Hart. Hart, who had won third place in the original memorial design competition, was awarded the commission to create a suitable work of representational sculpture that would hopefully quiet all opposition to Lin's avant-garde memorial design.

Hart failed to name his piece, but it has come to be called both The Three Fighting Men and The Three Servicemen. Interpretations of the work vary widely. Some say the troops have the "thousand yard stare" of combat soldiers. Others say the troops are on patrol and begin looking for their own names as they come upon the Memorial. Many local tour guides like to amaze their followers with mundane, useless information such as the variations in the wear and placement of dog tags on each soldier. Thank goodness the sculptor had a greater vision in mind!

Mr. Hart's goal was to create a moving sculpture which would evoke the experience and service of the Vietnam veteran. Opposed to Maya Lin's abstract ocean of names, he hoped to put a human face on the suffering and sacrifice. He consulted numerous veterans and conducted extensive research into their uniforms and equipment. He described his work as follows:

> *The portrayal of the figures is consistent with history. They wear the uniform and carry the equipment of war; they are young. The contrast between the innocence of their youth and the weapons of war underscores the poignancy of their sacrifice. There is about them the physical contact and sense of unity that bespeaks the bonds of love and sacrifice that is the nature of men at war. And yet they are each alone. Their strength and their vulnerability are both evident. Their true heroism lies in these bonds of loyalty in the face of their aloneness and their vulnerability.*

The VVMF website indicates that Hart used people as models, but makes no mention of them being actual Vietnam War veterans. The lead soldier was reportedly modeled after a 21 year old Marine who was stationed in the Washington, D.C. area in 1983. The soldier carrying the machine gun on his shoulder was supposedly modeled after a Cuban-American, and the African-American is a composite of several young men whom the sculptor used as models.

Occasionally, visitors and guides want to know why "dog tags" are depicted where they are on these statues or why the bullets point the way they do in the bandoliers. Hart wrote the Regional Director of the National Capital Region:

> *Because of the small, isolated nature of the actual combat unit within Vietnam, much diversity and individuality*

developed in the use of different equipment and clothing in the field. One unit, at a given time in history would do things, wear things, or use things in a totally different way from another unit in a different place and a different time.

Hart explained his use of what he called his "artistic judgement":

The wearing of the bandolier criss-crossed "poncho-villa" style was not particularly desirable or practical. When it was done, it was done more for looks than use.

It was this "picturesque" use, the sense of bravura, that I wanted to use in illuminating the spirit of the Vietnam infantryman. While I did my utmost to remain faithful to realistic details, my ultimate goal was to capture the spirit of the Vietnam experience.

Mr. Hart's use of the word "bravura" is interesting. Webster's New World Dictionary defines **bravura** as a bold display of daring, while defining **bravado** as pretended courage or defiant confidence.

Mr. Hart summed up his representational sculpture:

Given the great diversity of experiences of the many who served in Vietnam, I am sure that I cannot satisfy everyone's view as to the fidelity of detail. I hope, however, that the overall authenticity of spirit, the expression of the figures both facially and in their relationship to each other, and the portrayal of the youth of the participants will carry forward into future generations the larger truths of the Vietnam veteran's experience.

Vietnam Women's Memorial Statue.

The Vietnam Women's Memorial was the third addition to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It stands just 200 yards due south of the apex of the memorial wall.

Although the names of the eight military women who died in Vietnam are inscribed on the wall, Vietnam veteran and nurse Diane Carlsom Evans did not believe the statue of the Three Servicemen adequately honored women who served. Driven by her own nagging memories of the war and her respect for other women who served, she founded the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project in 1984.

Many of the 250,000 women veterans worked in concert with her and others to place the Vietnam Women's Memorial near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. As a result of their combined actions, Congress authorized the Vietnam Women's Memorial in 1988 to:

honor the women of the armed forces of the United States who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam era

Sculptor Glenna Goodacre of Santa Fe, New Mexico was selected to design the bronze statue that depicts three women, one of

whom is tending to a wounded soldier. The statue is six feet, eight inches tall and weighs one ton. Planted around the statue's plaza are eight yellowwood trees, one to commemorate each of the women who died in Vietnam.

The Vietnam Women's Memorial was dedicated Veterans Day, 1993. It remains an integral part of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, paying eternal tribute to servicewomen and civilian women who untiringly gave of themselves to support our national interests and to help others, both Americans and Vietnamese.

For more information about this statue or its creation, contact:

The Vietnam Women's Memorial Project (VWMP)
2001 S Street, NW, Suite 302
Washington, DC 20009
Phone 202-328-7253

Latest addition to the Memorial: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Plaque. On June 15, 2000, President Clinton signed Public Law 106-214, authorizing the American Battle Monuments Commission to solicit and accept private donations for the design, procurement and installation of a commemorative plaque to be added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The plaque will honor those veterans who died after their service during the Vietnam War as a result of that service and whose names are not otherwise eligible for placement on the Memorial wall. This is the latest design alteration and another attempt to complete the circle of healing at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The plaque will be placed within the existing 13 acre site of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Although its location, design and inscription have not been determined, the public law specifies that it shall be at least 6 square feet and not exceed 18 square feet. The legislation specifies that the plaque will be funded by private donations.

The Legacy: Relevant Ceremonies or Gatherings at the Site. Hardly a week goes by without some veterans' group, military organization, or school group sponsoring a ceremony at this memorial. Each Memorial and Veterans Day, large crowds gather to speak and reminisce about the war, its cost and the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of that generation. Likewise, many relatives and friends will return to the memorial on holidays like Christmas and Father's Day, or on the birthday or date of death of someone they lost.

Particularly in the spring season, it is extremely common for visiting school groups to place ceremonial wreaths during their visits. Other classes will leave poems, letters, or carnations.

Although many veterans and loved ones have already made the pilgrimage to see the names, you will still see those who are making the trip for the first time. These will be the most touching ceremonies-- the ones without the hype, fanfare, and media.

Possible Themes and Universal Concepts for Rangers at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The variety of your audience members' experiences will complicate your ability to deliver effective interpretive programs at this site. Imagine talking to a single group composed of people with viewpoints as diverse as a veteran, a family member, a war protester, a politician, etc.

It is hard to find a single universal concept that speaks to these people without insulting at least one of them. Moreover, many Rangers may not be old enough to have a true emotional connection with the memorial or the time in our history, but many of the visitors will have lived through it.

The following anonymous description presents some of the issues that will challenge the interpreter*:*

> *"People make the Vietnam Veterans Memorial a living memorial. Each of the names on the wall is not only a causality but also a relative, friend, or a comrade. Survivors come to the wall to reminisce and to heal painful memories. Families come to grieve and to remember. Many leave tokens of themselves at the base of the wall.*
>
> *The power of the memorial stems from the way in which these people interact with it. The relatives, friends and buddies, and veterans, volunteers and visitors become a part of what they see and so become more aware of the meaning of the memorial--the veterans' sacrifice. They develop a deeper appreciation and understanding for this troubled period of our nation's history."*
>
> --Unknown Author

Universal concepts could include:

- Reconciliation: Describe how this memorial has helped our nation and its citizens come to terms with loss of lives, innocence, trust, etc. Use examples of visitors you have met, their compelling stories, their sense of guilt/ burden, and perhaps their way of paying tribute. Be careful not to trivialize or "commercialize" their story or loss.

If you use the name of any deceased individuals, think about attempting to contact the family for permission. Or consult the many books that describe such visits or memorabilia left behind. Use a seemingly common object such as a medal, a coin, etc. to inspire discussion from audience members that will allow you to lead into a discussion of a visit, an artifact, a veteran's story.
For example, ask your audience if anyone has a picture of their family or children in their purse or wallet. Mention how soldiers liked to carry photos of their family, too. One such Vietnamese officer carried a photo of himself and his daughter the day he was killed by an American soldier. And the American soldier, who now has two daughters of his own, carries a terrible burden to this very day. He left a message at the wall:

> *Dear Sir, For twenty-two years I have carried your picture in my wallet. I was only eighteen years old that day that we faced each other on that trail in Chu Lai, Vietnam. Why you didn't take my life I'll never know. You stared at me for so long, armed with your AK-47, and yet you did not fire. Forgive me for taking your life, I was reacting just the way I was trained, to kill V.C.…So many times over the years I have stared at your picture and your daughter, I suspect. Each time my heart*

and guts would burn with the pain of guilt. I have two daughters myself now….I perceive you as a brave soldier defending his homeland. Above all else, I can now respect the importance that life held for you. I suppose that is why I am able to be here today….It is time for me to continue the life process and release my pain and guilt. Forgive me, Sir.

Or make a replica of the box of cookies that the Stewarts sent their son, Specialist Charles Stewart on the 30t^{h} of October, 1972. Have the audience touch it, shake it, feel it. And let the markings on the package tell the sad story: **"Returned to Sender", "KIA 10-31-72", postmarked Gladstone, Michigan, November 9, 1972**. I don't know if the postman returned the package before or after the sedan pulled up and delivered the news of his death. Either way, there is now way we can feel the sadness they felt when they held that unopened box of cookies.

- Duty: Discuss these veterans who did what their government asked of them despite the huge tendency to protest or avoid the war.

- Honor: Describe the honors won by units and individuals, like Medal of Honor recipients.

- Fidelity: Talk about comrades that faithfully come here to pay their respects to fallen friends.

- Teamwork: Focus on the small bands of brothers and sisters that sustained each other during this war and remain "family" to this very day.

- Perseverance: Describe how American veterans and prisoners of war held on despite terrible odds.

- Sacrifice: Describe the losses--the cost of this war--was it all in vain now that Vietnam is a united, Communist country?

- Betrayal: Many veterans opposed the war, some on moral grounds, others for pragmatic reasons. Describe how such a person might feel about the incredible waste represented by the seemingly endless rows of names.

Augmenting your program with a Medal of Honor Citation. Many Universal Concepts are illustrated in the details that accompany Medal of Honor citations. Citations for Medal of Honor recipients from all conflicts are posted on the US Army Center of Military History website (www.army.mil/cmh-pg/default.htm). The following citations demonstrate how useful these records can be to interpretive Rangers.

ANDERSON, JAMES, JR. (Posthumous award) Rank and organization: Private First Class, U.S. Marine Corps, 2d Platoon, Company F, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, 3d Marine Division. Place and date: Republic of Vietnam, 28 February 1967. Entered service at: Los Angeles, Calif. Born: 22 January 1947, Los Angeles, Calif. Location at VVM: 15E, 112.

Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Company F was advancing in dense jungle northwest of Cam Lo in an effort to extract a heavily besieged reconnaissance patrol. Pfc. Anderson's platoon was the lead element and had advanced only about 200 meters when they were brought under extremely intense enemy small-arms and automatic weapons fire. The platoon reacted swiftly, getting on line as best they could in the thick terrain, and began returning fire.

Pfc. Anderson found himself tightly

bunched together with the other members of the platoon only 20 meters from the enemy positions. As the fire fight continued several of the men were wounded by the deadly enemy assault. Suddenly, an enemy grenade landed in the midst of the marines and rolled alongside Pfc. Anderson's head.

Unhesitatingly and with complete disregard for his personal safety, he reached out, grasped the grenade, pulled it to his chest and curled around it as it went off. Although several marines received shrapnel from the grenade, his body absorbed the major force of the explosion. In this singularly heroic act, Pfc. Anderson saved his comrades from serious injury and possible death. His personal heroism, extraordinary valor, and inspirational supreme self-sacrifice reflected great credit upon himself and the Marine Corps and upheld the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

Another Medal of Honor Recipient's Story.

BENAVIDEZ, ROY P. Rank and Organization: Master Sergeant, Detachment B-56, 5th Special Forces Group, Republic of Vietnam. Place and Date: West of Loc Ninh on 2 May 1968. Entered Service at: Houston, Texas June 1955. Date and Place of Birth: 5 August 1935, DeWitt County, Cuero, Texas.

The Medal of Honor is awarded to Master Sergeant (then Staff Sergeant) Roy P. Benavidez United States Army, who distinguished himself by a series of daring and extremely valorous actions on 2 May 1968 while assigned to Detachment B56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam.

On the morning of 2 May 1968, a 12-man Special Forces Reconnaissance Team was inserted by helicopters in a dense jungle area west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam to gather intelligence information about confirmed large-scale enemy activity. This area was controlled and routinely patrolled by the North Vietnamese Army.

After a short period of time on the ground, the team met heavy enemy resistance, and requested emergency extraction. Three helicopters attempted extraction, but were unable to land due to intense enemy small arms and anti-aircraft fire. Sergeant Benavidez was at the Forward Operating Base in Loc Ninh monitoring the operation by radio when these helicopters returned to off-load wounded crewmembers and to assess aircraft damage.

Sergeant Benavidez voluntarily boarded a returning aircraft to assist in another extraction attempt. Realizing that all the team members were either dead or wounded and unable to move to the pickup zone, he directed the aircraft to a nearby clearing where he jumped from the hovering helicopter, and ran approximately 75 meters under withering small arms fire to the crippled team.

Prior to reaching the team's position he was wounded in his right leg, face, and head. Despite these painful injuries, he took charge, repositioning the team members and directing their fire to facilitate the landing of an extraction aircraft, and the loading of wounded and dead team members. He then threw smoke canisters to direct the aircraft to the team's position.

Despite his severe wounds and under intense enemy fire, he carried and dragged half of the wounded team members to the awaiting aircraft. He then provided protective fire by running alongside the aircraft as it moved to

pick up the remaining team members. As the enemy's fire intensified, he hurried to recover the body and classified documents on the dead team leader.
When he reached the leader's body, Sergeant Benavidez was severely wounded by small arms fire in the abdomen and grenade fragments in his back. At nearly the same moment, the aircraft pilot was mortally wounded, and his helicopter crashed. Although in extremely critical condition due to his multiple wounds, Sergeant Benavidez secured the classified documents and made his way back to the wreckage, where he aided the wounded out of the overturned aircraft, and gathered the stunned survivors into a defensive perimeter.

Under increasing enemy automatic weapons and grenade fire, he moved around the perimeter distributing water and ammunition to his weary men, reinstilling in them a will to live and fight. Facing a buildup of enemy opposition with a beleaguered team, Sergeant Benavidez mustered his strength, began calling in tactical air strikes and directed the fire from supporting gunships to suppress the enemy's fire and so permit another extraction attempt.

He was wounded again in his thigh by small arms fire while administering first aid to a wounded team member just before another extraction helicopter was able to land. His indomitable spirit kept him going as he began to ferry his comrades to the craft. On his second trip with the wounded, he was clubbed from (behind, sustaining) additional wounds to his head and arms before killing his adversary. He then continued under devastating fire to carry the wounded to the helicopter.

Upon reaching the aircraft, he spotted and killed two enemy soldiers who were rushing the craft from an angle that prevented the aircraft door gunner from firing upon them. With little strength remaining, he made one last trip to the perimeter to ensure that all classified material had been collected or destroyed, and to bring in the remaining wounded.

Only then, in extremely serious condition from numerous wounds and loss of blood, did he allow himself to be pulled into the extraction aircraft.

Sergeant Benavidez' gallant choice to join voluntarily his comrades who were in critical straits, to expose himself constantly to withering enemy fire, and his refusal to be stopped despite numerous severe wounds, saved the lives of at least eight men. His fearless personal leadership, tenacious devotion to duty, and extremely valorous actions in the face of overwhelming odds were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect the utmost credit on him and the United States Army.

Vietnam War Statistics.
(VFW Magazine, March 1993. Survey dates not known)

- Vietnam Vets: 9.7% of generation.
- 9,087,000 military personnel served on active duty during the Vietnam Era (Aug. 5, 1964-May 7, 1975).
- 8,744,000 GIs were on active duty during the war (Aug 5, 1964 - March 28, 1973).
- 3,403,100 (Including 514,300 offshore) personnel served in the Southeast Asia Theater (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, flight crews based in Thailand, and sailors in adjacent South China Sea waters).
- 2,594,000 personnel served within the borders of South Vietnam (January. 1, 1965 - March 28, 1973)
- Another 50,000 men served in Vietnam between 1960 and 1964.
- Of the 2.6 million, between 1 - 1.6 million (40 - 60%) either fought in combat, provided close support or were at least fairly regularly exposed to enemy attack.
- 7,484 women (6,250 or 83.5% were nurses) served in Vietnam.
- Peak troop strength in Vietnam: 543,482 (April 30, 1969)

Casualties:

- Hostile deaths: 47,378
- Non-hostile deaths: 10,800
- Total: 58,202 (Includes men formerly classified as MIA and Mayaguez casualties). Men who have subsequently died of wounds account for the changing total.
- 8 nurses died -- 1 of which was KIA.
- Married men killed: 17,539
- 61% of the men killed were 21 or younger.
- Highest state death rate: West Virginia
- Wounded: 303,704 -- 153,329 hospitalized + 150,375 injured requiring no hospital care.
- Severely disabled: 75,000 -- 23,214 - 100% disabled; 5,283 lost limbs; 1,081 sustained multiple amputations.
- Amputation or crippling wounds to the lower extremities were 300% higher than in WWII and 70% higher than Korea. Multiple amputations occurred at the rate of 18.4% compared to 5.7% in WWII.
- Missing in Action: 2,338
- POWs: 766 (114 died in captivity)

Draftees Vs. Volunteers:

- 25% (648,500) of total forces in country were draftees. (66% of U.S. armed forces members were drafted during WWII.
- Draftees accounted for 30.4% (17,725) of combat deaths in Vietnam.
- Reservists killed: 5,977
- National Guard: 6,140 served: 101 died.
- Total draftees (1965 - 73): 1,728,344.
- Actually served in Vietnam: 38%
- Marine Corps Draft: 42,633.
- Last man drafted: June 30, 1973.

Race And Ethnic Background:

- 88.4% of the men who served in Vietnam were Caucasian; 10.6% (275,000) were black; 1% belonged to other races.

- 86.3% of the men who died in Vietnam were Caucasian (includes Hispanics); 12.5% (7,241) were black; 1.2% belonged to other races.

- 170,000 Hispanics served in Vietnam; 3,070 (5.2% of total) died there.

- 86.8% of the men who were killed as a result of hostile action were Caucasian; 12.1% (5,711) were black; 1.1% belonged to other races.

- Overall, blacks suffered 12.5% of the deaths in Vietnam at a time when the percentage of blacks of military age was 13.5% of the total population.

- 14.6% (1,530) of non-combat deaths were among blacks.

- 34% of blacks who enlisted volunteered for the combat arms.

- Religion of Dead: Protestant-64.4%; Catholic-28.9%; other/none- 6.7%

Socio-Economic Status:

- 76% of the men sent to Vietnam were from lower middle/working class backgrounds.

- Thee-fourths had family incomes above the poverty level; 50% were from middle income backgrounds.

- Some 23% of Vietnam vets had fathers with professional, managerial or technical occupations.

- 79% of the men who served in Vietnam had a high school education or better when they entered the military service. (63% of Korean War vets and only 45% of WWII vets had completed high school upon separation.)

- Deaths by region per 100,000 of population: South -- 31%, West -- 29.9%; Midwest -- 28.4%; Northeast -- 23.5%.

Winning & Losing:

- 82% of veterans (surveyed) who saw heavy combat strongly believe the war was lost because of lack of political will.

- Nearly 75% of public (surveyed) agrees it was a failure of political will, not of arms.

Honorable Service:

- 97% of Vietnam-era veterans were honorably discharged.

- 91% of actual Vietnam veterans (surveyed) and 90% of those (surveyed) who saw heavy combat are proud to have served their country.

- 66% of Vietnam vets (surveyed) say they would serve again if called upon.

- 87% of the public (surveyed) now holds Vietnam veterans in high esteem.

Perspectives on the War. Be Careful! The Vietnam War is still enormously divisive, both nationally and internationally. It is important to understand that there are multiple interpretations of what happened there and why the U.S. was involved. The following articles show how different authors reach different conclusions. Just as our nation was divided during the war, historians are divided today as they seek to clarify the history of the war. Presidents Kennedy, Eisenhower, and Johnson could argue that our troop buildups were to assist the sovereign nation of South Vietnam. Others could just as easily argue that we were building, rather than protecting, a nation. Our visitors will have similar subjective tendencies. Understand that your interpretation will be subjected to the emotional scrutiny of your audience members, so carefully choose your "facts." Don't allow yourself to be caught up in a discussion over whether we should have been involved unless you are ready to describe the various points of view.

A Neutral Overview of the Vietnam War
(from Free Concise Encyclopedia article)

Vietnam War, (the) military struggle fought in Vietnam from 1959 to 1975. The conflict began as an attempt by Communist guerrillas (the Viet Cong) in the South, backed by Communist North Vietnam, to overthrow the government of South Vietnam. The struggle became a war between South Vietnam and North Vietnam and ultimately a limited international conflict. The United States and some 40 other countries supported South Vietnam by supplying troops and munitions, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Peoples Republic of China furnished munitions to the North Vietnam and Viet Cong. On both sides, however, the burden of the war fell mainly on civilians.

The war was a sequel to the struggle for independence (1946-1954) by the communist Vietminh, headed by Ho Chi Minh, against the French rulers of Indochina. In August 1945, following the surrender of Japan at the end of World War II, Vietminh guerrillas seized the capital city of Hanoi. They declared Vietnam to be independent and created the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, commonly called North Vietnam, with Ho Chi Minh as president. France was unwilling to completely cede control of Vietnam, and in December 1946 an armed conflict ensued. With French backing former emperor of Vietnam Bao Dai set up the state of Vietnam, commonly called South Vietnam, in July 1949, and established a new capitol at Saigon.

The following year, the United States officially recognized the Saigon government, and to assist it, dispatched a military advisory group to train South Vietnam in the use of U.S. weapons. Meanwhile, the Vietminh won a decisive battle against the French at Dien Bien in the spring of 1954.

On May 8, in Geneva, Switzerland, North and South Vietnamese delegates met with those of France, Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States, Communist China, Loas, and Cambodia to discuss the future of all of Indochina. France and North Vietnam agreed to a truce. It was further agreed to partition the country temporarily along the 17th parallel, with the north going to the Communist and the south placed under the control of

the Saigon government. The agreement stipulated that elections for reunification of the country would be held in 1956.

Once the French had withdrawn from Vietnam, the United States moved to bolster the Saigon government militarily, and later, economically. The United States continued it's support for the Saigon government even after South Vietnam was made a republic in 1955, with Ngo Dinh Diem as president. Diem promptly announced that his government would not hold reunification elections.

The New War Begins. The Geneva truce began to crumble, and by 1957 the Viet Cong began attacks on U.S. military installations. They began guerrilla attacks on the Diem government in 1959. On November 10 the Saigon government charged that regular North Vietnamese troops were taking a direct part in Viet Cong attacks in South Vietnam. To show that the guerrilla movement was independent, the Viet Cong set up their own political arm, known as the National Liberation Front.

In April 1961 the United States signed a treaty of amity and economic relations with South Vietnam. In December 1961 the U.S. troops, consisting of 400 uninformed (sic) army personnel, arrived in Saigon; a year later, U.S. military strength in Vietnam stood at 11,200. The Diem government, meanwhile, proved unable to defeat the Communist or to cope with growing unrest among South Vietnamese Buddhists and other religious groups. On November 1, 1963, the Diem was executed. A series of other coups followed. A military council under General Nguyen Van Thieu and General Nguyen Cao Ky was finally created in 1965. Elections were held in 1967, and Thieu became president of South Vietnam.

In the early 1960s some North Vietnamese troops infiltrated into South Vietnam to help the Viet Cong. Supplies sent to Hanoi from the USSR and China were sent south down the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail. The war escalated in the first week of August 1964, when North Vietnamese torpedo boats were reported to have attacked two U.S. destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. The U.S. Senate passed the so-called Gulf of Tonkin Resolution on August 7 authorizing increased military involvement. In February 1956, U.S. planes began regular bombing raids over North Vietnam. By the end of 1965 American combat strength was nearly 200,000.

The war went on despite attempts at negotiations. The United States continued it's military buildup and extended its bombing of North Vietnam. The mounting death toll accompanied a growing sentiment within the United States for and end to the war. Accelerating the peace movement was the issue of atrocities committed by U.S. troops in Vietnam. One widely publicized case was the massacre of unarmed civilians at the village of My Lai in 1968.

From February 1965 to the [end] of all-out U.S. involvement in 1973, South Vietnamese forces mainly fought against the Viet Cong guerrillas, while U.S. and allied troops fought the North Vietnamese in a war of attrition. During 1967 and 1978 the North Vietnamese

launched the famous Tet Offensive, a series of attacks on more that 100 urban targets. In spite of its devastating psychological effect, the campaign failed.

Nevertheless, by the early spring of 1968 much of the American public had concluded that the war was unwinnable. In May 1968 peace talks between the United States and North Vietnam opened in Paris. Later in the year, the talks were expanded to include South Vietnam and the Viet Cong NLF, but no progress was made.

In 1969 President Richard M. Nixon announced that 85,000 U.S. troops would be withdrawn from Vietnam by the end of the year. The North Vietnamese delegates to the Paris talk continued to insist upon complete U.S. withdrawal as a condition for peace. In April 1970 U.S. combat troops entered Cambodia following a political coup. Within three months, the U.S. campaign in Cambodia ended, but air attacks on North Vietnam were renewed. By 1971 South Vietnamese forces were playing a larger role in the war, fighting in both Cambodia and Loas as well as in South Vietnam. Meanwhile, Nguyen Van Thieu was reelected in 1971 amid charges that the election had been rigged.

In January1972 the United States entered into negotiations with the Viet Cong and North Vietnam. Peace talks broke off on March 23. The tide of the war turned one week later when on March 30 North Vietnam launched a massive offensive south into Quang Tri Province. In April, the United States retaliated with the first deep-penetration bombing raids over the north since 1967.

Temporary Peace. As the war continued into the second half of 1972, secret peace meeting were held at intervals in Paris, abruptly collapsing on December16. However, the meetings resumed in the new year, and on January23, 1973, President Nixon announced over nationwide television that agreement on all terms for a formal cease-fire had finally been reached.

On January27 in Paris, delegations representing the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Provisional Revolutionary Communist Government of South Vietnam signed an Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam. The cease-fire officially went into effect on January28.

By the end of March 1973, all U.S. fighting forces had been withdrawn. Fighting between Vietnamese antagonists died down shortly after the cease-fire, only to be renewed as each side attempted to hold or expand its military positions. In December 1974 the North Vietnamese and their southern allies launched a major offensive that quickly resulted in unprecedented success. On April 30 the capital city of Saigon was captured, and the Republic of Vietnam surrendered unconditionally to the Provisional Revolutionary Government.

The Vietnam War marked a turning point in the history of modern conventional warfare both in the extent of guerrilla and antiguerrilla combat involved and in the increased reliance on helicopters. Moreover, the Vietnam War was essentially a people's war; because noncombatants were not easily distinguished form combatants, the civilian

population suffered heavily. As a result of more than eight years of warfare, it is estimated that more than 2 million Vietnamese were killed and 3 million wounded. About 12 million Indochinese people became refugees.

In the Vietnam War, U.S. casualties rose to a total of 57,684 killed and about 153,303 wounded. Less measurable but still significant costs were the social conflicts within the United States that were engendered by the war--the questioning U.S. institutions by the American people and a sense of self-doubt.

Another Overview of the Vietnam War.

***The Second Indo-China War,* By Rob Righam, 1997 Vassar College**

The Vietnam war was the longest in our nation's history. Two American advisors were killed on July 8, 1959, and the last casualties in connection with the war occurred on May 15, 1975, during the Mayaquez incident. Approximately 2.7 million Americans served in the war zone; 300,000 were wounded and approximately 75,000 permanently disabled. Of the casualties, approximately 1,300 remain missing and unaccounted for.

The American advisory role began in the mid-1950's, and by 1964, U.S. personnel numbered approximately 20,000. With the "Gulf of Tonkin" Resolution, on August 7, 1964, the U.S. Congress authorized the President "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." The first American combat troops were landed in March 1965; by mid-1969, at the height of U.S. involvement, American military personnel in Vietnam numbered 550,000. Under a treaty signed by North Vietnam, South Vietnam, the Viet Cong and the United States, a cease-fire went into effect on January28, 1973. On April 30, 1975, the government of the Republic of Vietnam surrendered to the advancing North Vietnamese forces and all remaining U.S. civilian and military personnel were evacuated. During the war, American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines fought with heroism and determination under some of the most difficult circumstances ever encountered by American military personnel. Tragically, upon their return home they received virtually no recognition for their service and sacrifice because of the raging domestic controversy over U.S. policy in conducting the war.

The Second Indochina War, 1954-1975, grew out of the long conflict between France and Viet Nam. In July 1954, after one hundred years of colonial rule, a defeated France was forced to leave Viet Nam. Nationalist forces under the direction of General Vo Nguyen Giap trounced the allied French troops at the remote mountain outpost of Dien Bien Phu in the northwest corner of Viet Nam. This decisive battle convinced the French that they could no longer maintain their Indochinese colonies and Paris quickly sued for peace. As the two sides came together in Geneva, Switzerland, international events were already shaping the future of Viet Nam's modern revolution.

The Geneva Peace Accords.
The Geneva Peace Accords, signed by France and Viet Nam in the summer of 1954, reflected the strains of the international cold war. Drawn up in the shadow of the Korean War, the Geneva Accords represented the worst of all possible futures for war-torn Viet Nam. Because of outside pressures brought to bear by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, Viet Nam's delegates to the Geneva Conference agreed to the temporary partition of their nation at the seventeenth parallel to allow France a face-saving defeat. The Communist superpowers feared that a provocative peace would anger the United States and its western European allies, and neither Moscow (n)or Peking wanted to risk another confrontation with the West so soon after the Korean War.

According to the terms of the Geneva Accords, Viet Nam would hold national elections in 1956 to reunify the country. The division at the seventeenth parallel, a temporary separation without cultural precedent, would vanish with the elections. The United States, however, had other ideas. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles did not support the Geneva Accords because he thought they granted too much power to the Communist Party of Viet Nam. Instead, Dulles and President Dwight D. Eisenhower supported the creation of a counter-revolutionary alternative south of the seventeenth parallel. The United States supported this effort at nation-building through a series of multilateral agreements that created the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

South Viet Nam Under Ngo Dinh Diem.

Using SEATO for political cover, the Eisenhower administration helped create a new nation from dust in southern Viet Nam. In 1955, with the help of massive amounts of American military, political, and economic aid, the Government of the Republic of Viet Nam (GVN or South Viet Nam) was born. The following year, Ngo Dinh Diem, a staunchly anti-Communist figure from the South, won a dubious election that made him president of the GVN. Almost immediately, Diem claimed that his newly created government was under attack from Communists in the north. Diem argued that the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (DRV or North Viet Nam) wanted to take South Viet Nam by force. In late 1957, with American military aid, Diem began to counterattack. He used the help of the American Central Intelligence Agency to identify those who sought to bring his government down and arrested thousands. Diem passed a repressive series of acts known as Law 10/59 that made it legal to hold someone in jail if s/he was a suspected Communist without bringing formal charges. The outcry against Diem's harsh and oppressive actions was immediate. Buddhist monks and nuns were joined by students, business people, intellectuals, and peasants in opposition to the corrupt rule of Ngo Dinh Diem. The more these forces attacked Diem's troops and secret police, the more Diem complained that the Communists were trying to take South Viet Nam by force. This was, in Diem's words, "a hostile act of aggression by North Viet Nam against peace-loving and democratic South Viet Nam."

The Kennedy administration seemed split on how peaceful or democratic the Diem regime really was. Some Kennedy advisers believed Diem had not instituted enough social and economic reforms to remain a viable leader in the nation-building experiment. Others argued that Diem was the "best of a bad lot." As the White House met to decide the future of its Viet Nam policy, a change in strategy took place at the highest levels of the Communist Party. From 1956-1960, the Communist Party of Viet Nam desired to reunify the country through political means alone. Accepting the Soviet Union's model of political struggle, the Communist Party tried unsuccessfully to cause Diem's collapse by exerting tremendous internal political pressure. After Diem's attacks on suspected Communists in the South, however, southern Communists convinced the Party to adopt more violent tactics to guarantee Diem's downfall. At the Fifteenth Party Plenum in January1959, the Communist Party finally approved the use of revolutionary violence to overthrow Ngo Dinh Diem's government and liberate Viet Nam south of the seventeenth parallel. In May 1959, and again in September 1960, the Party confirmed its use of revolutionary violence and the combination of the political and armed struggle

movements. The result was the creation of a broad-based united front to help mobilize southerners in opposition to the GVN.

The National Liberation Front.
The united front had long and historic roots in Viet Nam. Used earlier in the century to mobilize anti-French forces, the united front brought together Communists and non-Communists in an umbrella organization that had limited, but important goals. On December 20, 1960, the Party' s new united front, the National Liberation Front (NLF), was born. Anyone could join this front as long as they opposed Ngo Dinh Diem and wanted to unify Viet Nam. The character of the NLF and its relationship to the Communists in Hanoi has caused considerable debate among scholars, anti-war activists, and policymakers. From the birth of the NLF, government officials in Washington claimed that Hanoi directed the NLF's violent attacks against the Saigon regime. In a series of government "White Papers," Washington insiders denounced the NLF, claiming that it was merely a puppet of Hanoi and that its non-Communist elements were Communist dupes. The NLF, on the other hand, argued that it was autonomous and independent of the Communists in Hanoi and that it was made up mostly of non-Communists. Many anti-war activists supported the NLF's claims. Washington continued to discredit the NLF, however, calling it the "Viet Cong," a derogatory and slang term meaning Vietnamese Communist.

December 1961 White Paper.
In 1961, President Kennedy sent a team to Viet Nam to report on conditions in the South and to assess future American aid requirements. The report, now known as the "December 1961 White Paper," argued for an increase in military, technical, and economic aid, and the introduction of large-scale American "advisers" to help stabilize the Diem regime and crush the NLF. As Kennedy weighed the merits of these recommendations, some of his other advisers urged the president to withdraw from Viet Nam altogether, claiming that it was a "dead-end alley."

In typical Kennedy fashion, the president chose a middle route. Instead of a large-scale military buildup as the White Paper had called for or a negotiated settlement that some of his advisers had long advocated, Kennedy sought a limited accord with Diem. The United States would increase the level of its military involvement in South Viet Nam through more machinery and advisers, but would not intervene whole-scale with troops. This arrangement was doomed from the start, and soon reports from Viet Nam came in to Washington attesting to further NLF victories. To counteract the NLF's success in the countryside, Washington and Saigon launched an ambitious and deadly military effort in the rural areas. Called the Strategic Hamlet Program, the new counterinsurgency plan rounded up villagers and placed them in "safe hamlets" constructed by the GVN. The idea was to isolate the NLF from villagers, its base of support. This culturally-insensitive plan produced limited results and further alienated the peasants from the Saigon regime. Through much of Diem's reign, rural Vietnamese had viewed the GVN as a distant annoyance, but the Strategic Hamlet Program brought the GVN to the countryside. The Saigon regime's reactive policies ironically produced more cadres for the NLF.

Military Coup.
By the summer of 1963, because of NLF successes and its own failures, it was clear that the GVN was on the verge of political collapse. Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, had raided the Buddhist pagodas of South Viet Nam, claiming that they had harbored the Communists that were creating the political instability. The result was massive protests on the streets of Saigon that led Buddhist monks to self-immolation. The pictures of the monks engulfed in flames made world headlines and caused considerable consternation in Washington. By late September, the Buddhist protest had created such dislocation in the south that the Kennedy administration supported a general's coup. In 1963, some of Diem's own generals in the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN) approached the American Embassy in Saigon with plans to overthrow Diem. With Washington's tacit approval, on November 1, 1963, Diem and his brother were captured and later assassinated. Three weeks later, President Kennedy was murdered on the streets of Dallas.

At the time of the Kennedy and Diem assassinations, there were 16,000 military advisers in Viet Nam. The Kennedy administration had managed to run the war from Washington without the large-scale introduction of American combat troops. The continuing political problems in Saigon, however, convinced the new president, Lyndon Baines Johnson, that more aggressive action was needed. Perhaps Johnson was more prone to military intervention or maybe events in Viet Nam had forced the president's hand to more direct action. In any event, after a dubious DRV raid on two U.S. ships in the Gulf of Tonkin, the Johnson administration argued for expansive war powers for the president.

Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.
In August 1964, in response to American and GVN espionage along its coast, the DRV launched a local and controlled attack against the C. Turner Joy and the U.S.S. Maddox, two American ships on call in the Gulf of Tonkin. The first of these attacks occurred on August 2, 1964. A second attack was supposed to have taken place on August 4, although Vo Nguyen Giap, the DRV's leading military figure at the time, and Johnson's Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara have recently concluded that no second attack ever took place. In any event, the Johnson administration used the August 4 attack as political cover for a Congressional resolution that gave the president broad war powers. The resolution, now known as the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, passed both the House and Senate with only two dissenting votes (Senators Morse of Oregon and Gruening of Alaska). The Resolution was followed by limited reprisal air attacks against the DRV.

Throughout the fall and into the winter of 1964, the Johnson administration debated the correct strategy in Viet Nam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted to expand the air war over the DRV quickly to help stabilize the new Saigon regime. The civilians in the Pentagon wanted to apply gradual pressure to the Communist Party with limited and selective bombings. Only Undersecretary of State George Ball dissented, claiming that Johnson's Viet Nam policy was too provocative for its limited expected results. In early 1965, the NLF attacked two U.S. army installations in South Viet Nam, and as a result, Johnson ordered the sustained bombing missions over the DRV that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had long advocated.

The bombing missions, known as OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER, caused the Communist Party to reassess its own war strategy. From 1960 through late 1964, the Party believed it could win a military victory in the south "in a relatively short period of time." With the new American military commitment, confirmed in March 1965 when Johnson sent the first combat troops to Viet Nam, the Party moved to a protracted war strategy. The idea was to get the United States bogged down in a war that it could not win militarily and create unfavorable conditions for political victory. The Communist Party believed that it would prevail in a protracted war because the United States had no clearly defined objectives, and therefore, the country would eventually tire of the war and demand a negotiated settlement. While some naive and simple-minded critics have claimed that the Communist Party, and Vietnamese in general, did not have the same regard for life and therefore were willing to sustain more losses in a protracted war, the Party understood that it had an ideological commitment to victory from large segments of the Vietnamese population.

The War In America.

One of the greatest ironies in a war rich in ironies was that Washington had also moved toward a limited war in Viet Nam. The Johnson administration wanted to fight this war in "cold blood." This meant that America would go to war in Viet Nam with the precision of a surgeon with little noticeable impact on domestic culture. A limited war called for limited mobilization of resources, material and human, and caused little disruption in everyday life in America. Of course, these goals were never met. The Viet Nam War did have a major impact on everyday life in America, and the Johnson administration was forced to consider domestic consequences of its decisions every day. Eventually, there simply were not enough volunteers to continue to fight a protracted war and the government instituted a draft. As the deaths mounted and Americans continued to leave for Southeast Asia, the Johnson administration was met with the full weight of American anti-war sentiments. Protests erupted on college campuses and in major cities at first, but by 1968 every corner of the country seemed to have felt the war's impact. Perhaps one of the most famous incidents in the anti-war movement was the police riot in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Hundreds of thousands of people came to Chicago in August 1968 to protest American intervention in Viet Nam and the leaders of the Democratic Party who continued to prosecute the war.

The Tet Offensive.

By 1968, things had gone from bad to worse for the Johnson administration. In late Januaryuary, the DRV and the NLF launched coordinated attacks against the major southern cities. These attacks, known in the West as the Tet Offensive, were designed to force the Johnson administration to the bargaining table. The Communist Party correctly believed that the American people were growing war-weary and that its continued successes in the countryside had tipped the balance of forces in its favor. Although many historians have since claimed that the Tet Offensive was a military defeat, but a psychological victory for the Communists, it had produced the desired results. In late March 1968, a disgraced Lyndon Johnson announced that he would not seek the

Democratic Party's re-nomination for president and hinted that he would go to the bargaining table with the Communists to end the war.

The Nixon Years.
The secret negotiations began in the spring of 1968 in Paris and soon it was made public that Americans and Vietnamese were meeting to discuss an end to the long and costly war. Despite the progress in Paris, the Democratic Party could not rescue the presidency from Republican challenger Richard Nixon who claimed he had a secret plan to end the war.

Nixon's secret plan, it turned out, was borrowing from a strategic move from Lyndon Johnson's last year in office. The new president continued a process called "Vietnamization", an awful term that implied that Vietnamese were not fighting and dying in the jungles of Southeast Asia. This strategy brought American troops home while increasing the air war over the DRV and relying more on the ARVN for ground attacks. The Nixon years also saw the expansion of the war into neighboring Laos and Cambodia, as the White House tried desperately to rout out Communist sanctuaries and supply routes. The intense bombing campaigns and intervention in Cambodia in late April 1970 sparked intense campus protests all across America. At Kent State in Ohio, four students were killed by National Guardsmen who were called out to preserve order on campus after days of anti-Nixon protest. Shock waves crossed the nation as students at Kackson State in Mississippi were also shot and killed for political reasons, prompting one mother to cry, "They are killing our babies in Viet Nam and in our own backyard."

The expanded air war did not deter the Communist Party, however, and it continued to make hard demands in Paris. Nixon's Vietnamization plan temporarily quieted domestic critics, but his continued reliance on an expanded air war to provide cover for an American retreat angered U.S. citizens. By the early fall 1972, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and DRV representatives Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho had hammered out a preliminary peace draft. Washington and Hanoi assumed that its southern allies would naturally accept any agreement drawn up in Paris, but this was not to pass. The new leaders in Saigon, especially President Nguyen van Thieu and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, rejected the Kissinger-Tho peace draft, demanding that no concessions be made. The conflict intensified in December 1972, when the Nixon administration unleashed a series of deadly bombing raids against targets in the DRV's largest cities, Hanoi and Haiphong. These attacks, now known as the Christmas bombings, brought immediate condemnation from the international community and forced the Nixon administration to reconsider its tactics and negotiation strategy.

The Paris Peace Agreement.

In early January1973, the Nixon White House convinced the Thieu-Ky regime in Saigon that they would not abandon the GVN if they signed onto the peace accord. On January23, therefore, the final draft was initialed, ending open hostilities between the United States and the DRV. The Paris Peace Agreement did not end the conflict in Viet Nam, however, as the Thieu-Ky regime continued to battle Communist forces. From March 1973 until the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, ARVN forces tried desperately to save the South from political and military collapse. The end finally came, however, as DRV tanks rolled south along National Highway One. On the morning of April 30, Communist forces captured the presidential palace in Saigon,ending the Second Indochina War and more than one hundred years of bloodshed.

The War Makers. **By John Dellinger.**

While the military is responsible for fighting a war, its civilian superiors not only wage war but also determine how it will be fought. In their naive ignorance, anti-war activists during the Vietnam War came close to undermining one of the foundation stones of American democracy. If military personnel had followed their shouts to disobey the orders of their civilian superiors and refuse to go to Vietnam, civilian control of the military would have been destroyed, for if the military chooses which orders it will obey, the result is a military dictatorship. The military did not order itself into Vietnam. It went in accordance with the orders of five duly elected presidents, each appointed by the U.S. Constitution as the nation's commander in chief.

Vietnam was the war that five presidents "owned"--and yet no resident "owned." Called "Johnson's war" or "Kennedy's war," or even "Nixon's war," Vietnam was actually the bastard child of five presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford, Jr. None of them owned the war in the traditional way that American presidents had owned earlier wars. But each of them, to a greater or lesser extent, shared in the responsibility for the Vietnam War.

President Eisenhower (1953-1961) refused to commit large numbers of Americans to Vietnam, but he did commit 900 American advisers, setting the precedent for American military involvement in that country. In his refusal to commit American troops to a ground war in Asia, Eisenhower exercised negative ownership. He did not want to own a war in Asia. He wanted to protect the "dominoes"--the Southeast Asian countries that might fall, like dominoes, under Communist domination--but not by exposing American troops to the carnage of a ground war.

During America's military involvement in Vietnam, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon had the most responsibility for the war. President Kennedy (1961-1963) increased Eisenhower's 900 military advisers to more than 16,000 and flirted with counterinsurgency and "limited war." President Johnson (1963-69) acted fast after the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, and added a half-million Americans, but failed to press the military advantage earned at the 1968 Tet Offensive. President Nixon (1969-74) withdrew by turning the war over to the Vietnamese, breaking some of his predecessors' rules by permitting American forces to swat the enemy in over-the-border sanctuaries and by laying Christmas bombs on Hanoi. Nixon's decision to send Henry Kissinger to secret negotiations with North Vietnam was also a major departure from previous practice.

President Ford (1974-1977) refused to re-enter the war in 1975 when South Vietnam was falling to the Communists. He was willing to let the domino fall, regardless of the consequences to South Vietnam or its neighbors. Ford, in exercising his ownership of the war, refused to extend the contract. The Vietnamese were once again declared the owners, with all of the associated pitfalls. Ford's refusal to order American military aid to South Vietnam declared the Vietnam military policies of his four predecessors bankrupt.

The Vietnam War, under five different commanders in chief, became a patchwork of

military strategy that America's military commanders in the field tried to hold together to fashion a win. The different personalities and politics of the presidents, along with their varying military strategies, led to an inconsistency in presidential philosophy and leadership that the U.S. military could not overcome. In brief, the foreign policy and military strategies of the five Vietnam-era presidents were as follows:

Eisenhower: Containment of communism through the threat of massive retaliation; reliance on nuclear weapons and "brinkmanship"; building of defensive alliances; summit conferences with world leaders. His goal was to lessen world tensions while maintaining America's military might and independence.

Kennedy: Containment of communism through the threat of massive retaliation and "counterinsurgency"; preparation to fight "small wars"; exportation of American ideals through the Peace Corps (goodwill ambassadors). He hoped to increase democratic governments in the world while maintaining America's military might and independence.

Johnson: Continuation of Kennedy's foreign policy and overall military strategy while escalating American commitment in Vietnam. His goal was to enforce America's will in Vietnam while maintaining America's military might and independence.

Nixon: Containment of communism through the threat of massive retaliation; "detente" with Communist nations to lessen international tensions; re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China; honorable withdrawal of the American military force from Vietnam. He hoped to decrease international tensions that existed between Communist and non-Communist nations while maintaining America's military might and independence.

Ford: Continuation of Nixon's foreign policy and overall military strategy while refusing to become militarily involved in Vietnam again, even though Nixon's negotiated peace agreement threatened renewed military action if that peace was broken. His goal was to refocus America's military while containing communism, other than in Southeast Asia, and maintaining America's military might and independence.

The specific Vietnam military strategies of the presidents can be summarized as follows:

Eisenhower: Minimal number of U.S. military advisers; intervention on a large scale only if by multinational coalition.

Kennedy: Increase in the number of U.S. military advisers; counterinsurgency and plans for fighting a "limited war."

Johnson: Escalating the number of American troops to more than a half-million while fighting a restricted war until the enemy could be defeated by attrition.

Nixon: Gradual withdrawal of American troops by turning the war over to South Vietnamese allies and instilling enough fear in the enemy through military technology to

make the enemy agree to a negotiated settlement.

Ford: No military involvement in Vietnam. Modern wars involve an extremely complex network of decisions.

When the president is deciding whether to wage war or deciding how to wage war, a multitude of civilian advisers feed him information and recommendations. Such was certainly the case in the Vietnam War, a hotbed of political intrigue. Civilians directly influenced presidential decisions or made decisions that had enormous consequences on the battlefield. Those decisions most often came from the ambassador to South Vietnam, the secretary of defense and the national security adviser. Over the long course of the Vietnam War, five civilian decision-makers stand out as particularly influential.

Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., ambassador to South Vietnam in 1963-1964 and 1965-1967, helped set the pattern of South Vietnamese political instability that damaged the war effort.

Maxwell Taylor, ambassador to South Vietnam in 1964-1965, influenced the United States to wage a limited war of "halt and go."

Robert S. McNamara, secretary of defense in 1961-1968, statistically quantified the war.

Clark Clifford, secretary of defense in 1968, substituted his judgment for that of the president and the military, thereby subverting the goal of winning the war.

Henry Kissinger, as national security adviser from 1969 to 1973, negotiated the end of American military involvement.

Lodge wanted responsible leadership in South Vietnam that could withstand the military aggression of North Vietnam. When leaders of a planned coup against President Ngo Dinh Diem informed Lodge in 1963 of their desire to overthrow Diem, the ambassador gambled that the coup would produce better leadership. He assured the leaders of the coup that the United States would not react unfavorably to their overthrow of Diem. Although Diem had shortcomings as a leader, he had led South Vietnam for eight years and at the time of his death was attempting to deal with Buddhist factionalism. While Buddhist monks were having themselves doused with gasoline and set afire, Diem attempted to retain control of the government and the army. His methods at times were savage and less than democratic. Lodge wanted a more democratic South Vietnam that operated on consensus rather than force. Lodge could have stopped the coup by either discouraging the coup leaders or informing Diem who was involved and letting him stop it. Lodge did neither, and the political instability that would dog South Vietnam for years to come was institutionalized.

While Lodge was away from South Vietnam in 1964-1965, Maxwell Taylor filled the post of ambassador. Although now a civilian, Taylor had been a professional soldier, with a distinguished record in both World War II and Korea. He had become chief of

staff of the Army in 1955 and served four years in that capacity. He was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) from 1962 until he became ambassador to South Vietnam in 1964. Taylor was President Kennedy's favorite general, and both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were in need of military expertise. Taylor, as the "insider" with military expertise, played a key roll in the military strategy that evolved during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. His strategy was "incremental" rather than "massive." Vietnam was a "little war" where advisers and limited bombing could hold the enemy in check without resorting to massive retaliation. Taylor was the foot-dragging general who wanted to take a limited amount of military action to forestall a Communist takeover of South Vietnam, but did not want to get bogged down in a ground war of massive proportions like the United States had fought in Korea. His effort to contain the enemy without massive force became a contradiction that created a war of attrition. Between 1961 and 1964, Taylor made fact-finding trips to Vietnam at the request of the president. Taylor was willing to up the ante, but he was never willing to try to win the pot. The Joint Chiefs usually wanted to "hard charge," but it was Taylor's policy of limited war--stop and go--that prevailed throughout the Vietnam War. Taylor wanted a manageable little war. But Vietnam proved to be neither manageable nor little.

As the war spun out of control, Taylor's influence waned, and the focus of civilian decision making shifted to the secretary of defense. As Secretary of Defense, McNamara started under Kennedy as a cheerleader for the war. He tried to run the war the way he had run the Ford Motor Company. By the time he was eased out by Johnson in early 1968, he had become a turncoat, seeking to undermine Johnson's support of the war. Rattling facts and figures, rapidly flipping charts and wielding a pointer with complete confidence, McNamara had urged America on during the early part of its involvement. It was only a matter of technology, units of energy and production quotas, according to McNamara. Place the right amount of force on the battlefield to counter the drag of the other side, schedule man-hours in accordance with the production desired, and voilà a finished product--a North Vietnam tamed of its aggressive tendencies and a South Vietnam that was independent, democratic and grateful to the United States. Statistics and production units could only carry so far in Vietnam. McNamara's statistics, combined with Taylor's foot-dragging gradualism, were a recipe for prolonged conflict.

When the stats and gradualism didn't do the job and sucked the United States into a seemingly bottomless quagmire, McNamara had a change of heart and became convinced that it was his duty to get America out of a war that he now believed could not be won. His change of heart probably came at the end of 1965, when he advised President Johnson to seek a compromise solution through negotiations. McNamara said that at least 600,000 Americans would be needed to give the war a satisfactory outcome, and that even that number would not guarantee success. He urged Johnson to stop American airstrikes for three or four weeks to give the North Vietnamese a chance to save face and reach a diplomatic settlement. McNamara remained secretary of defense for more than two more years. Athough he served as "captain of the team," he was committed to a diplomatic solution rather than victory. It can only be conjectured what effect this had on the team's "coach," President Johnson. The captain did not quit, and the coach did not fire him. The war ground on, quantified to Johnson and the American public on McNamara's

flip charts. Mercifully, McNamara finally left the job, not sure whether he had left on his own or had been fired. He had gone into office a believer and had left as an "infidel."

Clark Clifford, who replaced McNamara as secretary of defense on March 1, 1968, was a nonbeliever he took office, but he never bothered to tell his old and trusted friend Lyndon Johnson that important fact when he accepted the position. In March 1968 President Johnson needed all the support he could get, and that was why Clifford was chosen; yet Clifford's belief that the war could not be won rendered him incapable of giving Johnson the support needed to stay the course in Vietnam. Bombarded by bad news from the media, defeatism from his own staff and a gloomy call for 206,000 more troops to add to the half-million already in Vietnam, Johnson lost his resolve. Clifford, who could have encouraged the course, instead plunged the dagger that killed the Johnson presidency.

With the election of Richard Nixon in 1968, the thrust of civilian decision making shifted from the secretary of defense to the national security adviser, Henry Kissinger. Nixon, seeking an end to the war without the disquieting wrath of the protesters and media, sent Kissinger to negotiate behind closed doors. While the military struggle in Vietnam continued in village, city, rice paddy and highland, Kissinger sat eyeball to eyeball with North Vietnamese negotiators in Paris. To obtain an agreement, Kissinger was more inclined to blink than the North Vietnamese. Nixon tried to bolster his negotiator by giving orders and sending messages not to retreat while stiffening the meaning by trying to terrorize the enemy through military tactics. But in the end it was Kissinger who gave in, not the enemy. The crucial point on which Kissinger retreated was allowing North Vietnamese troops to remain in the South. Nixon had little chance to maintain his peace because Watergate soon enveloped him. As Nixon drowned in Watergate, South Vietnam had to rely on itself to stay afloat. Although the United States left South Vietnam generously supplied with military hardware, both Nixon and South Vietnam sank.

Lodge, Taylor, McNamara, Clifford and Kissinger played key roles in defining America's involvement in Vietnam, but there were a host of other civilian decision makers who influenced the American involvement. Perhaps the most often seen by the American public was Secretary of State Dean Rusk (1961-1968).

Rusk was there from the beginning of the Kennedy administration, and his experience in foreign affairs extended back in a distinguished career. It was Rusk's nature and conviction to be a loyal supporter of presidential policy and a team player. He was neither a headline grabber nor a grabber of other people's turf. He was content to advise and consent, letting the more flashy members of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations fight for prominence and dominance in the Vietnam War.

The Bundy brothers, William and McGeorge, were a part of the Kennedy brain trust. William Bundy, assistant secretary of defense (1961-1964) and assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs (1964-1968), was instrumental in drafting the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. Four days after the resolution, William Bundy advised President Johnson to "achieve maximum results for minimal risks." William Bundy encouraged the use of force, but when it got down to specifics, he was a gradualist. "Mac" Bundy, as national security adviser (1961-1966), was also reluctant to use more force than necessary. In

March 1968, at the critical juncture of the Vietnam War, he was in a group of "wise men," convened by Clark Clifford. Clifford had assembled the group as part of his plan to convince Johnson to withdraw from Vietnam, though there were several members of the 14-person group who were there to give lip service to continuing military involvement. Mac Bundy urged withdrawal.

Paul Warnke helped turn McNamara against the war. Coming to the Defense Department as a general counsel in 1966, he became assistant secretary of defense a year later. Imbued with a mission to stop the war, he proselytized McNamara. McNamara's replacement, Clifford, was Warnke's next target, and again he was successful. Warnke was able to help Clifford bring about the downfall of the Johnson presidency in March 1968.

Melvin Laird, who served as secretary of defense between 1969 and 1972, coined the term "Vietnamization." Feeling that the war should become "de-Americanized," he helped Nixon formulate the policy of gradual withdrawal that was officially initiated on June 8, 1969.

The names of other civilian decision makers ring out from the Vietnam era: W. Averell Harriman, Roger Hilsman, Walter Rostow, George Ball, Ellsworth Bunker, Graham Martin, Frederick Nolting and Cyrus Vance. Perhaps the civilian decision makers tried to do the best they could, but it wasn't good enough. They put too many names on a wall that contains none of their own.

The Men Who Made the Decisions. Under five different presidents, each with differing philosophies, strategies, goals and priorities, America's military served faithfully in Vietnam. Despite shifting political tides, the military was able to remain a potent force until it was totally withdrawn--a tribute to those who served in the war. Although all of the presidents believed in a strong U.S. military and all were committed to the goal of keeping South Vietnam from being taken over by the Communist North, their diverse methods of pursuing that goal during a protracted conflict challenged the military establishment. Following are biographical sketches of the men who made the decisions during the Vietnam War.

Dwight David Eisenhower (1890-1969) was born in Denison, Texas, on October 14, 1890. After growing up in Abilene, Kan., he graduated from West Point in 1915. Eisenhower remained in the Army until 1948, serving as supreme allied commander in Europe during World War II and as chief of staff of the Army from 1945 to 1948. From 1948 to 1953, he was president of Columbia University, but took a leave of absence in 1950 to command NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). Eisenhower became president on January20, 1953. After two terms in the White House, he retired in 1961 to his farm near Gettysburg, Pa. He died on March 28, 1969, at the age of 78.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963) was born in Brookline, Mass., on May 29, 1917. After receiving a B.S. degree from Harvard in 1940, he joined the Navy and commanded a PT-boat in the Solomons as a lieutenant during World War II. Kennedy served as a representative in Congress from 1947 to 1953 and as a U.S. senator from 1953 to 1961. He received a Pulitzer Prize in 1957 for his book Profiles in Courage. Kennedy, who

defeated Richard Nixon in the 1960 election, became president on January20, 1961, at the age of 46. He was assassinated in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973) was born near Stonewall, Texas, on August 27, 1908. After receiving a B.S. degree from Southwestern State Teachers College in 1930, he taught public school until 1932, when he became secretary to Texas Congressman Richard Kleberg. He studied law at Georgetown University during 1935 and was appointed director of the National Youth Administration. Johnson was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1936 and served until 1948, when he was elected a U.S. senator. For seven months during World War II, Johnson served as a lieutenant commander in the Navy. He was Democrat leader in the Senate from 1953 to 1961, when he became Kennedy's vice president. Johnson became president in 1963 when Kennedy was assassinated. He was re-elected in the 1964 presidential campaign, but did not seek re-election in 1968. He retired to his ranch near Johnson City, Texas, in 1969, after leaving the White House. He died on January22, 1973, at the age of 64.

Richard Milhous Nixon (1913-1994) was born in Yorba Linda, Calif., on January9, 1913. After graduating from Whittier College in 1934 and Duke University Law School in 1937, he practiced law. During World War II he served in the Navy as a lieutenant commander. Nixon was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1946 and served until 1950, when he was elected a U.S. senator. He was Eisenhower's vice president from 1953 to 1961. He lost the 1960 presidential election to John F. Kennedy and in 1962 was defeated in his race for California governor. He became president on January20, 1969. He resigned from the presidency on August 9, 1974, after a Congressional investigation of the Watergate break-in. He is the only president in U.S. history who resigned from office. After leaving the presidency, Nixon returned to California and maintained an interest in politics and world affairs. He died in New York City on April 22, 1994.

Gerald Rudolph Ford (1913-) was born in Omaha, Neb., on July 14, 1913. After graduating from the University of Michigan in 1935 and Yale Law School in 1941, he served in the Navy during World War II as a lieutenant commander. Upon leaving the Navy in 1946, he practiced law until he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1948. He served 25 years in the House, eight of them as Republican leader. When Nixon's Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned in 1973, Ford was appointed vice president. After Nixon resigned in 1974, Ford became president. He is the only U.S. president who was never elected president or vice president. Ford, in his 1976 re-election campaign, was defeated by Jimmy Carter. Ford has engaged in business interests, recreational pursuits and charitable events since leaving office.

Why Americans Were There, in the Words of One President.
(Excerpts from Speech Given by President Johnson at Johns Hopkins University, April 7,1965)

Viet Nam is far away 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 that is bursting with opportunity and promise, have ended their lives, on Viet-Nam's steaming soil.

Why must we take this painful road?

Why must this Nation hazard its ease, and 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....
The first reality is that North VietNam has attacked the independent nation of South Viet-Nam. Its object is total conquest.

Of course, some of the people of South Viet-Nam are participating in attack on their own government. But trained men and supplies, orders and arms, flow in a constant stream from north to south....

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, which has attacked India, and has been condemned by the United Nations for aggression in Korea....

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 Viet-Nam. We have helped to build, and we have helped to defend. Thus, over many years, we have made a national pledge to help South Viet-Nam defend its independence. And I intend to keep that promise...

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 Viet-Nam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these people in the value of an American commitment and in 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 Viet-Nam 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."...

Our objective is the independence of South Viet-Nam, and its freedom from attack. We

want nothing for ourselves only that the people of South Viet-Nam 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 Viet Nam were stepped up. Thus, it became necessary for us to increase our response and to make attacks by air. This is not a change of purpose. It is a change in which we believe that purpose requires...

These countries of southeast Asia are homes for millions of impoverished people. Each day these people rise at dawn and struggle through until the night to wrestle existence from the soil. They are often wracked by disease, plagued by hunger, and death comes at the early age of 40. For our part I will ask the Congress to join in a billion dollar American investment in this effort as soon as it is underway.

The task is nothing less than to enrich the hopes and the 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....

SOURCE: Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, pp. 394-397.

30th Anniversary-- Hamburger Hill Revisited.

Hamburger Hill proved to be the telling battle of the Vietnam War, as Pork Chop Hill was for the Korean War. By Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., U.S. Army (ret.)

"Don't mean nothin'." That was the refrain of the powerful 1987 movie about the battle for Hamburger Hill, more correctly called Ap Bia Mountain or Hill 937. Many veterans of that May 1969 fight would no doubt agree, since the hill was abandoned to the enemy soon after it was taken. But the truth is that it was one of the most significant battles of the war, for it spelled the end of major American ground combat operations in Vietnam.

The Hamburger Hill battle had run afoul of a fundamental war-fighting equation. Master philosopher of war Karl von Clausewitz emphasized almost a century and a half earlier that because war is controlled by its political object, "the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for it both in magnitude and also in duration." He went on to say, "Once the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced." And that's exactly what happened. The expenditure of effort at Hamburger Hill exceeded the value the American people attached to the war in Vietnam. The public had turned against the war a year and a half earlier, and it was their intense reaction to the cost of that battle in American lives, inflamed by sensationalist media reporting, that forced the Nixon administration to order the end of major tactical ground operations.

This was not the first time the American public had stopped supporting a war. Contrary to widespread belief, Vietnam is not the most unpopular war in American history. The Mexican War in 1848 was far more unpopular, as was the 1950-53 war in Korea. The majority of Americans supported the war in Vietnam from the landing of the Marines in Da Nang in March 1965 (64 percent supporting, 21 percent opposed after the first U.S. combat engagements) until October 1967, when for the first time a plurality (46 percent opposed, 44 percent supporting) turned against the war. Those 30 months equaled the period of time the American people supported the ground war in Europe in World War II, from the landing of U.S. forces in North Africa in November 1942 until the end of the war in May 1945. Public opinion had turned--not on ideological grounds, as the anti-war movement would claim, but for pragmatic reasons. "Either win the damn thing or get the hell out!" was the prevalent sentiment, and when the Johnson administration seemed unable to do either, the American people's patience ran out.

American public opinion turned against the war in Korea after only five months, percentages of those in favor falling precipitously after Chinese intervention in the war in November 1950. The war became stalemated after the U.S. Eighth Army's defeat of the 230,000-man Chinese Spring Offensive in April 1951 (as it did in Vietnam with the defeat of the enemy's 1968 Tet Offensive), degenerating into a series of bloody outpost skirmishes.

The last of those skirmishes was the battle for Pork Chop Hill between July 6 and 10, 1953. Officially Hill 255 (from its elevation in yards), it was dubbed Pork Chop Hill

because of its geographic shape. One of a series of outposted hills along the "Iron Triangle" in the western sector of the line of contact, it had long been contested by the enemy. Earlier, in November 1952, the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division's Thailand Battalion had come under heavy Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) attack there, but the assault was beaten back.

On March 1, 1953, then defended by the 7th Infantry Division's 31st Infantry Regiment, Pork Chop Hill came under an 8,000-round CCF artillery barrage. Then on March 23, the CCF 67th Division, under cover of an intense mortar and artillery barrage, made a ground attack on Pork Chop Hill. After some initial gains they were beaten back, only to resume the attack on April 16. Once again they were beaten back by counterattacks from the 31st Infantry, reinforced by a battalion from the 7th Infantry Division's 17th Infantry Regiment. But it was artillery that made the difference, as the 7th Infantry Division massed the guns of nine artillery battalions and fired 77,349 rounds in support of the two-day battle.

On July 6, 1953, the CCF made yet another attempt to capture Pork Chop Hill. This time they gained a foothold on a portion of the crest. After repeated attempts to dislodge them were repulsed, General Maxwell D. Taylor, the Eighth U.S. Army commander, ordered the hill to be abandoned on July 11, 1953. Two weeks later, with the signing of the armistice agreement at Panmunjom on July 27, the hill became part of the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.

Ever the politician (as he would prove to be again in the Vietnam War), General Taylor had made his decision based on his perception of American public and political reactions to the high numbers of U.S. casualties. During the month of July 1953 alone, the United States and its allies along the line of contact, including Pork Chop Hill, had suffered 29,629 casualties both from enemy ground attacks and a record 375,565-round CCF artillery barrage. Chinese and North Korean casualties were estimated at 72,112, most from allied airstrikes and a 2-million-round artillery barrage.

The battle for Hamburger Hill, like the Vietnam War itself, was less intense than the battle for Pork Chop Hill in Korea. A body count confirmed that 633 NVA soldiers had died in the battle, but as Samuel Zaffiri noted in his definitive history of the fight: "There is no telling how many other NVA soldiers were killed and wounded and carried into Laos. No telling how many were buried alive in bunkers and tunnels on the mountain or ended up in forgotten graves in the draws or along the many ridges."

Final U.S. casualties were 46 dead and 400 wounded. While these losses were high, Hamburger Hill was not the bloodiest fight of the war, even for the 101st Airborne Division. In the earlier November 1967 battle of Dak To in the Central Highlands, 289 U.S. soldiers were killed in action and an estimated 1,644 NVA soldiers also perished, victims of the 170,000 rounds of artillery, the 2,100 tactical airstrikes and the 228 Boeing B-52 sorties that supported the operation. Later, during the week of February 10-17, 1968, in the midst of the Tet Offensive, 543 Americans were killed in action and another 2,547 wounded without causing any outcry from the American public.

The Hamburger Hill losses were much smaller, but they set off a firestorm of protest back home. The American people were growing more weary of the war. A February 1969 poll revealed that only 39 percent still supported the war, while 52 percent believed sending troops to fight in Vietnam had been a mistake.

Politicians were quick to seek advantage in those numbers. Most prominent was Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, whose brother John F. Kennedy had been the architect of America's Vietnam involvement. As Zaffiri related: "In the early afternoon of May 29 [1969]...Senator Kennedy [who had served as a draftee military policeman in Paris during the Korean War] stood up on the Senate floor and angrily denounced the attack on Dong Ap Bia, calling it 'senseless and irresponsible… madness...sympathetic of a mentality and a policy that requires immediate attention. American boys are too valuable to be sacrificed to a false sense of military pride.'"

Kennedy would escalate his attack on May 24 in a speech to the New Democratic Coalition in Washington, referring to the battle as nothing but "cruelty and savagery," as well as saying that the Vietnam War was unjustified and immoral. He was soon joined by other senators, including South Dakota's George S. McGovern, a decorated World War II bomber pilot, and Ohio's Stephen M. Young, an infantryman in World War I and an Army staff officer in World War II, who carried the attack to a new level.

In a lengthy speech on May 29, noted Zaffiri: "Young described how during the Civil War the Confederate generals Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee attacked the Union forces at Chancellorsville from the rear and flanks simultaneously and routed them. 'Our generals in Vietnam acted as if they had never studied Lee and Jackson's strategy,' Young concluded. 'Instead, they fling our paratroopers piecemeal in frontal assaults. Instead of seeking to surround the enemy and seeking to assault the hill from the sides and the front simultaneously, there was one frontal assault after another, killing our boys who went up Hamburger Hill.'"

What set off this wave of criticism was a May 19 dispatch by Associated Press war correspondent Jay Sharbutt. While reports of the Hamburger Hill battle had been appearing in newspapers since May 14, most were innocuous descriptions of the fight in routine terms. But Sharbutt's dispatch struck a nerve: "The paratroopers came down the mountain, their green shirts darkened with sweat, their weapons gone, their bandages stained brown and red--with mud and blood.

"Many cursed Lt. Col. Weldon Honeycutt, who sent three companies Sunday to take this 3,000-foot mountain just a mile east of Laos and overlooking the shell-pocked A Shau Valley.

"They failed and they suffered. 'That damn Blackjack [Lt. Col. Honeycutt's radio call sign] won't stop until he kills every one of us,' said one of the 40 to 50 101st Airborne troopers who was wounded."

The day after Sharbutt's story hit the newspapers, Hamburger Hill fell to the troopers of the 101st Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade. But that victory was short-lived, for on June 5 the decision was made to abandon the hill to the enemy, further exacerbating public outrage. Adding fuel to the fire, the June 27, 1969, issue of Life magazine featured photographs of the 241 servicemen killed in Vietnam the previous week, including the five who had been killed in the assault on Hamburger Hill. The feature was titled, "The Faces of the Dead in Vietnam: One Week's Toll," and it was prefaced by a quote from a letter written by one of those five soldiers during a break in the fighting. "You may not be able to read this," it said. "I am writing in a hurry. I see death coming up the hill." The erroneous impression was thus created that all 241 pictured had been killed during the Hamburger Hill assault, increasing public disgust over what appeared to be a senseless loss of life.

Underlying that disgust was the fact that the war in Vietnam did not fit the model of war that was fixed in most American minds. Except for the 19th-century Indian wars on the Western plains, most of America's wars had fixed geographic boundaries, and progress could be measured by movement on the map. But Vietnam was different. As MACV commander General Creighton Abrams tried to explain: "We are not fighting for terrain as such. We are going after the enemy." At a news conference following Hamburger Hill's capture, the 101st Airborne Division's commander, Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, reinforced General Abrams' words.

"The hill was in my area of operations," Zaffiri quoted Zais as saying. "That was where the enemy was, and that was where I attacked him. If I find the enemy on any other hills in the A Shau, I assure you I'll attack him there also." Asked why he had not relied on Boeing B-52 bombers to do the job, he said, "I don't know how many wars we have to go through to convince people that aerial bombardment alone cannot do the job." When criticized for the high number of casualties involved, Zais testily replied: "It's a myth somebody perpetuated that if we don't do anything, nothing will happen to us. It's not true....It's just a myth that we can pull back and everything will settle down. If we pulled back, and were quiet, they'd kill us in the night. They'd come on and crawl under the wire, and they'd drop satchel charges on our bunkers, and they'd mangle and maim and kill our men. The only way I can in good conscience lead my men is to insure that they're not caught in that kind of situation."

Zais was reiterating a truth that military commanders throughout history have known--offense is the very best defense. But war is first and foremost a political act, and in the view of politicians in Washington the 101st Airborne Division's assault on Hamburger Hill had been a disaster. As Hedrick Smith reported in the May 23, 1969, New York Times, a number of civilian officials in the Nixon administration were afraid such Pyrrhic victories "would undermine public support for the war and thus shorten the administration's time for successful negotiations in Paris." As one official privately told Smith: "Now clearly the greatest limitation is the reaction of the American public. They react to the casualty lists. I don't understand why the military doesn't get the picture. The military is defeating the very thing it most wants--more time to gain a stronger hand."

What the military did not realize was that the American public had always been the greatest limitation on the use of military force. As General Fred C. Weyand, General Abrams' successor as MACV commander, wrote after the war: "Vietnam was a reaffirmation of the peculiar relationship between the American Army and the American people. The American Army really is a people's army in the sense that it belongs to the American people who take a jealous and proprietary interest in its involvement." In words particularly applicable to Hamburger Hill, he wrote, "When the Army is committed the American people are committed, when the American people lose their commitment it is futile to try to keep the Army committed."

Given the public and political reaction to Hamburger Hill, a change in war-fighting policy was not long in coming. In order to hold down casualties, what had been a policy of keeping "maximum pressure" on the enemy was changed to one of "protective reaction"--fighting only when threatened by enemy attack. As Lewis Sorley wrote in Thunderbolt (Simon & Schuster), his 1992 biography of General Abrams, when Henry Kissinger, then special assistant to the president for national security affairs, was asked "whether Abrams ever received any instructions, written or otherwise, to hold down the level of U.S. casualties, Kissinger replied, 'Not from the White House.' General Alexander Haig [Kissinger's deputy at the NSC] provided a different answer to the same question: 'Of course.'"

Sorley continued: "On June 19, just a month after the battle at Ap Bia Mountain, President Nixon cleared up any uncertainty there may have been about the existing policy. He had given explicit orders to General Abrams, he later said: 'They are very simply this: he is to conduct the war with a minimum of American casualties.'"

Vietnamization of the war had begun. At the same time Nixon gave his orders to General Abrams, the president also ordered a 25,000-man U.S. troop withdrawal by July 8 and removal of 35,000 more by early December. The U.S. military was on the way out of Vietnam, and the fighting on the ground would gradually be turned over to the ARVN. At the strategic level of the war, time had run out. As State Department Foreign Service Officer Norman Hannah, author of The Key to Failure (Madison Books) and one of the more insightful critics of the war, observed, "This is the tragedy of Vietnam--we were fighting for time rather than space. And time ran out."

Because time had run out at the strategic level, battlefield successes that had been won at the cost of so much blood and sacrifice were also rendered meaningless. In Hanoi a week before the fall of Saigon, I told my North Vietnamese counterpart on the Four Party Joint Military Team (set up by the Paris Peace Accords to deal, unsuccessfully as it turned out, with the POW/MIA issue), "You never beat us on the battlefield." He thought about that for a moment, then replied: "That may be so. But it's also irrelevant." And that irrelevance is what made Hamburger Hill so frustrating.

Previously, battlefield successes had been relevant indeed. Operation Apache Snow, of which the battle for Hamburger Hill would be a part, was designed by the U.S. XXIV Corps to keep the NVA forces in the A Shau Valley off balance. The goal was to prevent

them from using the valley as a staging area for an attack on the old imperial capital of Hue and the coastal provinces, as they had done the previous year during the Tet Offensive.

The 45-kilometer-long A Shau Valley, located in rugged country in southwestern Thua Thien province along the Laotian border, was the site of Base Area 611. This base area was a terminus of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a series of roads, trails and pipelines along the Chaine Annamitique mountains that begin in North Vietnam and continue southward along the Laotian and Cambodian border areas to some 60 kilometers from Saigon.

The valley had long been a staging area for NVA units preparing to attack the coastal provinces, and U.S. Army Special Forces established a camp there in 1963. On March 9, 1966, the NVA 95th Regiment launched a major attack on the camp, and the next day, after hard fighting, it fell to the enemy. There they would stage their capture of Hue during the 1968 Tet Offensive. After Hue was retaken, a counterattack into the A Shau was mounted on April 19, 1968, by the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), the ARVN 1st Division and an ARVN airborne task force. Called Operation Delaware/Lam Son 216, it ended on May 17, 1968, after stiff resistance and meager results. On August 4, 1968, two battalions of the 101st Airborne Division, with two ARVN battalions, launched an airmobile operation into the valley. Named Operation Somerset, it had no better luck than Operation Delaware and withdrew on August 19.

On January20, 1969, after a hardened road into the eastern part of the valley was constructed, Operation Dewey Canyon was launched into the A Shau. Led by the three battalions of the 9th Marine Regiment, the Marines not only advanced to the Laotian border but also launched a battalion-sized raid into Laos itself. They discovered that the NVA had built major roads in the area, and as many as 1,000 trucks were moving east from there. After capturing enormous enemy arms caches, including 73 AAA guns, sixteen 122mm artillery guns, nearly 1,000 AK-47 rifles and more than a million rounds of small-arms and machine-gun ammunition, the Marines withdrew on March 13, 1969.

The immediate prelude to Operation Apache Snow was an operation by the 101st Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade on March 1, 1969, into the southern end of the A Shau Valley. Labeled Operation Massachusetts Striker, it uncovered massive North Vietnamese supply depots that the enemy had abandoned in their flight northward, ironically right into the path of Operation Apache Snow, which began on May 10.

A 10-battalion operation, Apache Snow's initial assault force consisted of the 3rd Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division under the command of Colonel Joseph B. Conmy, Jr., with his 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry (3/187); the 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry (2/501); the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry (1/506); and two infantry battalions from the 1st ARVN Division. Also part of the operation were the three battalions of the U.S. 9th Marine Regiment; the U.S. 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry; and two additional ARVN infantry battalions. The operation was supported by some 217 airstrikes as well as fire from four 105mm artillery batteries, two 155mm batteries, one 175mm battery and one 8-inch battery.

The main action of the operation was the 10-day assault on Hamburger Hill, which was defended by the entrenched NVA 29th Regiment. The assault was led by the 3/187 "Rakkasans" under the command of Colonel Honeycutt. A detailed firsthand account of that battle by Colonel Conmy, the 3rd Brigade commander and a combat infantry veteran of World War II and the Korean War, appeared in Vietnam Magazine ("Crouching Beast Cornered," in the August 1990 issue). Several of his observations bear repeating, however.

First is his defense of the 3/187 commander Honeycutt, who has been severely condemned as being a heartless butcher. He was my classmate at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., the previous year and was known even then for his abrasive personality.

Enlisting in the Army at age 16 as a sixth-grade dropout, Honeycutt advanced from private to captain in five years and in the Korean War ended up commanding a rifle company in the 187th Regimental Combat Team, then commanded by Brig. Gen. William C. Westmoreland. Earning the nickname "Tiger" for his aggressiveness, he drove his subordinates hard and some would say mercilessly.

Conmy saw him in a different light. "If I ever go to war again, I want him on my team," he said. "He's a real fighter. Here's an indication of his type of leadership: In the first few days, 3/187 had sustained 50 percent casualties and there was talk of replacing the battalion. However, the troops and Colonel Honeycutt wouldn't have any part of it. They had started the thing and they wanted to finish it." And they did just that, joining forces with the 2/501, attacking from the northeast, the 2nd Battalion, 3rd ARVN Regiment, attacking from the southeast and the 1/506, attacking from the south. Reinforced by the 2/506's Alpha Company, the 3/187 would attack from the west. After the other three battalions had fought their way up the mountain, Colonel Conmy ordered them into blocking positions and gave the 3/187 the honor of making the final assault. Bynightfall on May 20, 1969, it was all over.

Conmy also commented on the negative publicity: "Well, people wanted the war to end. This was a battle; maybe if it had been fought a couple of years earlier, it would have been noted--but probably wouldn't have received the attention that it did. In 1969 there was an uproar in the United States. In their eyes we were committing mayhem and murder. Our mission was still to save South Vietnam from communism and give it back to them. If nothing else, this battle certainly helped at the time [and] it was very instrumental in aiding in the eventual withdrawal of our troops from South Vietnam. The enemy had lost his Sunday punch, so to speak."

The late General Abrams, the MACV commander at the time, should have the last word on the battle for Hamburger Hill. His biographer, Lewis Sorley, related: "Shortly after the battle and its immediate aftermath, Abrams had several people over for a game of poker. They had dinner beforehand, and Abrams told his guests: 'Today we had a congressional delegation in, including Teddy Kennedy. They were complaining about the loss of life at

Hamburger Hill. I told them the last time the 29th NVA Regiment came out of North Vietnam it destroyed Hue, and I heard from every antiquarian in the world. This time, when they came out again, I issued orders that they were to be intercepted and defeated before they could get to Hue. We drove them back into North Vietnam, but I was criticized for the casualties that entailed. If they would let me know where they would like me to fight the next battle, I would be glad to do it there.' Then they dealt the cards."

A rifle company squad leader in the Korean War and an infantry battalion operations officer in the Vietnam War, Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., is the editor of Vietnam Magazine

Vietnam: A Chronology of Politics and War.

1930:

Indochinese Communist Party, opposed to French rule, organized by Ho Chi Minh and his followers**.**

1932:

Bao Dai returns from France to reign as emperor of Vietnam under the French.

1940:

September: Japanese troops occupy Indochina, but allow the French to continue their colonial administration of the area.

1941:

May 10, 1941: Ho Chi Minh founds the Viet Minh to coordinate resistance to Japanese occupation and French colonial authorities in Vietnam.

1945:

An OSS (Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of the CIA) team parachutes into Ho Chi Minh's jungle camp in northern Vietnam and saves Ho Chi Minh who is ill with malaria and other tropical diseases.

August: Japan surrenders. Ho Chi Minh establishes the Viet Minh, a guerilla army. Bao Dai abdicates after a general uprising led by the Viet Minh.

September: Seven OSS officers, led by Lieutenant Colonel A. Peter Dewey, land in Saigon to liberate Allied war prisoners, search for missing Americans, and gather intelligence.

September 2: Ho Chi Minh reads Vietnam's Declaration and establishes the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi. Vietnam is divided.

September 26: OSS Lieutenant Colonel Dewey was killed in Saigon, the first American to be killed in Vietnam. French and Vietminh spokesmen blame each other for his death.

1946:

Ho Chi Minh attempts to negotiate the end of colonial rule with the French without success. The French army shells Haiphong harbor in November, killing over 6,000 Vietnamese civilians, and, by December, open war between France and the Viet Minh begins.

1948:

Socialist coup in Czechoslovakia extends Soviet control of eastern Europe.

1948-1949:

USSR blockades Berlin. U.S. participates in massive airlift to supply citizens in U.S. sector.

1949:

Mao Tse -Tung sets up Peoples' Republic of China.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is formed.

1950:

The U.S., recognizing Boa Dai's regime as legitimate, begins to subsidize the French in Vietnam; the Chinese begin to supply weapons to the Viet Minh.

July 25: Communist forces of North Korea invade South Korea. Korean Conflict begins.

August 3: U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) of 35 men arrives in Vietnam although the organization is not activated until September 1.

By the end of the year, the U.S. is bearing half of the cost of France's war effort in Vietnam.

1950-1954:

Senator Joseph Mc Carthy (Wisconsin) increases public's concerns over spread of Communism through speeches, accusations and investigations.

1954:

March 13-May 7: Battle of Dien Bien Phu. Two U.S. civilian fliers are shot down and killed. 3 U.S. Air Force mechanics and 2 Army paratroopers, captured by the Viet Minh, are released after the battle.

May 8: Vietnamese forces occupy the French command post at Dien Bien Phu and the French commander orders his troops to cease fire. The battle had lasted 55 days. Three thousand French troops were killed, 8,000 wounded. The Viet Minh suffered much worse, with 8,000 dead and 12,000 wounded, but the Vietnamese victory shattered France's resolve to carry on the war. General Vo Nguyen Giap commands the Vietnamese forces.

June: The CIA establishes a military mission in Saigon. Bao Dai selects Ngo Dinh Diem as prime minister of his government.

July 20: The Geneva Conference on Indochina declares a demilitarized zone at the 17th parallel.

August 11: MAAG, based in Saigon, reaches 342 men.

October 24: President Eisenhower pledges support to Diem's government and military forces.

1955:

The U.S.-backed Ngo Dinh Diem organizes the Republic of Vietnam as an independent nation; declares himself president.

Warsaw Pact is established by USSR and Soviet satellites.

1956:

Soviet troops invade Hungary to crush a nationalist uprising.

June 8: Technical Sergeant Richard B. Fitzgibbon, USAF, is murdered by another US serviceman in South Vietnam. Family's efforts finally result in his name being added to VVM wall on Memorial Day, 1999. He is now recognized as the first American to die in the area and era we associate with the Vietnam War.

1957:

October 21: Capt. Harry Cramer, Jr. dies in a munitions handling accident; the first American killed in the Second Indochina War.

Oct 22: U.S. military personnel suffer their first casualties of the Vietnam War when 13 Americans are wounded in three terrorist bombings of MAAG and U.S. Information Service installations in Saigon.

1959:

A specialized North Vietnamese Army unit, Group 559, is formed to create a supply route from North Vietnam to Vietcong forces in South Vietnam. With the approval of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, Group 559 develops a primitive route along the Vietnamese/Cambodian border, with offshoots into Vietnam along its entire length. This eventually becomes known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

July 8: The first two American combat deaths occur - Maj. Dale Buis and Msgt. Chester Ovnard - are killed in the Vietnam War by hostile fire when guerrillas strike a MAAG compound in Bien Hoa.

1960:

The National Liberation Front (NLF)--(known by derogatory slang, Viet Cong)is founded in South Vietnam.

1961:

Russians build Berlin Wall.

The U.S. military buildup in Vietnam begins.

April 19: MAAG Laos created. Green Beret "White Star" mobile training teams are also later operational. Three Green Berets are eventually KIA and 1 taken POW.

November 15: U.S. Air Force 2nd Advanced Echelon (later designated Division) is activated at Bien Hoa.

December 11: First U.S. helicopters arrive in Vietnam (380 men of the 57th and 8th Transportation Companies).

December 22: SP/4 James T. Davis (ASA's 3rd RRU) is killed in action during a firefight - the first American to die in combat.

December 26: SP/4 George Fryett is the first American captured by the VC.

Late 1961: President John F. Kennedy orders more help for the South Vietnamese government in its war against the Vietcong guerrillas. U.S. backing includes new equipment and more than 3,000 military advisors and support personnel.

1962:

Early 1962: Operation Ranchhand begins. The goal of Ranchhand is to clear vegetation alongside highways, making it more difficult for the Vietcong to conceal themselves for ambushes. As the war continues, the scope of Ranchhand increases. Vast tracts of forest are sprayed with "Agent Orange," an herbicide containing the deadly chemical Dioxin. Guerrilla trails and base areas are exposed, and crops that might feed Vietcong units are destroyed.

January 12: In Operation Chopper, helicopters flown by U.S. Army pilots ferry 1,000 South Vietnamese soldiers to sweep a NLF stronghold near Saigon. It marks America's first combat missions against the Vietcong.

February 6: U. S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) is created with headquarters in Saigon.

March 15: U.S. Army Advisory Campaign officially begins.

March 23: The first U.S. Army regular unit - 39th Signal Battalion -arrives in Vietnam.

April: Marine helicopter units launch Task Force Shufly.

October: Cuban Missile Crisis brings US and Soviet Union to brink of war.

1963:

January 2: Battle of Ap Bac. At the hamlet of Ap Bac, the Vietcong 514th Battalion and local guerrilla forces ambush the South Vietnamese Army's 7th division. For the first time, the Vietcong stand their ground against American machinery and South Vietnamese soldiers. Almost 400 South Vietnamese are killed or wounded. Three U.S. advisors are KIA and 8 WIA, and 5 U.S. helicopters shot down.

April 11: 100 men of the 25th Infantry Division are sent to Vietnam to serve as door gunners aboard helicopters.

June 16, 1963: A Buddhist monk immolates himself in Saigon.

September: The U.S. 145th Aviation Bn. is created in Vietnam.

November 1, 1963; South Vietnamese President Diem is assassinated in a coup led by high-ranking South Vietnamese military officers. US leaders had indications of plot yet failed to prevent it.

November 22: Lee Harvey Oswald assassinates President Kennedy in Dallas.

December 31: 16,300 U.S. troops are in Vietnam.

1964:

China explodes its first nuclear bomb.

April - June 1964: American air power in Southeast Asia is massively reinforced. Two aircraft carriers arrive off the Vietnamese coast prompted by a North Vietnamese offensive in Laos.

May 4: Trade embargo imposed on North Vietnam in response to attacks from the North on South Vietnam.

July 6: Assault on Nam Dong. In a bitter five-hour battle, 2 Green Berets are KIA and 7 WIA.

July 30, 1964: On this night, South Vietnamese commandos attack two small North Vietnamese islands in the Gulf of Tonkin. The U.S. destroyer Maddox, an electronic spy ship, is 123 miles south with orders to electronically simulate an air attack to draw North Vietnamese boats away from the commandos.

August 2 and 4, 1964: Gulf of Tonkin Incident**.** North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked the U.S. destroyer *Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin. A second attack allegedly occurs on August 4. The captain of the U.S.S. Maddox reports that his vessel has been fired on and that an attack is imminent. Though he later says that no attack took place, six hours after the initial report, a retaliation against North Vietnam is ordered by President Johnson. *USS Ticonderoga* and *Constellation* launch airstrikes against North Vietnamese naval bases, and destroy a major oil facility.. Two US planes are shot down by anti-aircraft tire. Lt.Everett Alvarez, Jr. becomes first U.S. POW held in North Vietnam, and longest ever held.

August 5: President Lyndon Johnson asks Congress for a resolution against North Vietnam following the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Congress debates.

August 7: Congress approves the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which allows the president to take any necessary measures to repel further attacks and to provide military assistance to any SEATO member. Senators Wayne L. Morse of Oregon and Ernest Gruening of Alaska cast the only dissenting votes. President Johnson orders the bombing of North Vietnam.

October: China, North Vietnam's neighbor and ally, successfully tests an atomic bomb.

November 1, 1964: Two days before the U.S. presidential election, Vietcong mortars shell Bien Hoa Air Base near Saigon. Four Americans are killed, 76 wounded. Five B-57 bombers are destroyed, and 15 are damaged.

December: U.S. Navy Task Group 77 (TF 77) establishes Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin.

December 24: Operation Barrel Roll. USAF begins strikes in Laos.

1965:

January 1 - February 7, 1965: Vietcong forces mount a series of attacks across South Vietnam.

January 2: Battle of Binh Gia. At the end of a six-day fight, 5 Americans advisors are KIA; 3 MIA - the highest U.S. casualties sustained in an actual battle during the advisory period. The Viet Cong briefly seize control of Binh Gia, a village only 40 miles from Saigon. Two hundred South Vietnamese troops are killed.

Feb 7: Attack on Camp Halloway. NLF commandos (VC) hit the U.S. helicopter base, barracks, and advisory compound in the central highlands of South Vietnam near Pleiku, killing 8 U.S. and wounding 126 men, mostly of the 2nd Combat Aviation Battalion. President Johnson immediately orders U.S. Navy fighter-bombers to attack military targets just inside North Vietnam.

February 10: Bombing of Qui Nhon Barracks. VC blow up the hotel housing the 140th Maintenance Detachment, killing 21 GIs and wounding 22.

February 13: President Johnson authorizes Operation Rolling Thunder, a limited but long lasting bombing offensive. Its aim is to force North Vietnam to stop supporting Vietcong guerrillas in the South.

March 2: After a series of delays, the first bombing raids of Rolling Thunder are flown against North Vietnamese targets. Operation continues, with occasional pauses, until Oct.31, 1968. By the end of 1965, 171 U.S. aircraft are lost.

March 7: U.S. Advisory Campaign officially ends. During this phase of the war, U.S. troops peak at 23,310. Some 246 GIs are killed by hostile action and 1,641 WIA by the end of 1964. An estimated 50,000 U.S. servicemen qualify for the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) between 1 July, 1958 and 3 July, 1965.

Mar 8: First U.S. combat troops reach South Vietnam. Men of the 3rd Bn., 9th Marines, 9th Marine Expeditionary Bde., 3rd Div. land at Da Nang, signalling the beginning of America's ground war in Vietnam.

Mar 11: Operation Market Time. U.S. Navy blockades Vietnam's coast. The Coastal Surveillance Force eventually assumes this duty.
April 3, 1965: An American campaign against North Vietnam's transport system begins. In a month-long offensive, Navy and Air Force planes hit bridges, road and rail junctions,

truck parks, and supply depots.

April 3-5: U.S. planes are attacked by the North Vietnamese Air Force for the first time.

April 6: National Security Action Memorandum 328 authorizes U.S. personnel to take the offensive to secure "enclaves" and to support the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

April 7: The U.S. offers North Vietnam economic aid in exchange for peace, but the offer is summarily rejected. Two weeks later, President Johnson raises America's combat strength in Vietnam to more than 60,000 troops. Allied forces from Korea and Australia are added as a sign of international support.

April 22: A patrol of the 3rd Marine Recon. Bn. engages the Viet Cong (VC) for the first time at Binh Thai. No U.S. casualties.

April 24: An executive order designates Vietnam a "combat area" and authorizes "hostile fire" pay for service there.

May 3-12: About 3,500 men of the 173rd Airborne Bde. (including the 3rd Bn., 319th Artillery) arrive in Vietnam. They constitute the first U.S. Army combat unit in-country.

May 11: Two and a half thousand Vietcong troops attack Song Be, a South Vietnamese provincial capital. After two days of fierce battles in and around the town, the Vietcong withdraw.

June: Generals Ky and Thieu seize the South Vietnamese government.

June 8: President Johnson authorizes use of U.S. troops in direct combat.

June 10-13: A full VC regiment attacks a U.S. Special Forces camp and South Vietnamese Army district headquarters near Dong Xoai. 7 U.S. are KIA, 12 MIA and 15 WIA. U.S. air attacks eventually drive the Vietcong away.

June 17: Operation Arc Light. Under the aegis of the Strategic Air Command, B-52s fly from Guam to begin bombing raids in South Vietnam. Later extended throughout Indochina.

June 27: General William Westmoreland sets in motion the first purely offensive operation by American ground forces in Vietnam.

June 28-30: First U.S. offensive is carried out by 3,000 troops of the 173rd Airborne Bde. in Zone D, sweeping into NLF territory just northwest of Saigon. 1 U.S. KIA, 9 WIA.

July 3: Vietnam Service Medal authorized by Presidential Executive Order 11231.

Aug 18-21: After a deserter from the 1st Vietcong regiment reveals that an attack is imminent against the U.S. Marine base at Chu Lai, American forces launch Operation Starlite. First major ground action fought only by U.S. troops. 5,500 men of the 3rd, 4th and 7th Marines destroy a VC stronghold near Van Tuong: In this, the first major battle of the Vietnam War, the United States scores a resounding victory. Ground forces, artillery from Chu Lai, ships and air support combine to kill nearly 700 Vietcong soldiers. U.S. forces sustain 45 dead and 204 wounded.

September - November: After the North Vietnamese Army attacks a Special Forces camp at Plei Mei, the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry is deployed against enemy regiments that identified in the vicinity of the camp. The result is the battle of the Ia Drang.

October 23 - November 20: Battle of the Ia Drang Valley. First set piece battle with the NVA occurs during *Operation Silver Bayonet.* During 29 days of fighting, the 1st Cavalry Div. Sustains 305 KIA and 524 WIA. (Half are KIA at LZ Albany alone and belong to the 2nd Bn., 7th Cav--see 17 November entry.) For 35 days, the division pursues and fights the 32d, 33d, and 66th North Vietnamese Regiments until the enemy, suffering heavy casualties, returns to bases in Cambodia.

November 17: Elements of the 66th North Vietnamese Regiment moving east toward Plei Mei encounter and ambush an American battalion, 2nd Bn. 7th Cavalry. Neither reinforcements nor effective firepower can be brought in. When fighting ends that night, 60 percent of the Americans were casualties, and almost one of every three soldiers in the battalion had been killed.

1966:

January 8: U.S. forces launch Operation Crimp. Deploying nearly 8,000 troops, it is the largest American operation of the war to that point. The goal of the campaign is to capture the Vietcong's headquarters for the Saigon area, which is believed to be located in the district of Chu Chi. Though the area in Chu Chi is razed and repeatedly patrolled, American forces fail to locate any significant Vietcong base.

January 24 -March 6: Operation Masher/White Wing. Largest search-and-destroy operation to date, conducted in part by the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Div. in Binh Dinh Province. U.S.: 228 KIA: 788 WIA.

February: Hoping for head-on clashes with the enemy, U.S. forces launch four search and destroy missions in the month of February. Although there are two minor clashes with Vietcong regiments, there are no major conflicts.

March 4-8: Operation Utah. Marines fight their first major battle with the NVA near Quang Ngai City. U.S.: 98 KIA.

March 5, 1966: The 272nd Regiment of the Vietcong 9th Division attack a battalion of the American 3rd Brigade at Lo Ke. U.S. air support succeeds in bombing the attackers into retreat.

March 7: A Vietcong regiment attacks the American 1st Brigade and a battalion of the 173rd Airborne. Americans employ heavy artillery fires to drive enemy away.

April: Operation Game Warden. U.S. Navy TF 116 (River Patrol Force) begins interdiction of enemy forces in inland waterways.

April - May 1966: In Operation Birmingham, more than 5,000 U.S. troops, backed by huge numbers of helicopters and armored vehicles, sweep the area around north of Saigon. There are small scale actions between both armies, but over a three week period, only 100 Vietcong are killed. Most battles are dictated by the Vietcong, who prove elusive.

April 11: USAF begins limiting pilots and crews stationed in Vietnam to a 12-month tour or 100 combat missions over North Vietnam.

Late May - June 1966: In late May 1966, the North Vietnamese 324B Division crosses the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and encounters a Marine battalion. The NVA holds their ground and the largest battle of the war to date breaks out near Dong Ha. Most of the 3rd Marine Division, some 5,000 men in five battalions, heads north. In Operation Hastings, the Marines backed by South Vietnamese Army troops, the heavy guns of U.S. warships and their artillery and air power drive the NVA back over the DMZ in three weeks.

Jun 30: Battle at Srok Dong. Classic conventional battle involving the 18th Inf. and 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division (ID). On Route 13, which links Vietnam to the Cambodian border, American forces are brutally assaulted by the Vietcong. Only American air and artillery support prevents a complete disaster.

July 1966: Heavy fighting near Con Thien kills nearly 1,300 North Vietnamese troops.

July 9: Battle of Minh Thanh Road. One of year's toughest encounters: fought by the 1st Infantry Division.

July 28: Co. K, 3rd Bn., 4th Marines faces a 1,000-man NVA human wave assault along the DMZ.

August 3- January 31 '67 : Operation Prairie. 3rd Marine Div. sweeps below the DMZ. Key battle fought on Mutter's Ridge. U.S.: 365 KIA; 1,662 WIA.

September 14 - November 24: Operation Attleboro. One of the war's biggest operations involves 22,000 U.S. troops from the 1st and 25th lDs; 3rd Bde., 4th ID; 196th Light Infantry and 173rd Abn. brigades. U.S. troops execute aggressive search and destroy sweeps through Tay Ninh Province. Almost immediately, huge caches of supplies belonging to the NLF 9th Division are discovered, but again, there is no large-scale, head-to-head conflict. A major battle is fought on Nov. 3 in Tay Ninh Province near the Cambodian border. The mission ends after six weeks, with more than 1,000 Vietcong killed and total U.S. casualties 155 KIA; 494 WA.

October: The Vietcong's 9th Division, having recovered from battles from the previous July, prepares for a new offensive. Losses in men and equipment have been replaced by supplies and reinforcements sent down the Ho Chi Minh trail from North Vietnam.

October 31: U.S. Navy patrol boats and helicopters sink 51 VC junks and sampans in the Mekong Delta near My Tho.

November 23: Two U.S. destroyers sink or damage 47 of 60 Communist supply barges off North Vietnam.

December 2: A single-day record of 8 U.S. planes are downed over Hanoi.

End of 1966: By the end of 1966, American forces in Vietnam reach 385,000 men, plus an additional 60,000 sailors stationed offshore. More than 6,000 Americans have been killed in this year, and 30,000 have been wounded. In comparison, an estimated 61,000 Vietcong have been killed. However, their troops now numbered over 280,000.

1967:

January- May 1967: Two North Vietnamese divisions, operating out of the DMZ that separates North and South Vietnam, launch heavy bombardments of American bases south of the DMZ. These bases include Khe Sanh, the Rockpile, Cam Lo, Dong Ha, Con Thien and Gio Linh.

January 2: In the biggest aerial duel of the war, the USAF downs 7 Communist MiG-21s over the Red River Delta.

January 8-26: America forces begin Operation Cedar Falls which is intended to drive Vietcong forces from the Iron Triangle, a 60 square mile area lying between the Saigon River and Route 13. About 16,000 U.S. troops and 14,000 soldiers of the South Vietnamese Army mount an offensive - the largest of the war to date - against the Thanh Dien Forest Preserve and the Iron Triangle. Ben Suc is razed. Participating units:1st & 25th IDs, 173rd Abn. Bde. and 11th ACR. Huge quantities of enemy supplies are captured. Over 19 days, 72 Americans are killed, victims mostly of snipers emerging from concealed tunnels and booby traps. Seven hundred and twenty Vietcong are killed.

February 16: Communist ground-fire downs 13 U.S. helicopters, a record number for a single day; 9 during an operation in the Mekong Delta.

February 22: First land-based artillery attack of the war takes place when 2nd Bn., 94th Arty/12th Marines 175mm guns based near U.S. Camp Carrol fire 63 shells at NVA anti-aircraft positions.

February 21- May 14: In one of the largest air-mobile assaults ever, 240 helicopters sweep over Tay Ninh province, beginning Operation Junction City. The goal of Junction City is to destroy Vietcong bases and the Vietcong military headquarters for South Vietnam, all of which are located in War Zone C, north of Saigon, near the Cambodian border.. Some 30,000 U.S. troops (22 battalions) take part in the mission, joined by 5,000 men of the South Vietnamese Army. Participating units: 1st, 4th & 25th lDs, 196th LIB. 173rd Abn. Bde and 11th ACR. After 72 days, Junction City ends. American forces succeed in capturing large quantities of stores, equipment and weapons, but there are no large, decisive battles. U.S. casualties: 282 KIA; 1,576 WIA.

February 22: During the war's only U.S. combat jump, 845 paratroopers of the 2nd Bn., 503rd Infantry and Battery A, 3rd Bn., 319th Artillery of the 173rd Airborne Bde. drop at Katum.

March 1-4: 1st Infantry Div. and 173rd Airborne Bde. suffer heavy casualties during Operation Junction City.

April 24 - May 5: Battle of the Hills. Near Khe Sanh, during a 12-day battle, two battalions of the 3rd Marine Regt. lose 160 KIA and 746 WIA.

April 24: American attacks on North Vietnam's airfields begin. The attacks inflict heavy damage on runways and installations. By the end of the year, all but one of the North's MiG bases has been hit.

May: Desperate air battles rage in the skies over Hanoi and Haiphong. America air forces shoot down 26 North Vietnamese jets, decreasing the North's pilot strength by half.

May 8: Con Thien. During a three-hour attack, 44 Marines are KIA.

May 18-31: Operation Prairie IV. Clearing the DMZ south of the Ben Hai River costs the Marines 164 KIA and 1,000 WIA.

Late May: In the Central Highlands of South Vietnam, Americans intercept North Vietnamese Army units moving in from Cambodia. Nine days of continuous battles leave hundreds of North Vietnamese soldiers dead.

June 2: Operation Union II. 5th Marines battle two NVA regiments in bunker-to-bunker fighting. Full operation, May 25-June 5.

June 2-3: In the Hiepdus Valley near Tam Ky, a battalion of the 5th Marines suffers 73 KIA and 139 WIA battling an NVA regiment.

June 17: VC ambush kills 31 Americans and wounds 113 men of the 1st Infantry Div. in War Zone D.

June 19-20: On the Rach-hui River, the Mobile Riverine Force (Navy's TF117 / 2nd Bde, 9th ID) sustain 28 KIA and 126 WIA in combat with the Viet Cong.

June 22: A 130-man company of the 173rd Airborne Bde. is virtually wiped out in an ambush near Dak To: 80 KIA and 34 WIA.

July 2-14: Operation Buffalo. B & C Companies., 1st Bn., 9th Marines, attacked near Con Thien, are reinforced by other battalions as well as the 3rd Marines. U.S.: 159 KIA; 345 WIA.

July 4-6: Con Thien. An NVA artillery shell directly hits a Marine bunker, killing 9 and wounding 21.

July 10-11: Central Highlands. 173rd Airborne Bde., near Dak To, loses 26 KIA; 49 WIA. Around Ducco, the 4th Infantry Div. sustains 35 KIA and 31 WIA.

July 16-Oct 31: Operation Kingfisher. A three-month sweep involving the 3rd Marine Division ends with 340 Marines KIA and 3,086 WIA.

July 23: In a five-hour battle, units of the 4th Infantry Div. wipe out an NVA company south of Ducco.

Autumn 1967: In Hanoi, as Communist forces are building up for the Tet Offensive, 200 senior officials are arrested in a crackdown on opponents of the Tet strategy.

September: Thieu is elected president of South Vietnam

September 4-7: Battle of Qua Son Valley. In a fierce four-day battle, 114 men of the 5th Marines are KIA.

September 11- October 31: Siege of Con Thien. "Hill of Angels" is held by 3rd Bn., 9th Marines. NVA troops, attempting to penetrate Marine positions, are thrown back in fierce hand-to-hand-combat on Oct. 4.
September 15: Mobile Riverine Force engages the VC on the Rach Ba Rai River, Mekong Delta: 7 U.S. KIA; 133 WIA.

October 21-23: 50,000 people demonstrate against the war in Washington, D.C.

October 29 - November 3: Battle of Loc Ninh. 1st Infantry Div. battalions (1,400 men) drive VC through the streets during house-to-house fighting.

November 3-22: Battle of Dak To. In one of the bloodiest and most sustained (19 days) battles of the war, men of the 173rd Abn. Bde. and 4th ID fight 6,000 NVA troops. Climax is at Hill 875 held by the 2nd & 4th Bns., 503rd Inf. (158 KIA; 402 WIA). Total U.S.: 285 KIA; 18 MIA; 985 WIA.

December 4: 9th Infantry Division's Riverine Force annihilates a VC battalion in the Mekong Delta.

December 6-9: Battle of Tam Quan. 1st Cav. Div. fights a fierce engagement on the Bong Son Plains.

December 10: A U.S. artillery firebase north of Saigon repels a VC/NVA attack, killing 124 of the enemy.

December 27: Battle of Thontham Khe. Marines battle in this coastal village, losing 48 KIA and 81 WIA.

1968:

January 1: Assault on Fire Base Burt. 2nd & 3rd Bns., 22nd Inf., 25th Div. face an all-out VC attack.

Mid-January 1968: In the remote northwest corner of South Vietnam, elements of three NVA divisions begin to mass near the Marine base at Khe Sanh. The ominous proportions of the build-up lead the U.S. commanders to expect a major offensive in the northern provinces.

January 20 - Apr 14: Battle of Khe Sanh. 6,633 men of the 26th Marines: 1st Bn., 9th Marines and two batteries of the 13th Marines come under siege by several NVA divisions for 77 days. A final clash is fought for Hill 881 North. U.S.: 205 KIA: 852 WIA.

January 21: At 5:30 a.m., a shattering barrage of shells, mortars and rockets slam into the Marine base at Khe Sanh. Eighteen Marines are killed instantly, 40 are wounded. The initial attack continues for two days.

January 30 - February 26: Tet Offensive. In the war's largest offensive. 88,000 Communist troops attack 105 cities and towns throughout South Vietnam. Shock attacks by Vietcong sapper-commandos are followed by wave after wave of supporting troops. A total of 81,000 lives are lost, including 3,895 U.S. KIA and 14,300 civilians. 37,000 Vietcong troops deployed for Tet have been killed. Many more had been wounded or

captured, and the fighting had created more than a half million civilian refugees. Casualties included most of the Vietcong's best fighters, political officers and secret organizers; for the guerillas, Tet is nothing less than a catastrophe. But for the Americans, it is a serious blow to public support and becomes a turning point of the war.

January 30 - February 7: Battle of Saigon. Some 11,000 U.S, and ARVN forces dislodge 1,000 VC from the capital city during a week of intense fighting.

January 31: U.S. forces sustain highest single-day casualties: 246 KIA.

January 31- March 2: Battle of Hue. In weeks of savage house-to-house combat, the 1st and 5th Marines' losses total 147 KIA; 857 WIA. 1st Cav. and 101st Abn. Divisions lose 69 KIA: 507 WIA.

February 10-17: Weekly U.S. casualties 543 KIA; 2,547 WA.

February 23: Over 1,300 artillery rounds hit the Marine base at Khe Sanh and its outposts, more than on any previous day of attacks. To withstand the constant assaults, bunkers at Khe Sanh are rebuilt to withstand 82mm mortar rounds.

March 2: In one of the costliest ambushes of the war, 48 GIs are KIA and 28 WIA four miles north of Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

March 6: While Marines wait for a massive assault, NVA forces retreat into the jungle around Khe Sanh. For the next three weeks, things are relatively quiet around the base.

March 11 - April 7: 1968: Massive search and destroy sweeps are launched against Vietcong remnants around Saigon and other parts of South Vietnam as part of Operation Resolve to Win. 22 battalions of the 1st, 9th and 25th Infantry Divisions sweep the Saigon region.

March 16: The My Lai massacre. In the hamlet of My Lai, members of a U.S. infantry company kill about two hundred civilians. Although only one member of the unit is tried and found guilty of war crimes, the repercussions of the atrocity are felt throughout the Army. However rare, such acts undid the benefit of countless hours of civic action by Army units and individual soldiers and raised unsettling questions about the conduct of the war.

March 22: Without warning, a massive North Vietnamese barrage slams into Khe Sanh. More than 1,000 rounds hit the base, at a rate of a hundred every hour. At the same time, electronic sensors around Khe Sanh indicate NVA troop movements. American forces reply with heavy bombing.

April 1-15: Operation Pegasus Brigade. 1st Air Cav Div. and 1st Marines relieve the Seige of Khe Sanh.

April 8 - May 31: Operation Complete Victory. 42 U.S battalions launch an offensive to destroy VC and NVA forces operating within the Capital Military District.

April 8: U.S. forces in Operation Pegasus finally retake Route 9, ending the siege of Khe Sanh. A 77 day battle, Khe Sanh had been the biggest single battle of the Vietnam War to that point. The official assessment of the North Vietnamese Army dead is just over 1,600 killed, with two divisions all but annihilated. But thousands more were probably killed by American bombing.

April 10-12: Battle for Lang Vei. In three days of intense fighting U S troops recapture the Special Forces Camp, are driven out and then retake it. 10 Green Berets are KIA during the seige.

April 19 - May 17: Operation Delaware. 1st Air Cavalry Division, 101st Abn Div and elements of the 196th Inf. Bde. join together to preempt enemy preparations in the A Shau Valley for another attack on Hue. U. S.: 139 killed in action.

May 5-13: Mini-Tet. Simultaneous shelling of 119 cities, towns, and military barracks, but targeting primarily Saigon, begins the second large-scale Communist offensive of the year. 9th Div. elements fight fiercely at Y-Bridge. Total U.S. 154 KIA.

May 3-10: Highest U.S. weekly hostile casualty toll of the year: 562 KIA.

May 25 - June 4: VC launch their third major assault of the year on Saigon, concentrating on the Cholon District.

June 1968: With strong, highly mobile American forces now in the area, and the base no longer needed for defense, General Westmoreland approves the abandonment and demolition of Khe Sanh.

July 4: Members of the 25th Inf. Div repulse a combined NVA/VC attack on their base at Dau Tieng.

August: Soviet troops invade Czechoslovakia in order to end liberal reforms by government leaders.

September 13- October 1: Largest sustained allied drive inside the DMZ penetrates 2 miles into the buffer zone. U.S.: 65 KIA; 77 WIA.

September 30: New Jersey goes into action, shelling NVA positions in the DMZ. First combat use of a U.S. battleship since 1953.

October 14: The Army and Marines announce they will be sending about 24,000 men back to Vietnam for involuntary second tours.

October 26: An enemy force of 500 to 600 men storms a 1st Inf. Div. base near the Cambodian border.

October 31: Operation Rolling Thunder - bombing of North Vietnam -ends. U.S. losses: 922 aircraft. After three-and-a-half years, Operation Rolling Thunder comes to an end. In total, the campaign had cost 922 American aircraft. Eight hundred and eighteen pilots are dead or missing, and hundreds are in captivity. Nearly 120 Vietnamese planes have been destroyed in air combat or accidents, or by friendly fire. According to U.S. estimates, 182,000 North Vietnamese civilians have been killed. Twenty thousand Chinese support personnel also have been casualties of the bombing.

November 1: USS Westchester County (LST 1167) mined while anchored near My Tho: 26 KIA(17 crew & 9 others). Navy's worst single loss due to hostile action during the war.

December 31: Peak U.S. annual combat deaths: 14,592.

1969:

January 1969: President Richard M. Nixon takes office as the new President of the United States. With regard to Vietnam, he promises to achieve "Peace With Honor." His aim is to negotiate a settlement that will allow the half million U.S. troops in Vietnam to be withdrawn, while still allowing South Vietnam to survive.

January 13: Operation Bold Mariner. War's largest amphibious assault -made by 2,500 Marines of 7th Fleet Amphibious Force on the Batangan Peninsula.

January 25: After a six-day battle, GIs seize a village 7 miles northwest of Quang Ngai.

February 1969: In spite of government restrictions, President Nixon authorizes Operation
Menu, the bombing of North Vietnamese and Vietcong bases within Cambodia. Over the following four years, U.S. forces will drop more than a half million tons of bombs on Cambodia.

February 22 -March 29: Post-Tet Offensive. In a major offensive, assault teams and artillery attack American bases all over South Vietnam. At the same time, South Vietnamese towns and cities are also hit. The heaviest fighting is around Saigon, but fights rage all over South Vietnam. Eventually, American artillery and airpower overwhelm the Vietcong offensive. During first 3 weeks, 1,140 Americans are KIA throughout South Vietnam. In the first two weeks alone, 4,287 are WIA.

February 25: Two U-S. DMZ positions are assaulted; NVA sappers kill 36 Marines - the highest single-battle toll in 6 months.

February 27: Communist forces shell 30 military installations and 9 towns.

March: Nixon Administration announces "Vietnamization" of the war.

March 18-26: Michelin Rubber Plantation. 11th ACR clears bunker complexes.

March 18: Operation Breakfast. During a 14-month period ending in April, 1970, B-52 strikes called "Menu" bombings are conducted inside Cambodia.

March 29: U.S. combat deaths for the week of March 23-29 raise the total to 33,641 KIA- 2 more than were KIA in the Korean War.

April 14: U.S. troops repulse a massive enemy attack against a firebase 33 miles northwest of Saigon.

April 25: 4th Bn., 9th Infantry, 25th ID fights one of the bloodiest battles in almost a year at Patrol Base Frontier City.

April 30: Peak U.S. troop strength in Vietnam: 543,482.

May 6: Worst helicopter crash of the war claims 34 U.S. lives.

May 10-20: Battle of Hamburger Hill. After 11 assaults 1000 troops of the3rd Bde., 101st Airborne Division capture Ap Bia Mountain (Hill 937) in the A Shau Valley. U.S.: 70 KIA, 372 WIA. Part of Operation Apache Snow, includes 9th Marines which ends June 7.

May 13: U.S. fire base near the Laotian border hit. 20 KIA: 65 WIA.

May 20, 1969: The Paris peace talks begin.

June 1 - July 2: Siege of Ben Het. U. S. Special Forces camp is cut off for a month. U.S. casualties total 100 KIA and WIA.

June 8, 1969: President Nixon meets with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu on Midway Island in the Pacific, and announces that 25,000 U.S. troops will be withdrawn immediately.

June 11: At Tam Ky, VC overrun the base perimeter and engage U.S. troops hand-to-hand: 16 U.S. KIA.

June 14 -15: NVA twice attack 3rd Bde. HQ of the 101st Abn. Div. just east of Ap Bia Mountain. U.S.: 18 KIA, 47 WA.

July 7: 3rd Bn., 60th Inf., 9th lnf. Div leaves Saigon, beginning the phased withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

July 8: President Richard Nixon announces the first troop withdrawals from South Vietnam.

August 13: In the heaviest fighting in 3 months, 90 Americans are KIA and 500 WIA in attacks on 150 bases and towns

August 17-26: Battle in Que Son Valley. Members of the Americal Div. battle 1,000 NVA, losing more than 60 KIA. Fierce fighting occurs on Hill 102 on August 23.

September 3, 1969: Ho Chi Minh dies.

September 6: Three battles rage in the jungle north of Saigon as the Communists shell 40 targets. 35 U.S. KIA

September 16: South of the DMZ, 25 U.S. Marines are KIA and 63 WIA.

September 17: NVA troops assault two U.S. Marine outposts just below the DMZ, killing 23 Americans, wounding 24.

November 13-14: In two days of fighting at Co Thien, 22 U.S. are KIA and 53 WIA. In other clashes near Da Nang, 17 U.S. are KIA; 60 WIA.

November 15: Nearly 20 helicopters are destroyed in a VC attack on the 4th ID's Camp Radcliffe at An Khe.

November 15, 1969: 250,000 people demonstrate against the war in Washington, D.C.

1970:

January 6: Three sapper teams penetrate the 7 Marines base at LZ Ross in the Que Son Valley: 13 U.S. KIA: 40 WIA.

February 13: Thirteen Marines are KIA and 12 WIA in an ambush in the Que Son Valley.

February 20: An armored unit of the 196th Light Inf. Bde,, Americal Div., is ambushed in the Que Son Valley; 14 U.S. KIA; 29 WIA.

March 9: U.S. Marines turn over control of I Corps to the U.S. Army: 150,000 GIs remain in the five northernmost provinces.

March 29: NVA troops attack Fire Base Jay nec- the Cambodian border:13 U.S. KIA; 30 WIA.

April 1-2: Communists stage 115 shellings and 13 ground assaults throughout Vietnam: 61 U.S. KIA.

April 15: U.S. artillery shell rigged as a VC booby-trap explodes near Duc Pho: 14 KIA; 32 WIA of the 4tn Bn., 3rd Inf. 23rd Div.

April 29:: South Vietnamese troops attack into Cambodia, pushing toward Vietcong bases.

April 30, 1970: U.S. forces invade Cambodia. A U.S. force of 30,000 -- including three U.S. divisions -- mounts an attack into Cambodia. Operations in Cambodia last for 60 days, and uncover vast North Vietnamese jungle supply depots. They capture 28,500 weapons, as well as over 16 million rounds of small arms ammunition, and 14 million pounds of rice. Although most Vietcong manage to escape across the Mekong, there are over 10,000 casualties.

May 1- June 30: Cambodia Campaign. Clearance of NVA sanctuaries in the Fish Hook and Parrot's Beak. Snuol is leveled. 30 U.S. gunboats penetrate 21.7 miles up the Mekong River as far as Neak Luong. 30,000 U.S. troops from the 4th, 9th. 25th and 1st Cavalry divisions and 11th ACR participate. U.S. casualties: 354 KIA; 1,689 WIA. Captured war's largest arms cache.

May 4, 1970: Four students are killed by National Guardsmen at Kent State University in Ohio.

May 6, 1970: More than 100 colleges are closed due to student riots over Kent State.

July 1 - 23: Siege of Fire Base Ripcord. U.S. troops abandon the artillery base north of the A Shau Valley: 61 KIA and 345 WIA of the 2nd Bn., 506th Inf., 101st Airborne Div.

August 26: U.S. helicopter is shot down while removing troops from Kham Duc firebase. killing 32 Americans aboard.

September 20: U.S. armored relief force attempting to reach a downed helicopter is shelled: 11 U.S. KIA; 11 WIA

October 14: 9 U.S. soldiers are KIA and 5 WIA by a VC booby-trap.

November 15: Booby-traps and land mines kill 9 Americans and wound 10.
November 21: Raid on Son Tay POW Camp. In an attempt to free 55 U.S. POWs, a team of 50 special forces land 23 miles west of Hanoi. Americans had been removed but the team kills foreign advisers and guards in 40 minutes. All team members return safely.

November 21: U.S. warplanes carry out the heaviest and most sustained bombing of North Vietnam since Nov. 1, 1968: 200 fighter-bombers and 50 support planes take part.

December 30: U.S. Navy ends its four-year role in inland waterway combat. About 17,000 Americans remain with South Vietnam's navy in shore positions and as advisers aboard vessels.

1971:

January 30 - April 6: Laos Campaign. *Operation Dewey Canyon II.* 10,000 GIs from the 1st Bde., 5th ID: 11th Bde., Americal; 101st Combat Aviation Grp.; 223rd CAB; 108th Artillery Group and 45th Engineer Grp. support Operation Lam Son 719, the invasion of Laos to assault the Ho Chi Minh Trail. U.S.: 257 KIA; 1149 WIA: 107 helicopters downed; 618 damaged; and 5 planes destroyed.

February 8, 1971: Laos invaded . In Operation Lam Son 719, three South Vietnamese divisions drive into Laos to attack two major enemy bases. Unknowingly, they are walking into a North Vietnamese trap. Over the next month, more than 9,000 South Vietnamese troops are killed or wounded. More than two thirds of the South Vietnamese Army's armored vehicles are destroyed, along with hundreds of U.S. helicopters and planes.

March 15 & 23: Operation Dewey Canyon II's rear support base at Khe Sanh comes under relentless Communist mortar and rocket fire. Sappers penetrate perimeter. U.S.: 3 KIA: 14 WIA.

March 28: Assault on Fire Base Mary Ann. In a one-hour battle, 50 NVA overrun the artillery base manned by 250 men of the 1st Bn., 46th lnf., 196th LIB, Americal Div.: 30 U.S. KIA; 76 WIA.

May 22: A direct rocket hit on a Fire Base Charlie 2 bunker kills 29 soldiers and wounds 50 of the 1st Bn, 61st lnf.,lst Bde., 5th Inf. Div.

June 26: Last Marine combat unit - 3rd Amphibious Bde. - in Vietnam departs from Da Nang.

July 8-9: DMZ troop turnover complete. The last 500 members of the 1st Bde., 5th Inf. Div. turnover fire bases Alpha 4 and Charlie 2 to the South Vietnamese. Two separate contingents of 50 U.S. artillerymen each remain at both bases to monitor radar equipment and operate artillery.

August 6: The last troops of the first U.S. Army combat unit to enter Vietnam -4th Bn., 503rd Inf., 173rd Airborne Bde. -are pulled out of the field.

Summer 1971: While herbicides containing Dioxin were banned for use by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1968, spraying of Agent Orange continues in Vietnam until 1971. Operation Ranchhand has sprayed 11 million gallons of Agent Orange -- containing 240 pounds of the lethal chemical Dioxin -- on South Vietnam. More than one seventh of the country's total area has been laid waste.

September 14 - 21: NVA gunners bring down 11 U.S. helicopters in the U Minh Forest, Mekong Delta.

October 8: Operation Jefferson Glenn. Final major U.S. operation in Vietnam is concluded by 8 battalions of the 101st Airborne DIV. It began Sept. 5, 1970 and lasted 399 days.

November 12: U.S. ground troops begin a defensive" rule.

December 18-19: In the heaviest single-day loss since Dec.1967, three U.S. F-4 Phantom jets are lost over northern Laos and North Vietnam. One other jet is downed on the 19th.

1972:

January 1, 1972: Only 133,000 U.S. servicemen remain in South Vietnam. Two thirds of America's troops have gone in two years. The ground war is now almost exclusively the responsibility of South Vietnam, which has over 1,000,000 men enlisted in its armed forces.

January 7: In a mortar attack on Fire Base Fiddler's Green, 18 Americans are WIA in the heaviest shelling of U.S. forces in 6 months.

February 17: Three U.S. planes are shot down by surface-to-air missiles during the 29-hour "limited duration" bombing of North Vietnam.

February 25: A five-hour action - the biggest single U.S. engagement with guerrilla forces in nearly a year - leaves 21 GIs WIA and 1 KIA.

March 7: U.S. jets battle 5 MiGs and shoot down 1 north of the DMZ in the biggest air battle in Indochina in 3 years.

March 30- April 1: Easter or Spring Offensive. Massed North Vietnamese Army artillery open a shattering barrage, targeting South Vietnamese positions across the DMZ. Upwards of 20,000 NVA troops crash across the DMZ, forcing the South Vietnamese units into a retreat. The Southern defense is thrown into complete chaos. Intelligence reports had predicted a Northern attack, but no one had expected it to come on the DMZ.

March 30, 1972: Navy's last in-country combat unit - Light Attack Squadron 4 - withdraws from Vietnam.

April 1, 1972: North Vietnamese soldiers push toward the city of Hue, which is defended by a South Vietnamese division and a division of U.S. Marines. But by April 9, the NVA are forced to halt attacks and resupply.

April 6: Operation Linebacker. U.S. planes flying 225 missions by April 9 hit NVA troops and missile emplacements above and below the DMZ. Two U.S. planes are downed by SAM-2 missiles.

April 8: The first attacks of the NVA offensive against U.S. installations leave 3 U.S. KIA and 15 WIA at Cam Ranh Bay Air Base; 2 U.S. KIA and 4 WIA at Nui Baden Mountain radio relay station.

April 8 - June 25: Siege of An Loc. Several U.S. helicopters and crews are lost in a 2-week period supporting ARVN. On July 9, a U.S. general and 3 other Gls are KIA by an enemy shell.

April 13, 1972: In an assault spearheaded by tanks, NVA troops manage to seize control of the northern part of the city of Hue. But the 4,000 South Vietnamese men defending the city, reinforced by elite airborne units, hold their positions and launch furious counterattacks. American B-52 bombers also help with the defense. A month later, Vietcong forces withdraw.

April 19: In the heaviest sea action of the war off Vietnam, the destroyer *Higbee* is badly damaged; 7th Fleet ships engage MiGs for the first time; and the U.S. missile frigate Sterett downs 1 MiG.

April 20: Seven GIs are KIA near the DMZ in rescuing two others.

April 27: Two weeks after the initial attack, North Vietnamese forces again battle toward Quang Tri City. The defending South Vietnamese division retreats. By April 29, the NVA takes Dong Ha, and by May 1, Quang Tri City.

May 8: U.S. Navy mines North Vietnamese ports.

May 10: Operation Linebacker I. At least 3 U.S. planes are lost as 150-175 aircraft hit targets over Hanoi and Haiphong. Ends Oct.

May 15: The *USS Ticonderoga* - the seventh aircraft carrier to be stationed off Vietnam - and six other warships, are sent to Vietnam. Navy downs 16 MiGs during May.

July 19: With U.S. air support, the South Vietnamese Army begins a drive to recapture Binh Dinh province and its cities. The battles last until September 15, by which time Quong Tri has been reduced to rubble. Nevertheless, the NVA retains control of the northern part of the province.

August 11: The 3rd Bn., 21st Inf., *Task Force Gimlet -the* last U.S. ground combat unit in Vietnam - is deactivated, along with G Battery, 29th F.A. Delta Co. completes the last patrol on Aug. 5, ending the U.S. infantry war. It departs Aug.23. The 1st Bn., 7th Cavalry, 1st Cav. Div. leaves the day before.

September 2: In air battles during the Spring Offensive. 47 MiGs vs, 18 U.S. planes are shot down.

November 1: 22 Americans are killed in a helicopter crash near My Tho in the Mekong Delta.

November 11: U.S. Army turns over its Long Binh HQ base to South Vietnam, symbolizing the end of direct U.S. Army participation in the war. 29,000 GIs, mainly advisors and helicopter crewmen, remain.

December 18-29: Operation Linebacker II ("Christmas Bombing"). By order of the president, a new bombing campaign starts against the North Vietnamese. In the most concentrated air offensive of the war, U.S. aircraft drop 40,000 tons of bombs over Hanoi and Haiphong. Strategic surgical strikes are planned on fighter airfields, transport targets and supply depots. 15 B-52s and 12 other U.S. aircraft are lost, along with 43 fliers KIA and 41 taken POW. . North Vietnam admits to between 1,300 and 1,600 dead.

December 13, 1972: In Paris, peace talks between the North Vietnamese and the Americans breakdown.

1973:

January 8, 1973: North Vietnam and the United States resume peace talks in Paris.

January 27: Paris Peace Accords. All warring parties in the Vietnam War sign a cease fire. United States and North Vietnam sign Paris Peace Accords, ending American combat role in war. At the time of the armistice, Saigon controls about 750/o of South Vietnam's territory and 85% of its population. ARVN is well-equipped and S.V.'s air force is the world's fourth largest. 1.1 million men are under arms.

January 27: U.S. military draft ends.

January 27: The last U.S. serviceman - Lt. Col. William B. Nolde - to die in actual combat is killed by an artillery shell at An Loc 11 hours before the truce. 4 Americans are KIA in the war's last week.

February 9 - August 15: Units of the 7th Air Force based in Thailand, as well as the 43rd Strategic Wing on Guam, flew missions over Cambodia. While backing anti-Communist forces there, at least seven airmen were KIA in concluding *Operations Arc Light and Freedom Deal.*

February 12-27: Operation Homecoming. First 142 of 587 U.S. POWs are returned.

February 23: Last U.S. air cavalry (helicopter) units depart.

March: The last American combat soldiers leave South Vietnam, though military

advisors and Marines, who are protecting U.S. installations, remain. For the United States, the war is officially over.

March 28: U.S. First Aviation Brigade departs. Cut-off date for the Vietnam Service Medal.

March 29: MACV closes down and the last U.S. combat troops leave South Vietnam. Navy operations end. Only a Defense Attache Office and a few Marine guards, as well as 8,500 U.S. civilians remain. U.S. military contingent is limited to 50.

March 29: 67 POWs are released.

April 1, 1973: Hanoi releases last 591 acknowledged American POWs.

1974:

January: Though they are still too weak to launch a full-scale offensive, the North Vietnamese have rebuilt their divisions in the South, and have captured key areas.

April 9: President Richard M. Nixon resigns, leaving South Vietnam without its strongest advocate.

December 26: The 7th North Vietnamese Army division captures Dong Xoai.

1975

January 6: In a disastrous loss for the South Vietnamese, the NVA take Phuoc Long city and the surrounding province. The attack, a blatant violation of the Paris peace agreement, produces no retaliation from the United States.

March 1: A powerful NVA offensive is unleashed in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. The resulting South Vietnamese retreat is chaotic and costly, with nearly 60,000 troops dead or missing.

March: Another NVA offensive sends 100,000 soldiers against the major cities of Quang Tri, Hue and Da Nang. Backed by powerful armored forces and eight full regiments of artillery, they quickly succeed in capturing Quang Tri province.

March 25: Hue, South Vietnam's third largest city, falls to the North Vietnamese Army.

Early April: Five weeks into its campaign, the North Vietnamese Army has made stunning gains. Twelve provinces and more than eight million people are under its control. The South Vietnamese Army has lost its best units, over a third of its men, and almost half its weapons.

April 11-13: 360 men of the 2nd Bn., 4th Marines, 31st MAU along with Helicopter Squadrons 462 and 463, evacuated 82 Americans from the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. No casualties were sustained in *Operation Eagle Pull*

April 29: Saigon defenses fail.

April 29-30: U.S. Marines and Air Force helicopters, flying from carriers off-shore, begin a massive airlift out of Saigon. 989 Marines from the 4th and 9th Marines, evacuated 1,373 Americans from Saigon. Offshore, the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade peaked at 5,200 men. Some 4,000 sailors of the 7th Fleet's Task Force 76 in the South China Sea, as did USAF units based in Thailand, assisted in *Operation Frequent Wind.* Of the 60 CH-53 helicopters used in the evacuation, two crashed at sea killing two Marine pilots.

April 30: North Vietnamese forces take over Saigon, South Vietnam surrenders to North Vietnam, ending the war and reunifying the country under communist control. Washington extends embargo to all of Vietnam.

April 30: At 4:03 a.m., two U.S. Marines (Cpl. Charles McMahon, Jr., and Lance Cpl. Darwin Judge) are killed. Part of the security guard detachment at the U.S. Embassy, they were struck by shrapnel during an NVA rocket attack on Tan Son Nhut airport. They are the last Americans to die from hostile fire Vietnam.

April 30: At dawn, the last Marines of the force guarding the U.S. embassy lift off. Only hours later, looters ransack the embassy, and North Vietnamese tanks role into Saigon, ending the war. In 15 years, nearly a million NVA and Vietcong troops and a quarter of a million South Vietnamese soldiers have died. Hundreds of thousands of civilians had been killed.

May 7: President Gerald Ford designated the end of the Vietnam era.

May 15: Battling the Khmer Rouge. As the final act in the Indochina tragedy, U.S. Marines were called upon to rescue 39 hostages taken aboard the cargo ship *Mayaguez.* 225 men of the 2nd Bn., 9th Marines, assaulted Koh Tang Island, off Cambodia. As it turned out, however, the ship had been moved. The eight U.S. Air Force helicopters of the 3rd Aerospace Rescue & Recovery Group and 21st Special Operations Squadron carrying the Marines came under intense fire by the Communist Khmer Rouge. One CH-53 was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade and burst into flames, killing 13 aboard instantly. Sixteen of the total 18 U.S. killed on the island were associated with the crash. Two were airmen. One Marine had been killed in an ambush. Wounded totaled 49.

Meanwhile, the *Mayaguez* was recovered near Poulo Wai Island by the destroyer escort *Holt* Co. D, 1st Sn., 4th Marines, boarded and took back the vacant ship. At the same time, the carrier *Coral Sea* launched air strikes against the airport at Ream, railroad marshaling yards and an oil refinery at Sihanoukville. The guided missile destroyer *Wilson* provided cover. Amidst these actions, the hostages had been released.

Tragically, 23 U.S. airmen (five crew members and 18 security policemen) to take part in the operation died in a helicopter crash in Thailand, bringing total American deaths to more than 50. But the Khmer Rouge paid a price for their piracy - 47 were killed and 55 wounded in the fighting on Koh Tang Island.

1978:

December: Vietnam invades Cambodia and topples Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge government, ending its reign of terror.

1979:

Western European countries and non-communist Asian nations support U.S.-led embargo against Vietnam, in protest against invasion of Cambodia.

1982:

February: Vietnam agrees to talks on American MIAs.

November 13: Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall is dedicated in Washington, D.C.

1988:

Vietnam begins cooperation with United States to resolve fate of American servicemen missing in action (MIA).

September/October: U.S. and Vietnam conduct first joint field investigations on MIAs.

1989:

September: Vietnam completes Cambodia withdrawal.

1992:

Vietnam's Constitution adopted.

February 3: President Clinton announces the lifting of the trade embargo.

1995:

July 28: Vietnam becomes a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

August 5: Secretary of State Warren Christopher opens U.S. embassy in Hanoi.

1997:

April 10: Former POW Douglas "Pete" Peterson is confirmed by the Senate as the first ambassador to Vietnam since the end of the war and the first ever to be posted to Hanoi. Vietnam's Le Van Bang is confirmed as Vietnam's ambassador to the United States.

April 16: U.S. and Vietnam reach copyright protection agreement, a step toward Most Favored Nation status.

For Further Information.

Searching for the names on the Internet
The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Wall Page maintains the most accurate database on the Internet. This is a free service that can be accessed at www.thewall-usa.com.

Much information about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial can be obtained from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund web site located at: www.vvmf.org.

Bibliography: