



VIETNAM CONFLICT TIMELINE

KEY EVENTS AND PEOPLE OF VIETNAMESE HISTORY

France Truman	1880s	The French occupy Indochina, including Vietnam, to build an overseas empire.
	1946	President Truman sends \$160 million to aid the French in Vietnam.
Eisenhower	1954	The Vietnamese defeat the French at Dien Bien Phu; the Geneva Accords divide Vietnam at the 17th parallel, creating a communist North Vietnam and a somewhat "democratic" South Vietnam supported by the U.S.
	1955	Communist threat to all Southeast Asia concerns the U.S. (domino theory)
	1950s	U.S. aid to South Vietnam props up shaky regimes.
Kennedy	1961	President Kennedy sends "advisors" to Vietnam.
	1963	16,000 U.S. advisors and military personnel sent to Vietnam; Vietnam religious struggles between Christians and Buddhists; President Kennedy killed in Dallas; Lyndon Johnson becomes president; <i>domino theory</i> becomes centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy.
	1964	Gulf of Tonkin Incident off North Vietnam leads Congress to grant war powers to President Johnson; U.S. involvement in Vietnam begins to escalate.
Johnson	1965	Viet Cong attack on Pleiku in South Vietnam leads to rapid U.S. troop build up and massive bombing of North Vietnam ("Operation Rolling Thunder").
	1966	U.S. troop strength in Vietnam reaches nearly 400,000.
	1968	Tet Offensive by North stuns U.S. military; Battle of Khe Sanh; My Lai massacre exhibits U.S. atrocities in the war; U.S. troops over 500,000; antiwar protests lead to turmoil and violence on the home front; President Johnson retires, Richard Nixon wins the presidency, promising "peace with honor."
	1969	North Vietnam's leader and guiding light, Ho Chi Minh, dies.
	1970	U.S. starts "Vietnamization" policy; secret bombing of Laos and Cambodia leads to wide-spread protests; Kent State and Jackson State students shot by National Guard and State Police forces.
Nixon	1971	<i>New York Times</i> publishes the <i>Pentagon Papers</i> , a secret history of the war.
	1972	Nixon re-elected; Christmas bombing of North Vietnam; U.S. troop strength down to 24,000.
	1973	Paris Peace Accords end U.S. involvement in Vietnam; U.S. troops and some POWs return; Congress enacts War Powers Act over veto by President Nixon.
	1974	Watergate scandal forces Nixon to resign; Gerald Ford assumes presidency and offers clemency to U.S. draft deserters and evaders.
Ford	1975	Last Americans evacuate South Vietnam; Saigon falls to communists; Ho Chi Minh's dream of a "free" and united Vietnam becomes reality.

Vietnam Glossary

- Agent Orange** — chemical defoliant dropped to strip leaves so the enemy is more visible
- AO** — area of operations
- ARVN** — South Vietnamese regular army (Army of the Republic of Vietnam); U.S. ally
- Basic** — basic training; boot camp
- Body bag** — a plastic bag used to transport dead bodies back to the States
- Body count** — number of casualties, often to determine operation's success
- Bouncing Betty** — U. S. land mine that bounces waist-high and sprays shrapnel
- Bush** — Area of jungle, mountains, or flooded rice paddies
- Charlie** — the Viet Cong; an elusive enemy for U.S
- Chopper** — helicopter, Huey
- C.O. status** — conscientious objector; moral or religious reasons to avoid combat
- Claymore** — U.S. antipersonnel mine which throws off a fan-shaped spray of fragments during its explosion; used for defense
- Clicks** — the measurement (in kilometers) for marches when companies went into the bush; for every
- Deceit** — convincing someone to believe an untruth; giving misleading, false, or incomplete information
- DMZ** — demilitarized zone; the "buffer," non-combat zone separating North and South Vietnam
- Domino Theory** — U.S. idea that if Vietnam fell to the communists, the rest of Southeast Asia would "fall like dominos in a line"
- Draft Dodger** — a person using legal or illegal methods to avoid the draft and military service
- Firefight** — a battle or exchange of fire with the enemy
- Five O'clock Follies** — nickname for the regular afternoon press briefings for U.S. journalists in Saigon, often characterized by reports of exaggerated enemy body counts and questionable claims of U.S. victories in the war (These derided official pronouncements led some reporters to venture into war zones to pursue the truth.)
- Free-fire zone** — enemy territory; this definition was often a license to kill anyone in the region
- Friendly fire** — when allies or our own personnel are accidentally killed by friendly forces, not by the enemy
- Grunt** — (also *ground pounder*) U.S. infantryman
- Guerrilla** — a member of an irregular military unit operating in small bands to undermine the enemy
- Gun ship** — armed helicopter used to support ground troops
- Hamlet** — a small Vietnamese village
- Hooch** — a hut or simple dwelling for Asian civilians, usually built with flammable thatched roofs
- Hot LZ** — a landing zone for U.S. helicopters that is under enemy attack
- In country** — being in Vietnam
- KIA** — killed in action
- Lifer** — career soldier (most in Vietnam were not lifers)
- Million-dollar wound** — a wound serious enough to warrant a return to the U.S.
- MIA** — missing in action
- Napalm** — jellied petroleum substance used in flame throwers and bombs that sticks to surfaces, including human flesh
- NVA** — North Vietnamese Army (foe of U.S.)
- PTSD** — Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; battle fatigue illness suffered by Vietnam vets
- Point man** — on U.S. patrols into the bush, the exposed man in front, usually a "cherry"
- Punji stakes** — sharpened wooden stakes hidden in deep holes; dipped in human excrement, these stakes infected U.S. soldiers if they fell in pit and stakes penetrated flesh
- R & R** — rest and relaxation; a 3–7 day vacation from the war, often to Saigon, Japan, or Hawaii
- Rolling Thunder** — President Lyndon B. Johnson's campaign of bombing North Vietnamese continuously
- Short-timer** — U.S. soldier with a short time left to serve in Vietnam
- Spider hole** — a hidden enemy foxhole, or pit
- Tour of duty** — the period of time a soldier serves his military obligation; for the army, 365 days; for the marines 395 days
- VC** — (the Viet Cong) guerrilla fighters in South Vietnam who fought against the Saigon government and the U.S.
- WIA** — wounded in action
- War of Attrition** — strategy of wearing down the enemy by killing them, rather than conquering territory
- The world** — the USA, as in a return to the (real) world
- Zippo raid** — part of a military operation, which includes burning down Vietnamese villages, often ignited with a cigarette lighter