



The Vietnam War

Geography

French Indochina included:

- Laos
- Cambodia
- Vietnam

Important areas during the war included:

- Dien Bien Phu
- Hanoi (Northern Capital)
- Saigon (Southern Capital)
- Denang
- The Gulf of Tonkin



WW II and Vietnam

- South East Asia was colonized by France in the mid to late 1800's
- There were resistance movements but none were successful
- During WW II the Vietnamese communists were supported by the Allies and fought against Japanese imperialism
- In Vietnam, at the conclusion of the war, there were:
 - Vietnamese communists
 - French colonials
 - Departing Japanese officials
 - A Vietnamese Emperor who served as the “leader” during Japanese occupation (his name was Bao Dai)

End of the War Famine

- In the governmental chaos that followed the end of WWII a famine engulfed Vietnam
- Between 500,000 and 2 million people died from hunger (out of a population of 10 million)

Ho Chi Minh

- Born in 1890 and died in 1969
- Worked and travelled quite a bit during his life
- Briefly lived in the US (in Boston and NYC)
- Lived in England
- Eventually moved to France in 1917
- Attended the Paris Peace Conference and asked for an independent Vietnam (this idea was never considered)
- Became a founding member of the French Communist Party
- Traveled to Chinese-Vietnamese border region to start organizing resistance to French colonial rule in Vietnam
- The next 20 years were spent finding ways to gain Vietnamese independence while dealing with French colonials, Chinese anti-communists, Japanese imperialism, anti-communist Vietnamese, the Russians, Chinese communists, and the US



September 1945 : Ho Announces Vietnamese Independence

- Japanese puppet Emperor Bao Dai abdicates his throne
- Vietnamese independence rejected
- Chinese Nationalist forces occupy the North, English forces occupy the South
- The goal is to allow time for France to reorganize itself and resume its colonial operations in SE Asia



"All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth; all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: "All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights."

Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice...

They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots; they have drowned our uprisings in rivers of blood....

After the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies, our whole people rose to regain our national sovereignty and to found the Democratic Republic of Vietnam...

Our people have broken the chains which for nearly a century have fettered them and have won independence for the Fatherland. Our people at the same time have overthrown the monarchic regime that has reigned supreme for dozens of centuries. In its place has been established the present Democratic Republic...

We are convinced that the Allied nations which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam."

--Ho Chi Minh, September 2, 1945

Ho Chi Minh and France

- In March of 1946 Ho and the French sign a treaty with the following provisions:
 - Chinese Nationalists will leave North Vietnam
 - Vietnam will be a free state within the French Union (the details of what this freedom means will be worked out later)
- In Northern Vietnam the Viet Minh grow in popularity and win regional elections
- From 1946 onward France is increasing its presence in Vietnam, especially the North – fighting occurs

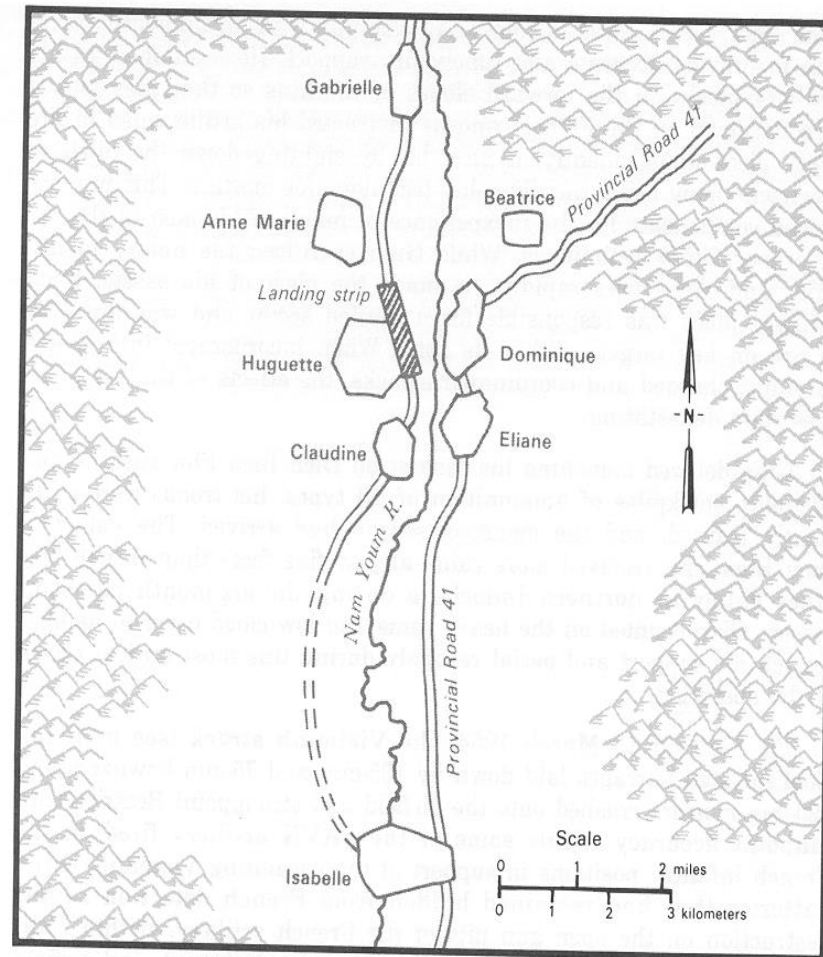
1949/1950 : China goes Commie, War in Korea

- The communists in China had a long relationship with the Vietnamese communists
- China promised and delivered military aid, training and other support for the Viet Minh against the French
- Throughout the 1950's the US offered military aid to the French, but Eisenhower rejected the idea of sending in US troops

The Battle of Dien Bien Phu : France is Out

- Ho and the Viet Minh increasingly come into conflict with France over the status of a “free” Vietnam
- Military conflict increases and culminates in two things which occur simultaneously:
 1. A conference in Geneva to settle the Indochina issues
 2. The Battle of Dien Bien Phu where French forces are routed by Ho and the Viet Minh

Combined Arms in Battle Since 1939



Map 13. Dien Bien Phu, 13 March–8 May 1954

The 1954 Geneva Settlement

- Vietnam is to be totally independent
- The nation is to be temporarily split into two parts divided at the 17th parallel
- Ho Chi Minh will lead the North from Hanoi
- In the South Emperor Bao Dai was restored to power and appointed Ngo Dinh Diem as Prime Minister
- National elections were to be held in 1956
- Freedom of movement around the country was to be allowed
 - millions moved from the North to the South (mostly Catholics)
 - Others moved to the North

Diem Rejects the Elections

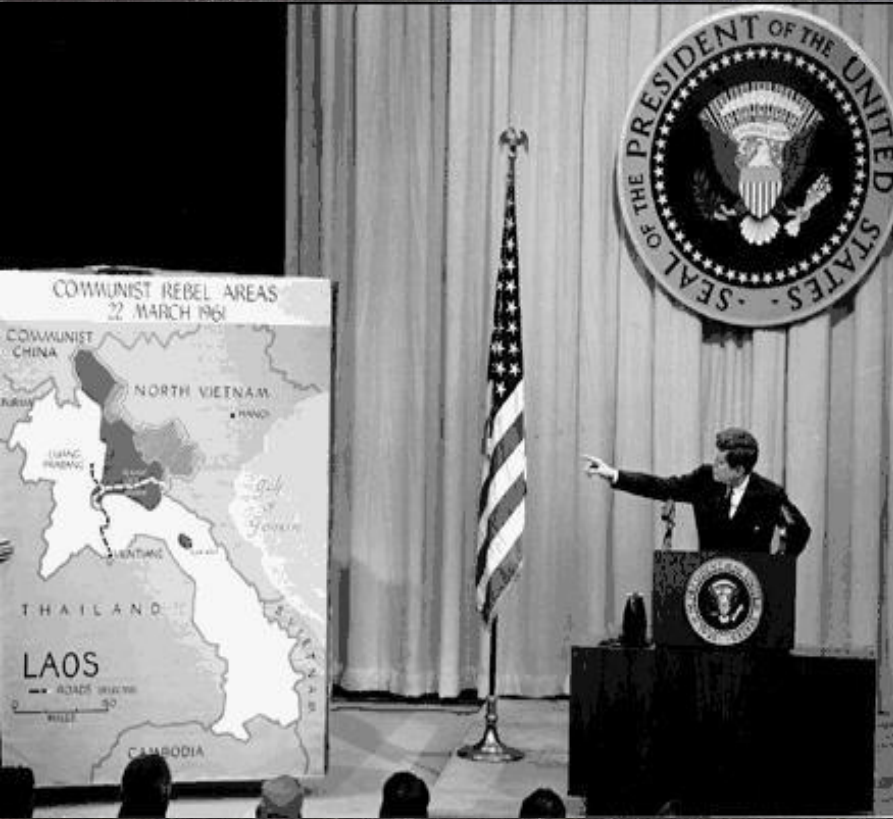
- In 1955 the leader of the South, Diem, rejects the idea of national elections due to his view that the elections would be corrupt in the North
- At the same time he holds elections in the South and through widespread corruption wins election as South Vietnam's President with over 90% of the vote
- Had national elections occurred its widely believed that Ho Chi Minh would have won by a large margin



1955 to 1960

- The South is increasingly engulfed in an internal struggle between the Government of Diem and communist forces supported from the North
- Southern government officials were routinely assassinated
- Diem's attempts to quell the violence were heavy handed and he became increasingly unpopular
- The National Liberation Front, a communist backed group, formed to unite the South under communist rule

1960 : JFK Brings the US into the War



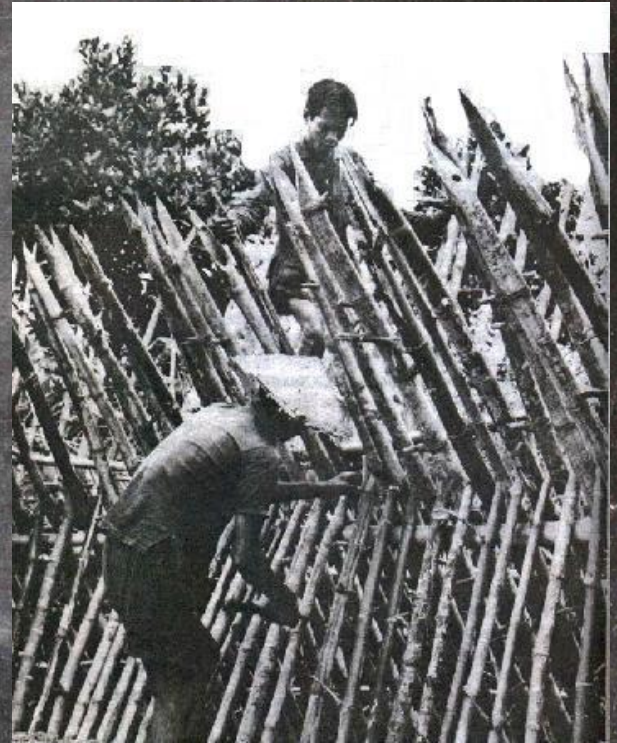
- The support for South Vietnam gradual went from Military equipment > military training (advisors) > US military intervention
- From 1960 to the time of his assassination in 1963 the number of US troops in Vietnam grew from 2,000 to 16,000
- By 1968 it was up to nearly 600,000

The Early 1960's

- Vietnam was an area where Kennedy could show his “toughness” after the failure of the Bay of Pigs
- The Berlin Wall (built in 1961) also helped increase Cold War tensions
- Despite warnings from American envoys to Vietnam Kennedy backed Diem (there was no clear alternative)
- Financial support and training of the ARVN grew despite an increasing lack of support for Diem among Vietnamese

The "Strategic Hamlet" Program

- Began in 1961
- Goal was to protect the non-VC population from the influence of the communists
- Built on the model the British used in Malaysia
- Arguable did more harm than good by turning into prison work camps that removed people from their traditional land
- Diem's hated appointees oversaw the building of the hamlets



Diem Continues to Alienate the People of South Vietnam

- Diem attacked nearly every opposition group in South Vietnam (the mafia, the hill people, Buddhists, religious cults, and others)
- In 1963 large protests of the Buddhist majority began protesting the ban on the Buddhist flag
- Diem also authorized Catholic death squads to kill problem Buddhists and destroy Buddhist pagodas around South Vietnam



South Vietnamese Generals Assassinate Diem

- Diem had eroded all support by 1963
- The US (Kennedy and the CIA) said they would not oppose the removal of Diem
- On November 2, 1963 Diem and his brother are both assassinated
- The US was glad he was gone — the new government was a general in the ARVN military
- The long term consequences for US success in Vietnam were a disaster, however, as one military coup after another occurred over the coming years
- Every new military leader was viewed as nothing more than an American stooge in the eyes of the Vietnamese



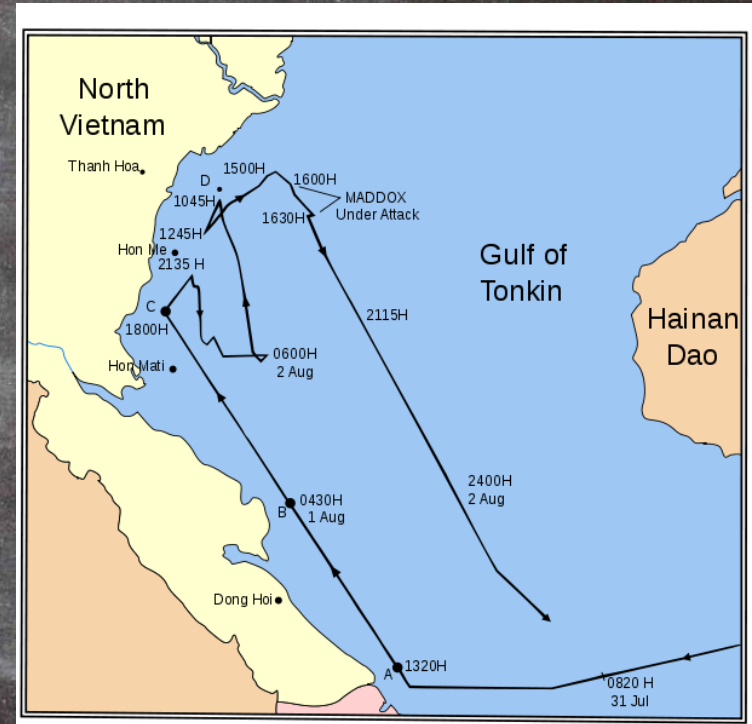
JFK Assassinated, Johnson Takes Over : The War Enters a New Phase

- November 22, 1963 John Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas
- By the end of 1963 Johnson authorizes a dramatic increase in support for South Vietnam

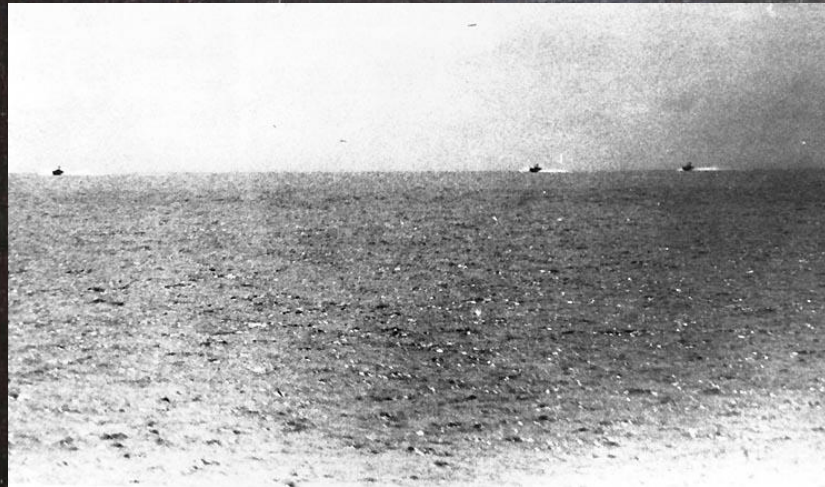


The Gulf of Tonkin "Incident"

- On August 2, 1964 the US destroyer Maddox was "engaged" by North Vietnamese patrol boats
- The Maddox opened fire on the North Vietnamese boats



- Resulted in Congress passing the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" which allowed President Johnson to use any force he deemed necessary to halt "communist aggression"
- This also directly led to a widening of the war into North Vietnam



Operation Rolling Thunder

- An intensive bombing campaign of North Vietnam
- Lasted until Nov 1968
- Intended to disrupt their ability to infiltrate and attack the South
- More tonnage of bombs was dropped on North Vietnam than all of World War II
- Cost an estimated \$900 million dollars
- CIA estimated that nearly 1,000 casualties were inflicted per week – most of them were civilians



US Marines Land in Danang (March 1965)

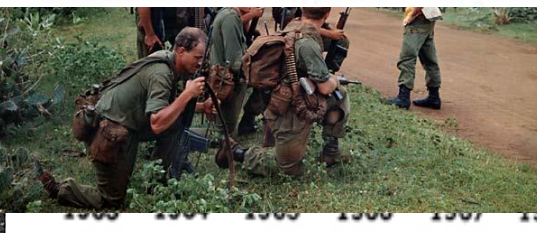


- First landing intended to secure airbases and to support ARVN
- Quickly changes to US led missions of “sweep and clear” also known as “search and destroy”
- By the end of 1965 US Troop levels reach 200,000

1966 to 1967

TABLE 14 -COMPARATIVE MILITARY CASUALTY FIGURES

Year	Killed in Action		Wounded in Action	
	U.S.	RVNAF	U.S.	RVNAF
1960	2,223	2,788
1961	11	4,004	2	5,449
1962	31	4,457	41	7,195
1963	78	5,665	218	11,488
1964	147	7,457	522	17,017
1965	1,369	11,242	3,308	23,118
1966	5,008	11,953	16,526	20,975
1967	9,377	12,716	32,370	29,448
1968	14,589	27,915	46,797	70,696
1969	9,414	21,833	32,940	65,276
1970	4,221	23,346	15,211	71,582
1971	1,381	22,738	4,767	60,939
1972	300	39,587	587	109,960
1973	237	27,901	24	131,936
1974	207	31,219	155,735
Total	46,370	254,256	153,313	783,602



1960 1961 1962 1963 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 72

January 1968 The Tet Offensive

- Major offensive all across South Vietnam
- Showed the ability of the North to wage a wide scale conventional war
- Attacked the US embassy in Saigon
- Directly refuted US military proclamations about "winning the war"



US Politics in 1968

- Student unrest increasing, the anti-war movement gains wider support
- Johnson announces he won't seek re-election
- Martin Luther King assassinated
- Robert F. Kennedy assassinated
- The Democratic National Convention erupts in violence in Chicago
- In November Nixon elected President with 43% of the popular vote – he has pledged to end the Vietnam War and to restore order in the US

Robert Kennedy



King Assassination



1968 Democratic Convention



Chicago 7 Trial

My Lai Massacre (March 1968)

- The killing took place in 1968 but was not publically known until 1969
- Somewhere between 350 – 500 civilians killed (mostly women and children)
- Only 1 person in the military was convicted for the killings
- Created worldwide anger towards the US involvement in Vietnam
- Increased the level of protest in the United States



"Vietnamization" Policy Announced by Nixon

- The Nixon plan for Vietnam was to turn the war over to the Vietnamese, or to "Vietnamize" the war
- The US would continue to provide training and material
- Gradually the number of US troops in South Vietnam would be drawn down

The Draft



- From the end of WWII to December 1, 1969 there was a draft to fill needed spots in the military
- People who were drafted could avoid service through “student deferments” which would postpone their potential draft year
- Starting in 1969 the draft was based on a lottery system without deferments
- The Baby Boom generation was mid-draft age just as the Vietnam war was peaking
- Nixon in his 1968 campaign favored an end to the draft, but this didn’t take place until 1973 with the end of the war
- About 3.5 million people served in Vietnam



1969

- Anti-war movement continues to grow
- Ho Chi Minh dies at age 79
- Woodstock Music and Arts Festival
- Peace talks are taking place in Paris
- Nixon begins secret bombing of Cambodia



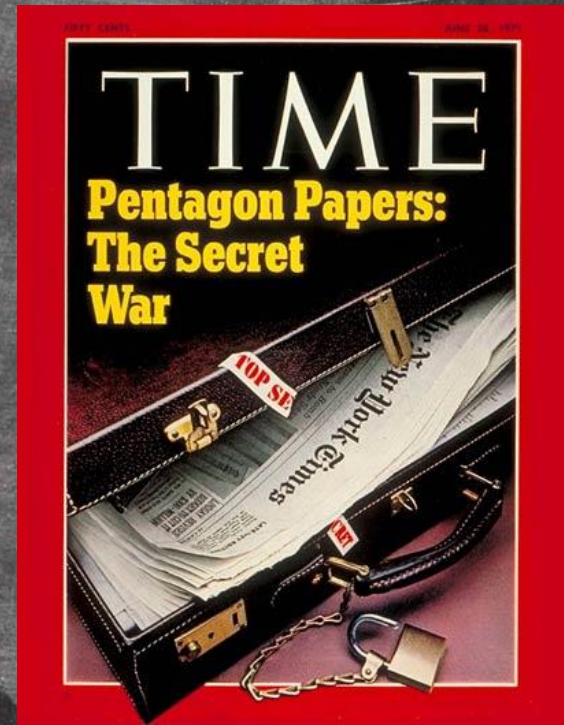
1970

- Nixon engaged in secret talks with the North to find an end to the war
- National Guard troops open fire on demonstrators at Kent State college in Ohio killing 4 students
- Number of US Military personnel drops to 250,000



1971

- The *Pentagon Papers* published exposing how the government had lied to the American public about the war in general, and how President Johnson lied to Congress
- Nixon opens relations with China – the first true diplomatic contact since it went communist in 1949



1972 through 1973

- Further US troop reductions
- The Watergate break-in takes place, Nixon re-elected
- January 28, 1973 a Peace Treaty goes into effect, US troops leave Vietnam



1974 through 1976

- After brief cease-fire the communists resume hostilities against the South Vietnamese government
- By April of 1975 the North is attacking the Southern Capital of Saigon – the US evacuates its embassy
- By July 1976 all of Vietnam is united and a new government is ruling from its capital of Hanoi



US Post War Issues

- Agent Orange
- POW's/MIA's
- Substance abuse and emotional problems will effect many soldiers for the rest of their lives
- Nixon's secret (and illegal) bombing campaign results in (among other things) the passage of the War Powers Act
- Faith in government and the military is shaken for a generation



