



## ***Indochina War Timeline : 1945***

Famine in northern Vietnam during the first half 1945 is estimated to claim the lives of more than a million people. Capitalizing on the indifferent response to the crisis by the Japanese, and their French puppet government, the [Viet Minh](#) urges citizens to raid rice warehouses and gains substantial popular support as a result.

**March**

**9<sup>th</sup>** Japanese stage a coup de force, attacking French garrisons and interning the administration

**11<sup>th</sup>** Japanese force [Bao Dai](#), Emperor of Annam, to denounce the French protectorate and to proclaim the independence of his country

**April**

**12<sup>th</sup>** Vice President Harry Truman becomes President as a result of Franklin Roosevelt's sudden death.

**July**

**17<sup>th</sup>** (to Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>) Allied Chiefs of Staff at the Potsdam Conference decide to temporarily partition Vietnam at the 16th parallel (Da Nang) for the purposes of operational convenience.

It is agreed that British forces will take the surrender of Japanese forces in Saigon for the southern half of Indochina, whilst Japanese troops in the northern half will surrender to the Chinese

## August

- 6<sup>th</sup> U.S. drops an atomic bomb on Hiroshima
- 9<sup>th</sup> American forces drop an atomic bomb on Nagasaki
- 13<sup>th</sup> The Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) convenes in Tan Trao and decides to lead the population in a general uprising to capitalize on the power vacuum and seize political control of the country
- 15<sup>th</sup> Surrender of Japan (V-J Day)
- 16<sup>th</sup> The Viet Minh National Congress meets in Tan Trao and approves the Central Committee's order for a general uprising. It also elects the National Liberation Committee of Vietnam to serve as a provisional government with [Ho Chi Minh](#) as president
- 20<sup>th</sup> Viet Minh forces seize power in Hanoi
- 22<sup>nd</sup> The Viet Minh organise a celebration of national independence in Saigon
- 25<sup>th</sup> Emperor Bao Dai abdicates under pressure from the Viet Minh. He accepts the position of Supreme Advisor to the provisional DRV government. The Committee of the South is formed to govern Saigon. Six of the committee's nine members are Viet Minh
- 28<sup>th</sup> British General Douglas Gracey appointed Commander Allied Forces for the occupation of French Indochina, south of latitude 16 degrees north and head of the Army Control Commission for French Indochina. Gracey is to command all French forces in his area until the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Land Forces, South East Asia, decides that the French can set up an independent command. His mission is to:
- Disarm all Japanese forces
  - Maintain law and order
  - Protect and evacuate Allied prisoners of war
  - Liberate Allied territory

## September

- Japanese officials sign an unconditional surrender in Tokyo Bay
- Ho Chi Minh declares the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in Hanoi
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Demonstrations take place on the streets of Saigon
- French President General De Gaulle appoints Thierry d'Argenlieu as High-Commissioner in Indochina
- 9<sup>th</sup> Chinese troops enter Hanoi to disarm Japanese troops north of the 16th parallel
- 12<sup>th</sup> The first allied troops, Indian Gurkhas, arrive in Saigon from Rangoon
- 13<sup>th</sup> General Douglas Gracey, Commander Allied Land Forces and GOC 20th Indian Division, arrives in Saigon to begin disarming Japanese troops south of the 16th parallel and finds widespread anarchy

- 19<sup>th</sup>** Gracey prohibits publication of Saigon newspapers, believing they were stirring up trouble
- In an effort to restore public order Gracey issues the following proclamation:
- 21<sup>st</sup>**
- Public meetings and the carrying of arms is prohibited
  - Looters will be summarily shot
  - A curfew will be imposed between 9:30pm and 5:30am
- 22<sup>nd</sup>** British forces in Saigon release and rearm French troops that had been initially interned by the Japanese on March 9th
- 23<sup>rd</sup>** In the early hours of the morning the newly freed French forces overthrow the local DRV government and declare French authority restored in Cochin-China
- 24<sup>th</sup>** French troops ordered back to barracks, but Saigon power station is attacked in Annamite reprisals
- 25<sup>th</sup>** Massacre in the Tan Dinh suburb of Saigon: Approximately 300 French men, women and children are abducted and half of them are killed.
- 26<sup>th</sup>** American OSS chief, Major Peter Dewey, attacked and killed in Saigon after being mistaken for a Frenchman
- October**
- 2<sup>nd</sup>** General Gracey persuades French Commissioner Cedile to negotiate a cease-fire with the Viet Minh
- 5<sup>th</sup>** General Leclerc, Commander-in-Chief of the French Expeditionary Corps, arrives in Saigon
- 9<sup>th</sup>** British recognize the French Civil Administration as the sole authority in Indochina south of the 16th parallel
- November**
- 2<sup>nd</sup>** The ICP is dissolved by the Viet Minh leadership and replaced by Association for the study of Karl Marx

### **Indochina War Timeline: 1946**

#### **January**

- 6<sup>th</sup>** Elections for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) National Assembly held throughout Tonkin and Annam and covertly in Cochin-china
- 7<sup>th</sup>** Franco-Cambodian Modus Vivendi signed, giving Cambodia autonomy within the French Union
- 28<sup>th</sup>** British General Douglas Gracey departs from Saigon

#### **February**

- 28<sup>th</sup>** Sino-French agreement signed at Chungking provides for the withdrawal of Chinese troops from northern Indochina

#### **March**

- 2<sup>nd</sup>** The first session of the DRV National Assembly elects [Ho Chi Minh](#) as president and asks him to form a government
- 4<sup>th</sup>** Lord Mountbatten deactivates Indochina as a territory under Allied Southeast Asia Command and transfers all control to the French authorities  
Ho Chi Minh signs a preliminary agreement with the French in Hanoi, which states that:
- The French government recognizes DRV as a free state, having its own government, parliament, army and treasury belonging to the Indo-Chinese Federation and to the French Union.  
The French government agrees to carry out a referendum on the question of the reunification of the three "ky" (Tonkin, Annam and Cochin-China)
  - The government of Vietnam declares itself ready to accept amicably the French army when, in conformance with international agreements, it relieves the Chinese Forces.
  - Each of the parties will take all necessary measures to stop hostilities immediately, to keep military forces in their respective positions and to create the favourable climate necessary to the immediate opening of friendly and frank negotiations.
- 6<sup>th</sup>**
- Read the complete [March 6th agreement](#)
- 7<sup>th</sup>** Ho Chi Minh and General [Vo Nguyen Giap](#) defend the [March 6th Accord](#) before a crowd of 100,000 in Hanoi
- 8<sup>th</sup>** French troops land in Haiphong, the chief port in Tonkin
- 18<sup>th</sup>** French troops enter Hanoi
- 29<sup>th</sup>** Dr. Phat, member of the Cochin-China Consultative Council, is assassinated by members of the Viet Minh
- May**
- 3<sup>rd</sup>** Dr. Thach, member of the Cochin-China Consultative Council, is assassinated
- June**
- 1<sup>st</sup>** French announce the formation of an independent Cochin-China within the Indochina Federation and the French Union
- 10<sup>th</sup>** Chinese troops complete their withdrawal from Hanoi
- July**
- 6<sup>th</sup>** Franco-Viet Nam conference opens at Fontainebleau, near Paris. Phan Van Dong protests against the creation of the independent state of Cochin China and accuses the French authorities of having violated the [accords of March 6](#)
- August**
- 1<sup>st</sup>** Vietnam delegation suspend negotiations at Fontainebleau after discovering that the French are convening a conference at Da Lat in southern Annam
- 6<sup>th</sup>** With the DRV leadership at Fontainebleau the French High Commissioner

organises a conference at Da Lat to study the status of the Indochina Federation within the French Union. Representatives are invited from Cambodia, Laos, Cochin-China and South Annam

14<sup>th</sup> Da Lat conference closes with the recommendation being to create a federal Assembly of States

27<sup>th</sup> Franco-Laotian Modus Vivendi signed, giving Laos autonomy within the French Union

September

10<sup>th</sup> Fontainebleau conference ends after the parties fail to reach an agreement on Cochin-China

Prior to leaving Paris, Ho Chi Minh signs a Franco – Vietnam [Modus Vivendi](#):

- Reciprocal rights for citizens
- Reciprocal property rights and the restoration of all seized French property in Vietnam
- Indochina Piastre tied to the Franc
- Establishment of a customs union and free trade within the Indochina Federation
- To restore public order in Cochin-China:
  - a) All fighting to cease
  - b) All political / military prisoners to be released except those accused of common crimes
  - c) All unfriendly propaganda to cease

November

French forces take control of the Haiphong customs office enabling them to both collect import taxes and prevent Chinese weapon shipments from reaching the [Viet Minh](#).

8<sup>th</sup> The National Assembly ratifies the new constitution of the DRV

20<sup>th</sup> French patrol boat seizes a Chinese junk carrying contraband gasoline destined for the Viet Minh. Viet Minh militia fire on the French craft as it nears the harbor - the resulting fire fight spreads throughout Haiphong before a cease fire is reached. Viet Minh forces also attack a French detachment at Langson

23<sup>rd</sup> French Colonel Debes issue an ultimatum ordering the Viet Minh to lay down their arms and to evacuate the Chinese quarter of Haiphong. When they refuse, French forces shell the area before committing ground troops. Fierce fighting continues for several days, resulting in 200 to 3,000 Vietnamese deaths.

29<sup>th</sup> French state they have "positive proof that Ho Chi Minh is in direct contact with Moscow and is receiving advice and instructions from the Soviets"

30<sup>th</sup> Hanoi embassy reports that the Vietnamese Government has partly evacuated the city

## December

19<sup>th</sup> War breaks out after Viet Minh agents destroy the Hanoi power plant and attack French civilians. French forces respond by driving Viet Minh guerrillas out of Hanoi

## Indochina War Timeline: 1947 - 1949

### 1947

#### January

8<sup>th</sup> The State Department declares that it will approve arm sales to France, except for use in Indochina

#### February

20<sup>th</sup> [Ho Chi Minh](#) sends a letter – via the British Consul - to the French President appealing for peace. He writes "...we want our unity and our independence within the French Union; we want, a just peace which will do honor both to France and to Vietnam"

#### March

5<sup>th</sup> Mr. Emile Bollaert is named as the replacement for Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu as French High Commissioner for Indochina

27<sup>th</sup> French handwriting experts report that Ho Chi Minh's signature on the February 20th peace proposal is a forgery!

#### April

1<sup>st</sup> Bollaert arrives in Saigon

#### May

7<sup>th</sup> Paul Mus, advisor to Bollaert, meets Hoang Minh Giam, DRV Minister of Foreign Affairs, to discuss possible cessation of hostilities

20<sup>th</sup> Ho Chi Minh and Hoang Minh Giam reject France's stringent cease-fire conditions

#### July

28<sup>th</sup> Ho Chi Minh reorganizes the DRV government, appointing Catholics and a member from Cochinchina

#### September

10<sup>th</sup> Bollaert makes a speech in Hadong conceding that the question of the union of the three Kys was for the people to decide themselves, but that diplomatic representation and defense are matters for the French Union and not for individual states

22<sup>nd</sup> Chief of Surete admits to the Saigon Consul that former Emperor [Bao Dai](#) agreed to return from Hong Kong and negotiate with the French some time ago. However, Bao Dai did not return immediately so as to avoid the appearance that his agreement was a put-up job

## December

- 7<sup>th</sup>** Bao Dai signs the Ha Long Bay Agreement, which weakly commits the French to national independence for Vietnam. Prominent nationalists, including Ngo Dinh Diem, condemn the agreement as falling far short of real independence.
- 1948**
- June**
- 5<sup>th</sup>** Bao Dai and Bollaert sign a second Long Bay Agreement in which France solemnly recognizes the independence of Vietnam. However, the French government retains control over foreign relations and the Army and defers transference of other government function to future negotiations
- October**
- Leon Pignon replaces Bollaert as French High Commissioner in Indochina
- 1949**
- March**
- Bao Dai and President Auriol of France sign the Elysee Agreement:
- France reconfirms Vietnam's status as an independent Associated State within the French Union
  - France agrees to unify Vietnam and place it under Vietnamese administration – the terms to be negotiated subsequently
  - France retains control of Vietnamese Armed Forces and foreign relations
- 8<sup>th</sup>**
- 14<sup>th</sup>** French National Assembly passes a bill forming a territorial assembly for Cochinchina
- April**
- 23<sup>rd</sup>** Cochinchina assembly votes for unification with Annam and Tonkin as part of the State of Vietnam within the French Union
- June**
- 4<sup>th</sup>** French Assembly passes the Cochinchina bill unifying Vietnam
- 13<sup>th</sup>** Bao Dai arrives in Saigon
- 14<sup>th</sup>** The Associated State of Vietnam is established with Bao Dai as Head of State
- October**
- 1<sup>st</sup>** Having defeated Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalists (Kuomintang), Mao Tse-Tung proclaims the Peoples Republic of China
- 6<sup>th</sup>** U.S. Congress passes the Mutual Defense Assistance Act through which arms, military equipment and training assistance might be provided worldwide for collective defense

## **Indochina War Timeline: 1950**

**January**

- 18<sup>th</sup>** Peoples Republic of China grants diplomatic recognition of [Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam \(DRV\)](#)
- 20<sup>th</sup>** Soviet Union formally recognizes the DRV
- 21<sup>st</sup>** Nguyen Phan Long becomes Prime Minister of the State of Viet Nam
- 29<sup>th</sup>** French Assembly ratifies the Elysee Agreement, establishing Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as autonomous states within the French Union
- February**
- 2<sup>nd</sup>** France announces the ratification of the Elysee Agreement
- 3<sup>rd</sup>** United States of America recognizes [Bao Dai](#) as the head of the Associated State of Vietnam
- 7<sup>th</sup>** Great Britain recognizes Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as Associated States within the French Union
- 16<sup>th</sup>** Fearing Communists Chinese military assistance to Hanoi, France requests U.S. aid in fighting the Viet Minh
- The National Security Council reports:  
The presence of Chinese Communist troops along the border of Indochina makes it possible for arms, material and troops to move freely from Communist China to the northern Tonkin area now controlled by Ho Chi Minh. There is already evidence of movement of arms.
- 27<sup>th</sup>** It is important to United States security interests that all practicable measures be taken to prevent further communist expansion in Southeast Asia. Indochina is a key area of Southeast Asia and is under immediate threat. The neighboring countries of Thailand and Burma could be expected to fall under Communist domination if Indochina were controlled by a Communist-dominated government. The balance of Southeast Asia would then be in grave hazard.
- April**
- 27<sup>th</sup>** Nguyen Phan Long resigns as Prime Minister of Viet-Nam. Tran Van Huu, Governor of Cochin-China, succeeds him
- May**
- 1<sup>st</sup>** U.S. President Harry S. Truman approves \$10 million in military aid to the French in Indochina
- 8<sup>th</sup>** U.S Secretary of State Dean Acheson announces aid for "the Associated States of Indochina and to France in order to assist them in restoring stability and permitting these states to pursue their peaceful and democratic development"
- 24<sup>th</sup>** U.S. formally announces its intent to establish an economic aid mission to the three associated states of Indochina.
- June**
- 25<sup>th</sup>** War breaks out in Korea after the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Army crosses the 38th parallel and invades South Korea

- 27<sup>th</sup>** President Truman announces that he has "directed acceleration in the furnishing of military assistance to the forces of France and the Associated States in Indochina and the dispatch of a military mission to provide working relations with those forces."
- August**
- 3<sup>rd</sup>** The first members of U.S. MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group) arrive in Saigon
- September**
- 17<sup>th</sup>** MAAG-Indochina is established
- October**
- 1<sup>st</sup>** [Vo Nguyen Giap's](#) Viet Minh forces start an attack on the string of French forts along the Chinese border
- 10<sup>th</sup>** Brigadier General Francis G. Brink assumes his role as the first head of MAAG Indochina. MAAG was to provide material assistance to the French forces and indirect provision of military aid to the forces of the Associated States.
- 17<sup>th</sup>** All French garrisons along the Chinese border are destroyed.  
A State of Emergency is announced in Tonkin
- November**
- 8<sup>th</sup>** General de la Tour du Moulin succeeds General Alessandri as Commander-in-Chief in Tonkin and begins to introduce new tactics against the Viet Minh
- 18<sup>th</sup>** Jean Letourneau is given sole responsibility for the direction of French policy in Indochina as Minister for the Associated States
- December**
- 6<sup>th</sup>** General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny replaces Leon Pignon as French High Commissioner and General Carpentier as Commander-in-Chief of the French Union Forces (FUF)
- 17<sup>th</sup>** De Lattre de Tassigny assumes command of Indochina
- 23<sup>rd</sup>** Representatives of U.S., France, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in Saigon sign an agreement for mutual defense assistance in Indochina

## Indochina War Timeline: 1951 - 1952

**1951**

**January**

- 13<sup>th</sup>** Communist forces attack the French fortified defensive line around the Red River Delta (De Lattre Line) at Vinh-Yen, in an attempt to reach Hanoi
- 17<sup>th</sup>** After suffering repeated human wave and suicide attacks, napalm drops help the French to defeat [Vo Nguyen Giap's](#) troops and to hold the area around Vinh-Yen
- 20<sup>th</sup>** [Bao Dai](#) orders Prime Minister Tran Van Huu to form a new and more representative government

## **February**

**18<sup>th</sup>** Prime Minister Tran Van Huu announces his new cabinet

## **March**

**23<sup>rd</sup>** Viet Minh infantry divisions stage a second attempt to destroy the French defensive line with a fierce attack on Mao Khe

**29<sup>th</sup>** Despite the near destruction of Mao Khe village, French Union Forces manage to overcome the Communist offensive

## **May**

Jean Letourneau, Minister for the Associated States, confirms that the French Expeditionary Force in Indochina totals approximately 225,000 men consisting of:

- 51,000 metropolitan Frenchman
- 18,000 Legionnaires
- 9<sup>th</sup>** • 26,000 North Africans
- 15,000 Africans
- 56,000 Indochinese
- 17,000 French Officers
- 42,000 Native auxiliaries

The National armies of the three Associated States total 162,000 men

**29<sup>th</sup>** Viet Minh forces infiltrated behind the De Lattre Line combine with regular Communist Divisions to mount a surprise attack on French positions along the Day River, south of Hanoi

**30<sup>th</sup>** Lieutenant Bernard de Lattre (son of the General) is killed at Ninh-Binh during the first night of the Day River assaults

## **June**

**18<sup>th</sup>** The Communist supply line is ravaged by French riverine (Dinassaut) and airborne elements, forcing the Viet Minh to abandon their third assault in the Red River delta

## **October**

**5<sup>th</sup>** French forces manage to successfully stop repeated Viet Minh assaults against Nghia Lo in the mountainous T'ai area

## **November**

**14<sup>th</sup>** De Lattre takes the fight to the Viet Minh with a military offensive on the town of Hao Binh on the Black River, a major supply route between Communist strongholds

**15<sup>th</sup>** French forces successfully occupy Hoa Binh after meeting surprisingly little resistance. General Giap responds by launching a huge Viet Minh counteroffensive

## **December**

**19<sup>th</sup>** General de Lattre leaves Indochina

**1952**

**January**

**11<sup>th</sup>** General de Lattre de Tassigny dies of cancer. He is replaced as Commander-in-Chief by General Raoul Salan

**February**

**Salan orders Franco-Viet forces to withdraw from Hoa Binh after 3-months of ferocious and murderous fighting**

**Salan says his decision to withdraw is based on the fact that:**

- 22<sup>nd</sup>**
- **The Viet Minh have succeeded in developing a parallel supply route that bypasses the town**
  - **The number of troops pinned down in Hoa Binh jeopardizes control of the Red River Delta, which the Viet Minh have begun to infiltrate**

**June**

**6<sup>th</sup>** Nguyen Van Tam succeeds Tran Van Huu as Prime Minister

**July**

**31<sup>st</sup>** Major General Thomas J. H. Trapnell succeeds General Brink as Chief of MAAG-Indochina

**October**

**29<sup>th</sup>** General Salan launches Operation Lorraine; a large-scale offensive on the Viet Minh's supply system along the Red River. The raid is designed to divert enemy troops from the T'ai hill country

**November**

**5<sup>th</sup>** General Dwight Eisenhower wins the U.S. Presidential election

**14<sup>th</sup>** After capturing sizeable quantities of Viet Minh equipment but failing to engage the enemy, General Salan orders the withdrawal of troops from Operation Lorraine

**17<sup>th</sup>** French forces are ambushed by the Viet Minh at Chan-Moung whilst withdrawing to the de Lattre Line.

**23<sup>rd</sup>** The 308th Viet Minh Division surrounds and attacks the fortified French airbase at Na San

**December**

**1<sup>st</sup>** French defenders repel the Viet Minh attack on Na San

**18<sup>st</sup>** Jean Letourneau, Minister for the Associated States, confirms that 90,000 French Legionnaires, African and North African troops are dead, missing or wounded for the period 1945 to October 1952

**Indochina War Timeline: 1953**

**April**

- 12<sup>th</sup>** Viet Minh forces invade Laos. Laotian Government requests formal condemnation of Viet Minh aggression
- May**
- 5<sup>th</sup>** President Eisenhower tell the U.S. Congress:  
"We are proposing to make substantial additional resources available to assist the French and the Associated States in their military efforts to defeat the Communist Viet Minh aggression."
- 9<sup>th</sup>** French Government announces the appointment of General Henri-Eugene Navarre as Commander in Chief of the French Union Forces (FUF) in Indochina. Navarre had previously served as Chief of Staff to Marshal Alphonse Juin, Commander of Allied Land Forces in Central Europe.
- 10<sup>th</sup>** France announce the devaluation of the [Indochinese Piastre](#) from 17 francs to 10 francs
- 19<sup>th</sup>** General Navarre arrives in Saigon
- June**
- 20<sup>th</sup>** Military survey mission, headed by U.S. Army Pacific Commander Lt. General [John W. O'Daniel](#), arrives in Saigon to pursue discussions with Gen. Navarre on the manner in which U.S. aid to the French and Associated States armed forces in Indochina may best contribute to the defeat of Communist forces
- 28<sup>th</sup>** Joseph Laniel becomes Prime Minister of France
- 30<sup>th</sup>** Lt. General John W. O'Daniel sends details of the [Navarre plan](#) ("Principles of the Conduct of the War in Indochina") to the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC)  
Read the [Navarre Plan](#)
- July**
- 3<sup>rd</sup>** French government issues a declaration of its intention to complete the independence and sovereignty of the three Associated States (Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam)
- 17<sup>th</sup>** French Union forces launch a heavily supported airborne assault against Viet Minh depots at Lang Son northeast of Hanoi, seizing 1,000 Skoda automatic rifles
- 27<sup>th</sup>** The Commanders-in-Chief of the United Nations Command and the Korean Peoples Army sign an armistice agreement that ends the Korean War
- 28<sup>th</sup>** French forces launch operation Camargue; a coordinated air, land and sea assault on the coastal villages used by Viet Minh Regiment 95 to mount attacks on Road 1
- October**
- 22<sup>nd</sup>** Franco-Laotian Treaty of Friendship signed completing the independence of Laos
- 28<sup>th</sup>** Laos signs a mutual defense treaty with France
- November**

- 9<sup>th</sup> France grants independence to Cambodia  
Three French battalions parachute into Dien Bien Phu to defend Lai Chau against Viet Minh forces and to establish a base in the T'ai country:
- 20<sup>th</sup>
- To act as a northern defensive anchor for Laos (the southern anchor being Plain des Jarres)
  - To send out parties in all directions to seek out and engage the enemy
  - To foster development of T'ai guerrilla and partisan forces in order to supplement those already formed and based at Lai Chau
- 21<sup>st</sup> Two more French battalions parachute into Dien Bien Phu
- 29<sup>th</sup> Swedish newspaper Expressen publishes a Q&A with [Ho Chi Minh](#) in which he indicates willingness to negotiate an armistice with the French
- December
- 7<sup>th</sup> The evacuation of civilians from Lai Chau is completed  
Maurice DeJean, French Commissioner General in Indochina, states that the French High Command is hopeful that a major engagement can be forced in the vicinity of Dien Bien Phu in the near future
- 10<sup>th</sup>
- 17<sup>th</sup> Nguyen Van Tam resigns as Prime Minister of Viet Nam

#### Indochina War Timeline: 1954

##### January

- 12<sup>th</sup> [Bao Dai](#) appoints Prince Buu Loc as Prime Minister of Viet Nam. Buu Loc had previously served as Vietnamese High Commissioner in Paris.  
U.S. intelligence reports that in the event of a major Viet Minh attack on Dien Bien Phu French 105 and 155mm ammunition would last only 4 – 6 days  
President Eisenhower announces:
- 29<sup>th</sup>
- The delivery of 10 additional B-26 aircraft to Indo China, bringing the two French B-26 squadrons up to 25 planes each
  - The temporary assignment of 200 U.S. Air Force mechanics to MAAG to assist the French Air Force personnel in the maintenance of the C-47 and B-26 aircraft

##### February

- 18<sup>th</sup> Foreign Ministers of United States, United Kingdom, France and Soviet Union meet in Berlin (January 25th – February 18th) and agree to discuss the Indochina problem at the Geneva Conference on Korea scheduled for April 26th

##### March

- 4<sup>th</sup> A Viet Minh unit sabotages 11 aircraft at Gia Lam airfield
- 12<sup>th</sup> Viet Minh Regiment 42 attacks civil and military traffic on the highway

between Hanoi and Haiphong in broad daylight

13<sup>th</sup> Viet Minh forces under the command of General [Vo Nguyen Giap](#) attack the southern (Isabelle) and three northern outposts (Anne Marie, Gabrielle and Beatrice) of Dien Bien Phu. After an all night attack they succeed in occupying the north-eastern outpost (Beatrice).

14<sup>th</sup> French Command parachutes in an additional battalion in an attempt to retake Beatrice

15<sup>th</sup> Dien Bien Phu's northern outpost, Gabrielle, is overrun by Viet Minh troops. The French also lose the use of both airstrips, forcing them to rely on airdrops for all reinforcements.

16<sup>th</sup> Following Viet Minh attacks on three airfields General Navarre orders the evacuation of villages in the immediate vicinity of the airfields at Gia Lam, Cat Bi and Do Son

18<sup>th</sup> After almost continual Viet Minh bombardment Dien Bien Phu's northern-western outpost, Anne Marie, is abandoned

April

4<sup>th</sup> The French government informs U.S Ambassador to France, Douglas Dillon, that "..immediate armed intervention of US carrier aircraft at Dien Bien Phu is now necessary to save the situation."

6<sup>th</sup> British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden tells Winthrop Aldrich, U.S. Ambassador to the U.K, "French cannot lose the war between now and the coming of the rainy season however badly they may conduct it."

11<sup>th</sup> Secretary of State Foster Dulles meets with Anthony Eden and explains U.S apprehensions regarding French weakening at Geneva and discusses joint action in South East Asia. Eden states that he is against implementing any coalition prior to Geneva.

12<sup>th</sup> Major General [John W. O'Daniel](#) (aka "Iron Mike") arrives in Saigon to replace General Trapnell as Chief of MAAG-Indochina

26<sup>th</sup> The Geneva Conference begins, chaired by the United Kingdom and the U.S.S.R

27<sup>th</sup> British Prime Minister Winston Churchill tells the House of Commons that the British Government was "not prepared to give any undertakings about United Kingdom military action in Indochina in advance of the results of Geneva."

May

7<sup>th</sup> The central redoubt of Dien Bien Phu falls to the Viet Minh at 17:30

8<sup>th</sup> The first full session on Indochina begins at the Geneva Conference

14<sup>th</sup> [Bao Dai](#) summons [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) to Paris from an abbey in Bruges

U.S Ambassador to France, Douglas Dillon, reports to the State Department after meeting Diem that:

24<sup>th</sup> "On balance we were favorably impressed (with Diem) but only in the realization that we are prepared to accept the seemingly ridiculous prospect

that this Yogi-like mystic could assume the charge he is apparently about to undertake only because the standard set by his predecessors is so low."

## June

**3<sup>rd</sup>** General Paul Ely is appointed Commissioner General and Commander in Chief in Indochina. General Raoul Salan is named as his military deputy.

**4<sup>th</sup>** French Prime Minister Joseph Laniel and Viet Nam Prime Minister Buu Loc initial treaties of independence

**14<sup>th</sup>** Buu Loc resigns as Prime Minister of Viet Nam

**16<sup>th</sup>** Emperor Bao Dai announces the appointment of Ngo Dinh Diem as Prime Minister

**25<sup>th</sup>** Ngo Dinh Diem arrives in Saigon

**28<sup>th</sup>** Group Mobile 100 is almost decimated following several ambushes during 5-days of fierce fighting on Road-19 between Pleiku and Ankhe

## July

**7<sup>th</sup>** Ngo Dinh Diem takes office as Prime Minister

**17<sup>th</sup>** The 1st Korea Battalion is destroyed in a Viet Minh ambush in the Chu-Dreh pass on Road 14 between Pleiku and Ban Me Thout

Agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Cambodia and Laos signed in Geneva

The major points of the 47 articles in the a cease-fire agreement signed by the Commanders-in-Chief of the French Union Forces and People's Army of Vietnam provide for the following:

- A military demarcation line at the 17th Parallel, on either side of which the forces of the two parties shall be regrouped after their withdrawal
- A demilitarised zone to be established on either side of the demarcation line (not more than 5km wide), to act as a buffer zone against any incidents which might result in the resumption of hostilities
- Each party is given 300 days to regroup its forces to their side of the demarcation line
- The introduction of any troops reinforcements, additional military personnel or reinforcements of other war material into Vietnam is prohibited. War materiel destroyed, damaged, worn out or used up after the cessation of hostilities may be replaced on a piece for piece basis of the same type / characteristics. Suck replacements are not permitted for French Union troops stationed north of the demarcation line during the withdrawal period.
- The establishment of new military bases is prohibited throughout Vietnam territory. No military base under the control of a foreign state may be established in the regrouping zone of either party
- The liberation and repatriation of all prisoners of war and civilian internees detained by each of the two parties
- Responsibility for the execution of the agreement on the cessation of

**20<sup>th</sup>**

hostilities shall rest with the parties

- A Joint Commission, composed of an equal number of representative of the commanders of the two parties, shall be set up in order to facilitate the execution of provisions concerning joint actions by the two parties
- An International Commission shall be set up for the control and supervision over the application of the agreement. It shall be presided over by the representative of India and shall be composed of representatives of Canada, India and Poland
- Pending general elections, which will bring about the unification of Vietnam, the conduct of civil administration in each regrouping zone in the hands of the part regrouped there

21<sup>st</sup> Ngo Dinh Diem's Government of Vietnam (GVN) did not sign the agreement  
An unsigned Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference is issued that states:  
In order to insure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that all the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of the International Committee.

27<sup>th</sup> Guy La Chambre (Minister for the Associated States) tells U.S. Ambassador to France, Douglas Dillon, that he does not think that Diem is suitable to continue as Prime Minister

August

26<sup>th</sup> Donald Heath, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, informs the State Department that conspirators, including Army Chief of Staff General Nguyen Van Hinh, may be close to staging a coup d'état

31<sup>st</sup> Donald Heath warns General Hinh of " ..the serious effect on American and other free world opinion of any movement to oust Diem by force or force his resignation at this juncture."

September

8<sup>th</sup> In Manila representatives of Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, U.K. and U.S. sign the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (SEATO). Under the terms of the Manila pact, each party agrees, in the event of aggression against another party, to act or meet the common danger. The parties to the treaty also agree to guarantee the territories of Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam against aggression.

9<sup>th</sup> Diem informs Ambassador Heath that his agents have uncovered a plot by General Hinh and officers of the National Army to overthrow the government  
10<sup>th</sup> Diem relieves General Hinh of his position as Chief of Staff of the Vietnamese National Army and orders him to leave by September 12th for a 6-month "study" mission to France. General Vy replaces Hinh.

11<sup>th</sup> Diem relieves General Vy of his duties and places him on inactive service after he refuses to replace General Hinh as Army Chief of Staff. Diem appoints Chan as the new Chief of Staff.

**23<sup>rd</sup>** Bao Dai sends a telegram inviting Diem to resign the office of Prime Minister. Diem refuses, announcing that he is reorganizing his government with participation of the religious sects (Hoa Hao and Cao Dai).

**24<sup>th</sup>** Minister of Defense General Xuan announces his resignation and repudiates Diem, saying the time has come for his dismissal. Diem announces a new broader based cabinet.

**October**

**10<sup>th</sup>** The Viet Minh enter Hanoi as French forces withdraw from the city

**13<sup>th</sup>** Diem signs a Presidential Decree providing for the creation of the Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC)

**24<sup>th</sup>** U.S. President Eisenhower addresses a letter to Diem in which he promises economic aid and assistance to Viet Nam

**November**

**8<sup>th</sup>** General J. Lawton Collins arrives in Saigon to coordinate and direct U.S. activities in Vietnam

**10<sup>th</sup>** Bao Dai summons General Hinh to France

**19<sup>th</sup>** General Hinh finally departs Saigon for France

**December**

General Lawton Collins (USA) and General Paul Ely (France) sign the following Minute of understanding:

- A reduction in the strength of the Vietnam armed forces to 90,000 men, through selective discharge of the least effective personnel<sup>1</sup>
- France will grant full autonomy to the armed forces of the State of Viet Nam by 1st July 1955
- Full responsibility for assisting the Government of Viet Nam (GVN) in the organization and training of its armed forces will be assumed by the chief of the United States Military Assistance Advisory group (MAAG) on 1st January 1955, under the overall authority of the Commander-in-Chief in Indochina (General Ely)
- 13<sup>th</sup>** • U.S. and French personnel will be assigned as advisors and trainers of the Vietnamese armed forces. As the efficiency of the Vietnamese armed forces increase, the number of U.S. and French advisors will be reduced.

Ely and Collins agreed that the size of such forces is the maximum that can be effectively maintained and trained within the limits imposed by US funds likely to be made available.

They recognized that the forces of the size envisaged would be clearly insufficient in themselves to guarantee Viet Nam against external aggression. However, they acknowledged the necessity of accepting the military risk inherent in the proposed levels of forces. They further recognized that under these conditions ultimate reliance must be

placed on the Manila pact as a deterrent to a resumption of Viet Minh aggression

15<sup>th</sup> Diem promotes Deputy Defense Minister Minh to full ministerial rank, rather than appointing the American choice of Dr. Phan Huy Quat (Quat had a history of hostility to the religious sects and his appointment would have prompted several resignations from the government. U.S. officials also suspected that Diem was reluctant to hand over the army to a strong man and potential successor)

U.S. Departments of State and Defense approve the Collins-Ely Minute  
Following the failure of Diem to include Dr. Phan Huy Quat in his cabinet as Defense Minister, General Collins recommends to the State Department that:

- 16<sup>th</sup>
- That the US continue to support Diem for a short while, but without committing to specific aid programs
  - If Diem's government fails to make progress, and if the return of Bao Dai is acceptable to the U.S. government, to support his return
  - If the return of Bao Dai is unacceptable and the Diem government continues to demonstrate an inability to unite free Vietnam, then the U.S. should withdraw from Vietnam

18<sup>th</sup> Tripartite (U.K., U.S. France) discussions on Indochina take place in Paris. French Prime Minister Pierre Mendes recommends that Collins and Ely study alternatives to Diem, including Bao Dai. U.S. Secretary of State Dulles makes it clear that any investigation of an alternate solution must be conducted very carefully so as not to undermine the present Diem government.

31<sup>st</sup> French inform the U.S. that they do not wish to present a signed Franco-American agreement (Collins-Ely Minute) to the Vietnamese Government that they would have to carry out. French propose a redraft in the form a Franco-American recommendation for consideration by the GVN.

## Vietnam War Timeline: 1955

January

7<sup>th</sup> French propose a reworded draft of the Collins-Ely memorandum (of Dec 13th 1954)

20<sup>th</sup> General Collins, U.S. Special Representative in Vietnam, reports to the National Security Council (NSC) that [Diem](#) is the best available Prime Minister to lead Vietnam in the struggle against Communism and that his government has a reasonable chance of success if it has firm U.S. support and guidance and active French cooperation

24<sup>th</sup> Collins tells the NSC that if the recommendations of his report were carried through, there was at least a 50% chance of saving South Vietnam from the Communists

## February

Acting Secretary of State, Herbert Hoover Jr, informs the French Embassy that U.S. will accept the French revision to the Collins-Ely memorandum provided that:

- 1<sup>st</sup> • General Ely sends a letter to General Collins stating that the assignment of U.S. and French personnel to the Vietnamese Armed Forces will be under the direct of Chief MAAG acting under authority of the Commander-in-Chief. As the efficiency of the Vietnamese Armed Forces increases, the number of U.S. and French advisors and trainers will be decreased.
- General Ely sends a letter to Diem which includes the phrase that "The Armed Forces of Viet-Nam will be completely autonomous by July 1, 1955; specifically that all units of these armed forces will be staffed and commanded by Vietnamese officers."

8<sup>th</sup> Vietnamese Government payments to Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects / confessional forces are overdue

11<sup>th</sup> The three documents designed to replace the original Collins-Ely memorandum are signed and delivered

12<sup>th</sup> Training Relations and Instruction Mission (TRIM) – a special section within MAAG - assumes responsibility for training Vietnamese forces

22<sup>nd</sup> Representatives of the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Dan Xa, Lien Minh and Binh Xuyen confessional forces (sects) meet at Tay Ninh and agree to form a "United Front" against Prime Minister Diem

## March

21<sup>st</sup> The United Front issues a 5-day declaration calling on Diem to form a government of national union

26<sup>th</sup> The United Front's ultimatum deadline passes

29<sup>th</sup> Defense Minister Ho Thong Minh resigns in protest against Diem's refusal to consult the cabinet over his plans to fire Lai Van Sang as Chief of National Police and replace him with Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Le.

30<sup>th</sup> Binh Xuyen forces attack the Saigon-Cholon police HQ, the FAVN Cholon HQ and fire Mortar shells into the grounds of the Prime Minister's Palace

General Gambiez, Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief of French Forces in Indochina, mediates a truce between the Binh Xuyen forces and Diem's government

31<sup>st</sup> After multiple resignations from the cabinet General Collins informs the State Department that Diem is practically operating a one-man government that is unlikely to last long. He suggests that Tran Van Do and Dr. Quat be considered as alternatives to Diem.

## April

- 1<sup>st</sup>** Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, tells General Collins "...we do not think that a switch (from Diem) would be desirable or practicable at this time."
- 7<sup>th</sup>** General Collins and General Ely, Commander of French Forces in Indochina, agree that Diem is incapable of inspiring unity and must be replaced.
- 13<sup>th</sup>** Diem tells Collins he is considering forming an interim government pending general elections for a constituent assembly in two months time
- 16<sup>th</sup>** John Foster Dulles informs General Collins that he must travel to Washington for consultations for it to be practical to give any U.S. commitment to a program replacing Diem
- 18<sup>th</sup>** MAAG Chief [O'Daniel](#) recommends to General Collins a reduction in the Vietnamese Armed Forces from 196,000 men to 150,000 by the end of 1955. These forces would be divided into 4 field divisions and 6 light divisions. (On December 13th 1954 Collins and Ely had recommended that the VNAF be reduced to 90,000 men)
- 26<sup>th</sup>** Diem fires Lai Van Sang as Direct General of National Police and Surete and replaces him with Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Le. Sang declares that he will remain in his post as he can only be removed by [Bao Dai](#).
- 27<sup>th</sup>** After meeting with Collins, Dulles informs the Paris and Saigon embassy's: "The U.S. will have to maintain a position of full support for Diem until and unless Vietnamese leaders develop alternate proposals which Bao Dai would support."
- 28<sup>th</sup>** Edward Lansdale, head of the Saigon Military Mission, sends a telegram to Washington arguing that the Diem government represents a better chance for success than any other it will be possible to form in South Vietnam. Fighting erupts between the Binh Xuyen forces and the Vietnamese National Army (VNA) in the Saigon-Cholon area. The VNA drive the Binh Xuyen forces out of Cholon.
- 29<sup>th</sup>** Bao Dai issues a decree naming General Nguyen Can Vy as Supreme Commander of the VNA and empowers him to take all necessary measures to avoid armed conflict between the national army, the police forces and sects. The Cabinet unanimously counsels Diem not to transfer military command to General Vy
- 30<sup>th</sup>** A gathering of 200 people in Saigon Town Hall calling themselves the "General Assembly of the democratic and revolutionary forces of the nation" demand:
- Bao Dai's abdication
  - A new government under Diem
  - The withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps (FEC)
  - Elections for a national assembly
- The General Assembly elects a "Revolutionary Committee" of 33 members (dominated by Cao Dai Generals Trinh Minh The and Nguyen Thanh Phuong and by Hoa Hao General Ngo), which submits their demands to Diem.

## **May**

- 1<sup>st</sup>** Following Diem's victory over the Binh Xuyen and the rise in his political standing, Secretary John Foster Dulles tells General Collins that the U.S. is supporting the Diem Government  
The General Assembly of Democratic Revolutionary Forces circulates resolutions charging the French with instigating the Binh Xuyen "rebellion" and calling for the withdrawal of the FEC
- 4<sup>th</sup>** Diem admits to General Collins that some members of the Revolutionary Committee had once been in the Viet Minh, but that they were no longer affiliated
- 8<sup>th</sup>** Tripartite (U.S., U.K and France) talks on Vietnam begin in Paris  
After lengthy discussion John Foster Dulles manages to get French Prime Minister Faure to accept that Diem must be supported. They also agree that from now on U.S. and French policies no longer have any formal engagements to each other.
- 11<sup>th</sup>**
- 15<sup>th</sup>** General Lawton Collins leaves Vietnam

## **June**

- 2<sup>nd</sup>** General Paul Ely, French High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief, leaves Vietnam
- 11<sup>th</sup>** Saigon embassy informs the State Department that the latest MAAG recommendation of reducing VNAF to 170,000 by July 1956 and to 150,000 by end of 1956 will cost \$336 million. The embassy / United States Operations Mission (USOM) recommends a reduction to 100,000 men by the end of 1955 at a cost of \$180 million.

## **July**

- 14<sup>th</sup>** U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam notifies the State Department that the embassy now concurs with O'Daniel's position that the VNAF should be reduced to only 150,000 by July 1st 1956 and for the rest of the year. This 150,000 force strength would provide four field divisions of 8500 each, six light divisions of 5500 each and 13 light infantry regiments.
- 16<sup>th</sup>** Diem makes a radio address stating that South Vietnam was not a signatory of, and therefore not bound by, the Geneva Accords and that the necessary conditions for free elections did not exist in the North
- 19<sup>th</sup>** Pham Van Dong, DRV Minister of Foreign Affairs, sends a letter to Diem and Bao Dai proposing joint consultations "as provided for by the Geneva Agreements, at a place agreeable to both sides, on the Vietnamese territory, in order to discuss the problem of reunification of our country by means of free general elections all over Viet Nam."
- 20<sup>th</sup>** It is estimated that approximately 900,000 civilians have migrated from North to South Vietnam since the signing of the Geneva Agreement, in addition to the departure of 190,000 troops from the French Expeditionary Corps. 130,000 members of the Viet Minh are estimated to have moved North across the

17th Parallel.

**August**

9<sup>th</sup> Republic of Vietnam broadcasts a reply to Dong's letter reiterating previous statements that South Vietnam was not bound by the Geneva Accords and that conditions for free elections do not exist in the North

Walter Robertson, Asst. Secretary for Far East Affairs, sends a telegram to General White, Director of the Office of Military Assistance Programs, stating: "In order to avoid inevitable accusations of purposefully trying to sabotage the Geneva Settlement, it is believed United States policy with regard to MAAG personnel should be such that the number of military personnel actually present in Indochina at any given time should not exceed 342 persons, the number called for in the table of organization at the time the Geneva Accord was signed.

12<sup>th</sup> "Military personnel, including mobile training teams assigned on temporary duty mentioned in your memorandum of April 25, 1955, would appear to fall within the overall numerical limitation. Military personnel not actually present in Viet-Nam, whether carried on Saigon rolls or not, need not be charged against the 342 maximum. Replacement overlaps which result in personnel excess over the ceiling should not be encouraged. However, overlaps when considered essential to the effectiveness of MAAG operations and if held to the shortest possible duration might be justified.

"While there may develop some flexibility in the interpretation of the Geneva Accord with respect to United States military personnel, since such personnel is not specifically covered by the Agreement and the United States is not a signatory, it is believed desirable that we pursue at this time a policy which accommodates the spirit of the Geneva Settlement."

30<sup>th</sup> John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, publicly supports Diem's view that conditions in the North are not ripe for free elections

**September**

27<sup>th</sup> The State Department approves O'Daniel's plan for a VNAF force strength of 150,000

Saigon embassy reports that the Vietnamese Government plans two national referenda.

28<sup>th</sup> The first, to be held on October 23, to decide whether Bao Dai should be deposed and Diem designated Chief of State. The second, to be held on November 27, to decide on a constitution prepared by Diem's government for establishing a strong presidential system. The two referenda are to be followed by direct elections for a National Assembly.

**October**

23<sup>rd</sup> Voting begins in the Diem-Bao Dai referendum

24<sup>th</sup> Lt. General Samuel T. Williams ("Hanging Sam") replaces Major General John

**O'Daniel as Chief of MAAG-Indochina**

**26<sup>th</sup>** **Biu Van Thinh, the Minister of Interior, announces that with 98% of the 6-million votes, Diem becomes President of the new Republic of Vietnam and that Bao Dai is dethroned.**

**November**

**1<sup>st</sup>** **MAAG-Indochina renamed MAAG-Vietnam**

**December**

**9<sup>st</sup>** **The Joint Chiefs of Staff inform the Secretary of Defense "...The progressive withdrawal by the French of their military personnel without replacement and the inability of the United States to augment the MAAG personnel has created a critical situation both in carrying out redistribution of MDAP equipment and in the training of Vietnamese forces."**

**Diem terminates existing economic and financial agreements with France and calls upon France to denounce the Geneva agreements and break relations with Hanoi. Soon thereafter, he withdraws South Vietnamese representatives from the French Union Assembly.**

## **Vietnam War Timeline: 1956-1957**

**1956**

**January**

**19<sup>th</sup>** **Secretary of State John Foster Dulles decides against raising the ceiling on the number of MAAG personnel beyond the present limit of 342**

**23<sup>rd</sup>** **Dulles notifies the Saigon embassy of his decision not to authorize the raising of the MAAG ceiling, but suggests studying alternative methods including the possibility of using civilian personnel or military in civilian status**

**26<sup>th</sup>** **China requests a reconvening of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina**

**February**

**3<sup>rd</sup>** **Secretary Dulles suggests discussions with U.K. and Canada to enable the U.S. to send personnel to Vietnam to salvage and maintain US supplied Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) equipment**

**9<sup>th</sup>** **Dulles informs MAAG that the planned additional military logistical group would be limited to a maximum of 350 persons, would remain in Vietnam for a temporary period only and might be known as "Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission" (TERM)**

**25<sup>th</sup>** **State Department informs the ambassadors of the U.K., Canada and France of U.S. plan to dispatch TERM mission to Vietnam**

**March**

**4<sup>th</sup>** **Elections held for the National Constituent Assembly in South Vietnam**

Election results announced, with 90 of the 123 seats won by [Diem](#) favored candidates:

- 8<sup>th</sup>
- National Revolutionary Movement: 47 seats
  - Independents: 39 seats
  - Citizens Community: 18 seats
  - Movement for Freedom: 11 seats
  - Others: 5 seats

22<sup>nd</sup>

France agrees with Diem to withdraw all French Expeditionary Corps (FEC) personnel

April

Following India's positive response to the planned creation of TERM, Secretary Dulles informs the Saigon Embassy that, pending ICC approval, TERM personnel will begin arriving in Vietnam on May 9th. TERM is to have the double purpose of:

12<sup>th</sup>

- Supervising the recovery (identification, inventory, and accounting control) and out shipment of excess MDAP equipment
- Assisting in the improvement of Vietnamese logistical capabilities

28<sup>th</sup>

The French High Command in Indochina is officially dissolved

29<sup>th</sup>

TRIM personnel are reassigned to MAAG's Combat Arms Training and Organization Division

May

26<sup>th</sup>

International Commission in Viet Nam informs the Vietnamese Government that entry of TERM personnel into Viet-Nam should be delayed, so that the Commission may complete consideration of the matter prior to the arrival of said personnel.

June

1<sup>st</sup>

TERM personnel begin arriving in Saigon without final ICC approval  
Retired former MAAG Chief General [O'Daniel](#) opens the American Friends of Vietnam Conference

21<sup>st</sup>

Half of the 350 personnel authorized for TERM are in Viet Nam. The remaining two contingents are to be sent in early July and August

October

26<sup>th</sup>

President Diem announces the new constitution of the Republic of Vietnam

November

A popular uprising occurs in Nghe An province of North Vietnam in defiance of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's policies of land reform and land redistribution

1957

## February

22<sup>nd</sup> An assailant fires a shot at President Diem as he arrives on foot for the inauguration of the Ban Me Thuot Economic Fair. The shot misses Diem but seriously wounds the Secretary of Agrarian Reform.

## April

Diem reaches an agreement with the French ambassador for the withdrawal of the French Air Force and Navy training missions upon the completion of their present courses

15<sup>th</sup> Discussion take place in Washington about the need to increase the number of MAAG personnel as a result of the withdrawal of then French Air Force and Navy training missions

## May

4<sup>th</sup> Diem directs French to conduct a phased withdrawal of their advisors as soon as possible

5<sup>th</sup> President Diem arrives in Honolulu at the start of a 21-day visit to the United States

9<sup>th</sup> Presidents Diem and Eisenhower meet in Washington

24<sup>th</sup> Government of Vietnam requests that MAAG advisors fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of French Air Force and Naval advisors on May 31st. To accommodate the request 44 military personnel engaged in housekeeping functions are shifted to the Embassy's roll. This makeshift enables the total military personnel to be increased from 692 in MAAG and TERM to a total of 736.

## July

26<sup>th</sup> During TERM's first nine months of operations it ships out more that \$36,000,000 worth of MDAP equipment from Viet Nam. This is over and above the \$137,000,000 worth of MDAP equipment that had be shipped out prior to TERM's introduction.

## October

22<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Army officers injured in a dynamite explosion and in a separate incident a number of U.S. enlisted men are injured when their bus is dynamited

## Vietnam War Timeline: 1958-1960

### 1958

#### March

7<sup>th</sup> Walter Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs recommends that the UK, Canada, France and India be sounded out about increasing the number of [MAAG](#) personnel

#### June

- 7<sup>th</sup> Walter Robertson sends a letter to the Secretary of State stressing the need to abolish the 342 ceiling on MAAG personnel and explains, "...for some time now only a handful of [TERM](#) personnel has been engaged in the original mission of equipment salvage. Practically, the duties of most TERM personnel are indistinguishable from those of the MAAG personnel."
- July
- 14<sup>th</sup> MAAG objects to [ARVN](#) plans to open a Commando Training School a Nha Trang
- August
- 12<sup>th</sup> Thirty Binh Xuyen members are killed during their attack on the Michelin rubber plantations
- 1959
- January
- North Vietnam's Central Executive Committee issues Resolution 15, changing its strategy from "Political struggle" to "armed struggle"
- April
- 4<sup>th</sup> President Eisenhower makes his first commitment to maintain South Vietnam as a separate National State
- May
- 19<sup>th</sup> North Vietnamese high command organizes the 559th Transportation Group to construct and maintain a route for infiltration into South Vietnam. The route would become known as the [Ho Chi Minh Trail](#) and facilitated the movement of troops and transportation of supplies from North of the [DMZ](#). Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) extends the advisory and training operation in Vietnam as follows:
- Provide MAAG advisors down to and including Infantry Regimental level and Artillery, Armored and separate Marine Battalion level.
  - Place the advisors in the field with the HQ of the units being advised in order to furnish advice on the preparation of daily plans, monitor the day-to-day conduct of operations and render on the spot advice based on the situation as it exists at the time. This will include tactical advice as well as that provided on logistical matters, including medical support problems, the evacuation of the wounded, transportation problems, road and rail construction, bridging supply procedures, maintenance of equipment etc.
  - Evaluate Vietnamese requests for additional equipment, road building materials, heavy engineering equipment etc. in the light of the direct observations of the on-the-spot advisors as well as upon other information available.
  - Evaluate the level of cooperation and coordination among Vietnamese Army, Navy and Air Force elements and take necessary corrective action
- 25<sup>th</sup>

with Vietnamese officials in those instances where deficiencies are reported by on-the-spot advisors.

- The activities of MAAG Advisors must be limited to advisory functions and under no circumstances shall they participate directly in combat operations nor will they accompany units on anti-guerrilla operations in areas immediately adjacent to national boundaries.

## July

7<sup>th</sup> Saigon embassy informed that the DoD is considering detailing U.S. Army Special Forces teams to MAAG Viet-Nam to act as advisors on anti-guerrilla tactics

8<sup>th</sup> [Viet Cong](#) guerrillas armed with small arms and home made bombs attack the U.S. 7th Infantry Advisory Detachment at Bien Hoa. American advisors Major Dale Buis and Master Sergeant Chester Ovnard, who were watching a movie in the mess hall, are killed along with a Vietnamese mess attendant and an ARVN soldier. One VC member was also killed.

## August

10 ARVN officers attend the British Jungle Warfare School in Johor, Malaya  
90% of voters turn out in elections for the National Assembly in South Vietnam

The election results are:

- 30<sup>th</sup>
- National Revolutionary Movement: 78 seats
  - Independents: 36 seats
  - Socialist: 4 seats
  - Social Democrats: 3 seats
  - Vietnam Restoration Party: 2 seats

## 1960

### February

CINCPAC argues against using U.S. Special Forces teams to train the Vietnamese civil guard because:

- 15<sup>th</sup>
- If overt it would violate the MAAG / TERM ceiling
  - If covert, experience in Laos has shown the difficulty in maintaining plausibility of such cover

Instead, Admiral Felt believes the training of selected Vietnamese civil guard personnel on Okinawa by Special Forces instructors is the only practical and feasible solution

19<sup>th</sup> Elbridge Durbrow, U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, strongly recommends that U.S. Army Special Forces be assigned to USARMA (United States Army Attaché) Saigon, to give anti-guerrilla training to the Vietnamese civil guard. He indicates that GVN is agreeable to this extension of USARAMA activities

and regards this type of training as an urgent need.

Edward Lansdale informs John Irwin, Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, that the Office for Special Operations (OSO) concurs with Durbrow's recommendation.

27<sup>th</sup> President [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) states he is anxious to have sufficient numbers of U.S. Army Special Forces personnel brought in to train both the Civil Guard and ARVN.

March

11<sup>th</sup> Secretary of Defense notifies CINCPAC that from April 1<sup>st</sup> personnel arriving in Viet-Nam will no longer be assigned to TERM and that the mission will be phased out by 31<sup>st</sup> December 1960

30<sup>th</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) reverse MAAG policy by deciding that the Army of Vietnam should develop an anti-guerrilla capability within the regular force structure

April

North Vietnam imposes universal military conscription and begins infiltration of cadres in to the South

May

5<sup>th</sup> U.S. announces an increase in the number of MAAG advisors above the Geneva imposed ceiling of 342

August

9<sup>th</sup> Captain Kong Le leads the 2nd Lao Paratroop Battalion in a coup d'état against the right wing government of Prince Somsanith and forms a neutralist government of Laos, open to both Royalists and the [Pathet Lao](#).

15<sup>th</sup> General Phoumi Nosavan demounces Kong Le as a communist and forms a counter-coup committee (Revolutionary Committee) nominally under Prince Boun Oum in Savannakhét.

16<sup>th</sup> Wishing to end the fighting in Laos, Kong Le hands over power to a neutralist government under Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma.

September

1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr replaces General Samuel Williams as Chief of MAAG-Vietnam

November

9<sup>th</sup> Senator John F. Kennedy narrowly defeats Vice President Richard M. Nixon in the U.S. Presidential election

11<sup>th</sup> South Vietnamese paratroopers stage a failed coup d'état against President Ngo Dinh Diem

December

4<sup>th</sup> The Soviet Union begins airlifting Supplies to Kong Le's neutralist forces in Vientiane. Thailand, which supplies food and fuel to the city, had previously

- imposed a blockade on the Laos capital
- 9<sup>th</sup> Laos Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma hands power to the military and leaves Vientiane for Cambodia
- 13<sup>th</sup> Backed by the CIA, Phoumi Nosavan's Royal Laotian Army begin their assault on the capital.
- 16<sup>th</sup> Phoumi's royalist troops retake Vientiane. Kong Le retreats north towards the [Plaine des Jarres](#).
- 20<sup>th</sup> [National Liberation Front](#) of South Vietnam forms with the aim of overthrowing Diem's government and reunifying the country
- 31<sup>st</sup> U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam: Approximately 900

## Vietnam War Timeline: 1961 - 1962

1961

January

The CIA begins supplying, training and supporting the [Hmong](#) (Meo) tribesman in Laos under Vang Pao (Operation Momentum)

1<sup>st</sup> Kong Le's troops take control of the [Plaine des Jarres](#), join forces with the [Pathet Lao](#) and receive airdropped Soviet supplies.

6<sup>th</sup> Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev makes a speech promising support for "wars of national liberation"

7<sup>th</sup> The Royal Laotian Army launches a failed attempt to capture the Plaine des Jarres from Kong Le, despite significant numerical superiority.

20<sup>th</sup> John F. Kennedy is inaugurated as the 35th President of the United States  
Kennedy approves the Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP) for Vietnam, which offers money to increase the size of the Army and Civil Guard in exchange for [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) broadening his government, streamlining the military chain of command and agreeing a national strategy to defeat the [Viet Cong](#)

February

13<sup>th</sup> U.S. opens negotiations on the CIP with Diem. The talks drag on until May without much success as a result of his reluctance to move away from centralized decision-making.

March

15<sup>th</sup> Frederick Nolting Jr. replaces Elbridge Durbrow as U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam

23<sup>rd</sup> President Kennedy tells the American public "The security of all Southeast Asia will be endangered if Laos loses its neutral independence."

April

9<sup>th</sup> Diem re-elected President of the Republic of Vietnam

19<sup>th</sup> After 3 days of fighting, the CIA's invasion force of 1,543 Cuban exiles is

defeated at the Bay of Pigs by Castro's army. The U.S. Navy rescues 26 members of the Brigade, the rest are captured or killed.

## May

- 3<sup>rd</sup> The Royal Laotian Army and Pathet Lao declare a ceasefire, though PL / North Vietnamese forces continue their attack on the Hmong outpost of Padong
- 11<sup>th</sup> In National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 52, President Kennedy approves the deployment of a 400-man Special Forces group to Nha Trang to accelerate [ARVN](#) training.
- 11<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> U.S. Vice President Lyndon Johnson visits South Vietnam and proclaims strong U.S. support for Diem.
- 16<sup>th</sup> A Laos peace conference is convened in Geneva attended by the Neutralists, Pathet Lao and Rightists. Also in attendance are Laos' neighbours, the [ICC](#) member countries as well as the U.S. and France.

## June

- 1<sup>st</sup> CIA backed Hmong tribesman abandon Padong to the Pathet Lao / North Vietnamese, and establish a new base at Long Cheng
- 9<sup>th</sup> President Ngo Dinh Diem requests U.S. troops to train the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) officers and technical specialists. He also proposes increasing the ARVN from 170,000 to 270,000 men and that [MAAG](#) be enlarged accordingly to train the new soldiers.
- 27<sup>th</sup> In order to avoid accusations of violating the Laos ceasefire agreement, the CIA stop all military shipments to the Hmong

## August

- 11<sup>th</sup> In NSAM 65 Kennedy agrees to support an increase in the ARVN to 200,000 men, if Diem produces a plan for using the forces.

## September

- 15<sup>th</sup> MAAG Vietnam publishes the "Geographically Phased National Level Operation Plan for Counterinsurgency". It improves on the original CIP with a specific three-phase timetable of operations for winning control of the countryside from the Viet Cong.
- 18<sup>th</sup> Viet Cong forces attack Phuoc Vinh, 55 miles from Saigon, and behead the province chief
- 21<sup>st</sup> 5th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces activated at Fort Bragg
- 30<sup>th</sup> The British Advisory Mission (BRIAM) is established in Saigon under Robert Thompson to advise and assist the [GVN](#) in their efforts to suppress the Communist insurgency

## October

- 5<sup>th</sup> National Intelligence Estimate states that 80% to 90% of the Viet Cong are recruited locally, rather than infiltrating from the North.
- 11<sup>th</sup> President Kennedy, in [NSAM 104](#), authorizes the introduction of the 'Air Force "Jungle Jim" Squadron into Viet Nam for the initial purpose of training

Vietnamese forces.' Codenamed "[Farm Gate](#)", detachment 2A of the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron departs for its covert mission in Vietnam on November 5th.

RVN President Diem proclaims a state of emergency

18<sup>th</sup> General Maxwell D. Taylor, President Kennedy's Special Military Representative, arrives in Vietnam to investigate the possibility of employing U.S. combat troops.

November

U.S. Special Forces, under the direction of the CIA, begin working with the [Montagnard](#) tribesman of Buon Enao village as a counterinsurgency experiment. They fortify the hamlet and create a 30-man strike force to patrol the village and to conduct ambushes to ward off Viet Cong.

1<sup>st</sup> In a eyes only cable to President Kennedy, General Taylor states that the Viet Cong guerrillas are well on their way to success in South Vietnam. He recommends increasing the number of American advisory personnel, improving ARVN mobility and argues that a U.S. task force (6-8,000 troops) be sent under the guise of assisting with flood relief in the Mekong Delta. The task force would "conduct such combat operations as are necessary for self-defense and for the security of the area in which (it) is stationed"

In his formal report to President Kennedy, General Maxwell Taylor recommends:

- 3<sup>rd</sup>
1. U.S. military forces be sent to Vietnam to demonstrate American resolve and boost ARVN confidence
  2. To solve the weaknesses of the Diem regime the U.S. should form a "limited partnership" with GVN. (i.e. in exchange for increased material assistance the U.S. would expect to "share in decision-making", rather than "advise only")

7<sup>th</sup> Special National Intelligence Estimate 10-4-61 assesses that North Vietnam would respond to larger U.S troop commitments by increasing support to the Viet Cong

13<sup>th</sup> Robert Thompson, head of BRIAM in Saigon, submits to Diem a plan to clear the Viet Cong from the Mekong Delta and to secure the population through the creation of "strategic" and "defended hamlets". Rather than killing insurgents, the plan aims to win the loyalty of the rural population by providing the necessary security for economic and social improvements to progress.

22<sup>nd</sup> In [NSAM 111](#) President Kennedy adopts most of Maxwell Taylor's "limited partnership" recommendations, but decides not to send combat troops to Vietnam. The U.S. will substantially increase the number of advisors and provide GVN with helicopters and transport aircraft. In return Diem is

expected to broaden his government and streamline the military command structure.

25<sup>th</sup> Diem tells Ambassador Nolting that the quid pro quo aspects of the U.S proposal will allow the Communists to capture the nationalist cause. He also states that broadening the government to make it more popular is putting the cart before the horse. Giving security to the people is vital to regain popular support.

27<sup>th</sup> State Department tells Ambassador Nolting to drop the insistence on explicit U.S. influence on decisions by Diem's government. Instead, State assumes such influence will be a by-product of the close collaboration between U.S. and GVN.

## December

11<sup>th</sup> The first U.S. Army helicopter units, the 57th and 8th Transportation Companies, arrive in Saigon. The 32 "Flying Banana" CH-21 helicopters are to provide air transportation for ARVN soldiers.

31<sup>st</sup> U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam: 3,205

1962

## February

3<sup>rd</sup> President Diem creates the Inter-Ministerial Committee for [Strategic Hamlets](#) (IMCSH). Nominally under Bui Van Long, the committee is actually controlled by the President's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu.

8<sup>th</sup> Military Assistance Command, Vietnam ([MACV](#)) formed to support the increased American involvement in RVN. Headquartered in Saigon it is placed under the command of General Paul D. Harkins. MAAG remains responsible for training the Republic of Vietnam's Armed Forces ([RVNAF](#)).

## March

19<sup>th</sup> Diem approves Robert Thompson's Delta Pacification Plan

22<sup>nd</sup> GVN launches Operation Sunrise, a test of the Strategic Hamlet program. Rather than beginning in the Mekong Delta, Diem chooses the heavily infiltrated province of Binh Duong, north of Saigon.

## April

15<sup>th</sup> Marine Helicopter squadrons arrive in Soc Trang, southwest of Saigon, as part of Operation Shufly. The Marines are to provide air support to ARVN troops fighting the Viet Cong.

## May

8<sup>th</sup> Pathet Lao forces attack Phoumi Nosavan's garrison in Nam Tha in northwest Laos. The defenders flee across the Mekong.

15<sup>th</sup> Kennedy sends 5,000 Marines and 50 jet fighters to Thailand in response to the recent Communist attacks in Laos

## June

23<sup>rd</sup> Souvanna Phouma forms a new coalition government in Laos with the

neutralists, Pathet Lao and rightists all having seats in the cabinet.

## July

After receiving optimistic reports on the situation in Vietnam, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara requests the development of a plan to build up the RVNAF and phase-out U.S. involvement by 1965.

23<sup>rd</sup>

All 14 nations sign the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos in Geneva. The agreement states that all foreign military personnel are to leave the country by October 7th 1962.

31<sup>st</sup>

The Australian Army Training Team, Vietnam ([AATTV](#)) begins to arrive in South Vietnam to assist with teaching the ARVN

## August

14<sup>th</sup>

General Paul Harkins, head of MACV, is instructed to develop a Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam (CPSVN) in accordance with McNamara's directive of 23rd July.

## October

6<sup>th</sup>

All U.S military personnel, including Special Forces, are withdrawn from Laos, in accordance with the Geneva neutrality agreement.

14<sup>th</sup>

A U-2 spy plane photographs Soviet nuclear missile sites in Cuba

22<sup>nd</sup>

In a televised address President Kennedy announces the discovery of medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBM) in Cuba

27<sup>th</sup>

An American U-2 spy plane is shot down over Cuba

28<sup>th</sup>

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev announces that he has agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba

## November

26<sup>th</sup>

Diem reorganizes the RVNAF and increases the Corps Tactical Zones ([CTZ](#)) from three to four

## December

31<sup>st</sup>

U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam: 11,300

## Vietnam War Timeline: 1963 - 1964

### 1963

#### January

2<sup>nd</sup>

At Ap Bac, [ARVN](#) units equipped with U.S. helicopters and armored personnel carriers suffer their first major pitched battle defeat by [Viet Cong](#) forces.

#### May

8<sup>th</sup>

Buddhists in Hue demonstrate against a recently imposed ban on the public display of religious flags. When initial attempts to disperse the crowd fail, government troops fire on the protesters, killing nine and wounding fourteen. [President Diem](#) blames the incident on the Viet Cong.

- 10<sup>th</sup>** Buddhist clergy submit a manifesto to the [GVN](#). Their demands include; freedom to fly the Buddhist flag, legal equality with the Catholic church and the punishment of the perpetrators of the May 8th incident.
- 18<sup>th</sup>** Ambassador Nolting attempts to persuade Diem to address the Buddhist grievances and admit responsibility for the May 8th incident.
- 30<sup>th</sup>** Approximately 350 Buddhist monks demonstrate in front of the National Assembly in Saigon.
- June**
- 4<sup>th</sup>** GVN creates a committee headed by Vice President Tho to resolve the Buddhist dispute.
- 11<sup>th</sup>** A Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc, burns himself to death in protest against the Diem regime. The incident shocks the world.
- 16<sup>th</sup>** Following negotiations, a joint GVN-Buddhist communique outlines details of a settlement. However, no responsibility for the May 8th incident is affixed and the agreement only papers over the crisis.
- 17<sup>th</sup>** GVN crushes further Buddhist riots
- 27<sup>th</sup>** President Kennedy announces that Henry Cabot Lodge will replace Frederick Nolting as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam (RVN).
- July**
- 15<sup>th</sup>** Ambassador Nolting convinces Diem make a radio address announcing concessions to the Buddhists.
- 19<sup>th</sup>** Under U.S. pressure, Diem coldly delivers a two-minute radio address announcing minor Buddhist concessions.
- August**
- 5<sup>th</sup>** A second Buddhist monk commits suicide by fire in protest against Diem's administration. Madame Nhu, the wife of Diem's brother, refers to the immolations as barbecues.
- 14<sup>th</sup>** In his final meeting with Ambassador Nolting, Diem agrees to publicly repudiate Madame Nhu's remarks.
- 15<sup>th</sup>** Diem tells the New York Herald Tribune that conciliation with the Buddhists has been his policy from the start
- 20<sup>th</sup>** Senior Generals ask Diem to declare martial law so that they can return Buddhist monks from outside Saigon to their own provinces and thereby reduce tensions in the capital. Diem approves the request at midnight.
- 21<sup>st</sup>** Under the cover of martial law, forces loyal to Nhu ransack Pagodas across the country, arresting over 1,400 monks. The raids finally destroy any U.S. illusions about Diem's conciliatory approach to the Buddhists.
- 22<sup>nd</sup>** Henry Cabot Lodge, the new U.S. Ambassador, arrives in Saigon
- 23<sup>rd</sup>** General Kim, deputy to General Don, tell Rufus Phillips of the U.S. mission that a firm American stand for the removal of the Nhus would unify the army and permit it to act against them.

Ambassador Lodge tells the State Department that "Nhu, probably with the full support of Diem, had a large hand in planning the action against the Buddhists..."

24<sup>th</sup> Believing that Diem's handling of the crisis is losing popular support and harming the war effort, State Department officials Hilsman, Harriman and Forrestal instruct Lodge that the U.S. can no longer tolerate Nhu's continuation in power. If Diem is unwilling to remove Nhu, the generals are to be told that the U.S. will be prepared to halt economic and military support and will assist them any interim breakdown of the GVN.

The authors of the Aug 24 cable are widely criticised in Washington for encouraging a coup. However, neither the White House or the State Department rescind the instructions to Lodge

29<sup>th</sup> General Duong Van Minh tells the CIA's Lou Conein that the U.S. should suspend aid to Diem's regime as a sign of U.S. support for the coup

31<sup>st</sup> Unable to get sufficient forces to Saigon, General Minh calls off the coup.

September

2<sup>nd</sup> In an interview with Walter Cronkite, President Kennedy says that more effort is needed by the GVN to win popular support. This can be achieved "with changes in policy and perhaps personnel".

10<sup>th</sup> General Krulak and Joseph Mendenhall return from a 4-day assessment trip to Vietnam. Krulack reports that the shooting war is going well and that the political crisis has had little impact. Disagreeing, Mendenhall argues that disaffection with Diem's regime threatens the breakdown of the government. After receiving the contradictory reports President Kennedy asks "You two did visit the same country, didn't you?"

11<sup>th</sup> The White House delays economic aid renewal for Vietnam whilst examining how it might used to pressure Diem.

October

2<sup>nd</sup> After visiting Vietnam to further assess the military and political situation, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and General Maxwell Taylor confirm the progress of the war. However, they recommend that some aid be suspended (but without formal announcement) to put pressure on Diem to reform. They also advise against a coup but state that alternative leadership should be identified and cultivated.

In accordance with the McNamara-Taylor recommendations, the White House announces plans to withdraw 1,000 U.S. troops from Vietnam by the end of the year.

5<sup>th</sup> President Kennedy approves the McNamara-Taylor recommendations, including the unannounced suspension of the commodity import program.

In a meeting with the CIA's Lou Conein, General Minh ask for clarification of the U.S. position with respect to a change of government in South Vietnam.

6<sup>th</sup> President Kennedy tells Ambassador Lodge, the U.S. doesn't want to stimulate a coup against Diem, but does not wish to thwart one either.

27<sup>th</sup> Diem meets with Ambassador Lodge, but is unwilling to discuss changes to his administration

27<sup>th</sup> Lodge tells Washington that he is powerless to stop the coup, the matter is entirely in Vietnamese hands.

## November

1<sup>st</sup> General Duong Van Minh leads an assault on the Presidential palace. Diem and Nhu initially manage to escape to the Cholon area of Saigon via an underground passage. After finally surrendering the following morning, the pair are murdered in the back of an Amored Personnel Carrier.

5<sup>th</sup> The new government of South Vietnam (GVN) is announced. General Minh becomes President and Chief of the Military Committee, which will oversee a civilian cabinet.

5<sup>th</sup> General Minh is announced as Chairman of the Executive committee of the Military Revolutionary Council

8<sup>th</sup> The U.S. recognizes the new GVN

22<sup>nd</sup> President Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as the new U.S. leader.

26<sup>th</sup> In [National Security Action Memorandum 273](#) President Johnson reaffirms Kennedy's policies and establishes economic and military aid to the new Minh government. NSAM 273 also states that plans should be developed for covert military operations up to 50km into Laos and asks the GVN to focus its counterinsurgency efforts on the Mekong Delta, where the Viet Cong threat is greatest.

## December

6<sup>th</sup> A USOM report on Long An province in the Mekong Delta describes the near collapse of the [Strategic Hamlet program](#).

31<sup>st</sup> U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam: 16,300

## 1964

### January

14<sup>th</sup> Lt. General [William Westmoreland](#) is appointed Deputy Commander of [MACV](#)  
24<sup>th</sup> MACV Studies & Observations Group ([SOG](#)) is formed to carry out Oplan 34A, a program of covert actions against North Vietnam.

30<sup>th</sup> General Nguyen Khanh, commander of II Corps, seizes power from the Minh government in a bloodless coup.

### February

12<sup>th</sup> SNIE (Special National Intelligence Estimate) 50-64 concludes that.. "South Vietnam has, at best, an even chance of withstanding the insurgency menace

during the next few weeks or months."

## March

8<sup>th</sup> Robert McNamara (Defense Secretary) and Maxwell Taylor (JCS Chairman) begin a 5-day trip to appraise the situation in Vietnam.

16<sup>th</sup> McNamara reports to the President that the situation in Vietnam is far worse than was recognized in NSAM 273 (26 Nov 1963). Approximately 40% of South Vietnamese territory is now under de facto Viet Cong control. ARVN and paramilitary desertion rates are increasing while the Viet Cong are recruiting energetically and effectively.

In National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 288 President Johnson stresses the importance of Vietnam to the security of the whole of South East Asia ([Domino Theory](#)). Johnson also adopts all of McNamara's recommendations to improve the situation, which include:

- 16<sup>th</sup>
- Full support for Khanh's government and opposition to further coup
  - Support for Khanh's National Service policy
  - An increase in RVNAF by 50,000 men
  - A raise in both the military and paramilitary pay scales
  - The provision of new aircraft, vehicles and river craft
  - To begin contingency planning for both "Retaliatory Actions" and a program of "Graduated Overt Military Pressure" against North Vietnam

## April

4<sup>th</sup> General Khan announces mobilization- all able bodied males aged 20-45 to be subject to national service

SIGMA I-64 War Game reveals that North Vietnam would respond to U.S. bombing by pouring more troops in to the South

## May

15<sup>th</sup> MAAG-Vietnam is absorbed by MACV and disbanded

30<sup>th</sup> The Honolulu conference begins. With the situation in the Vietnam countryside still deteriorating, Senior policymakers decide to expand the U.S. advisory effort to district level within eight critical provinces

## June

2<sup>nd</sup> At a conference in Honolulu, major U.S. policymakers discuss obtaining a Congressional Resolution on Vietnam

9<sup>th</sup> The CIA's Board of National Estimates challenges the Domino Thesis of NSAM 288. In its memorandum to the President the CIA state "With the possible exception of Cambodia, it is likely that that no nation in the area would quickly succumb to Communism as a result of the fall of Laos and Vietnam."

20<sup>th</sup> Following the departure of General Paul Harkins, William Westmoreland is appointed acting MACV Commander

## July

- 6<sup>th</sup> The Viet Cong launch an attack on the U.S. [Special Forces](#) camp at Nam Dong. Special Forces Captain [Roger H. C. Donlon](#) will be awarded the first Medal of Honor of the Vietnam war for his actions during the battle. Among the 55 defenders killed were two Americans and [AATTV](#) advisor WO2 Kevin Conway, Australia's first combat death of the Vietnam War.
- 31<sup>st</sup> New Zealand troops arrive to work with the Australians in Phuoc Tuy province  
SOG / SES Vietnamese gunboats carry out a covert OPLAN 34A attack on two North Vietnamese coastal bases.
- August
- 1<sup>st</sup> General William Westmoreland officially becomes Commander of MACV  
The destroyer USS Maddox is attacked by three North Vietnamese torpedo boats whilst on a De Soto (electronic intelligence gathering) patrol in the Tonkin Gulf. The Maddox returns fire and requests air support from the carrier Ticonderoga. The carrier jets strafe the PT boats, damaging two and crippling the other.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> In a repetition of the August 2nd incident, both the Maddox and her companion ship C. Turner Joy are reportedly attacked by North Vietnamese PT boats. Neither ship suffers any damage and there is uncertainty about the actuality of this second attack.
- 4<sup>th</sup> CIA Director John McCone tells the National Security Council that the North Vietnamese were reacting defensively to the OPLAN 34A attacks. He says "They are responding out of pride and on the basis of defense considerations. The attack is a signal to us that the North Vietnamese have the will and determination to continue the war. They are raising the ante."
- 5<sup>th</sup> After strenuous attempts to confirm the attacks, the U.S. launches retaliatory air strikes (Operation Pierce Arrow) against four North Vietnamese PT boat bases and the Vinh oil depot
- 6<sup>th</sup> Defense Secretary Robert McNamara appears before a joint session of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees to testify on the August 2nd and 4th attacks in the Tonkin Gulf. He states that the Maddox was on a routine patrol and that the North Vietnamese attacks were unprovoked and deliberate.
- 7<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress unanimously passes the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, enabling 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 resolution (H.J. RES 1445) passes the Senate with only two dissenting votes. The resolution is later cited as the necessary authority for military action without the need for a formal declaration of war.
- September
- 19<sup>th</sup> A Montagnard uprising flares up at five [CIDG](#) camps around Ban Me Thout in the Central Highlands (II Corps) . Angered at mistreatment by the Vietnamese, the rebels kill a number of LLDB (Vietnamese Special Forces) soldiers and

imprison several US advisors. The rebellion ends after five days of negotiations, with the GVN agreeing to organize a conference of highland leaders in Pleiku from 15 to 17 October.

## October

1<sup>st</sup> 5th Special Forces Group deploys to Vietnam to oversee Special Forces operations

## November

1<sup>st</sup> A Viet Cong attack on the U.S. air base at Bien Hoa kills four Americans and destroys several B-57 bombers

3<sup>rd</sup> President Lyndon Johnson enjoys a landslide election victory over Republican Barry Goldwater

## December

24<sup>th</sup> Viet Cong saboteurs explode a bomb at the Brinks Hotel, a billet for U.S. military personnel in Saigon. 2 Americans are killed in the blast and 107 Americans, Vietnamese and Australians are injured.

31<sup>st</sup> U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam: 23,000

## Vietnam War Timeline: 1965

### January

26<sup>th</sup> Armed Forces Council (AFC) removes Huong as RVN (Republic of Vietnam) Prime Minister and installs General Nguyen Khanh. President Suu remains in power.

### February

7<sup>th</sup> Viet Cong attack the air base at Pleiku, killing 8 Americans. U.S. responds with Flaming Dart bombing operation against southern targets in North Vietnam  
VC sappers blow up enlisted men's billet in Qui Nhon killing 23 American servicemen. Operation Flaming Dart II launched in response, with USAF, VNAF, and Navy aircraft striking targets north of the [DMZ](#).

16<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> AFC votes out Nguyen Khanh as Prime Minister and replaces him with Phan Huy Quat

### March

2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Air Force launches [Rolling Thunder](#), the sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam. The air strikes are designed to convince the North Vietnamese to cease their support of the insurgency in the South

8<sup>th</sup> Two battalions of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) land at Da Nang to strengthen the security of the air base, which is being used as part of the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign against North Vietnam.

17<sup>th</sup> CIA estimates VC have 37,000 regulars and approximately 100,000 irregulars in South Vietnam

20<sup>th</sup> The JCS recommends that U.S. and Allied forces be introduced with a mission

to assume the offensive against the Viet Cong

30<sup>th</sup>

A car bomb explodes outside the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. 2 Americans and 20 Vietnamese are killed. Nearly 200 people are wounded.

April

1<sup>st</sup>

In National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 328, President Johnson approves the deployment of two additional Marine Battalions and an 18-20,000 man increase in U.S. forces to "fill out existing units and supply needed logistic personnel."

[NSAM 328](#) also changes the security mission of U.S. in forces in Vietnam "to permit their more active use".

11<sup>th</sup>

Two additional Marine Battalions begin landing at Phu Bai and Da Nang

20<sup>th</sup>

Honolulu Conference – Senior officials meet and propose sending an additional 17 U.S. / Free World Battalions to South Vietnam to establish four brigade-sized enclaves at Bien Hoa / Vung Tau, Chu Lai, Qui Nhon and Quang Ngai

May

5<sup>th</sup>

173rd Airborne Brigade arrives at Bien Hoa / Vung Tau to secure the air base, becoming the first regular army combat unit to deploy in South Vietnam

11<sup>th</sup>

Viet Cong overrun Song Be, the capital of Phuoc Long Province

13<sup>th</sup>

U.S. pauses Rolling Thunder bombing campaign against North Vietnam to test Hanoi's willingness to negotiate. Bombing resumes on 18th May.

June

7<sup>th</sup>

General [Westmoreland](#) requests more troops to prevent the [ARVN](#) from being defeated. He asks for a 35 battalion U.S. / 3rd Country force and identified 9 additional battalions which may be required at a later date. The appeal was subsequently dubbed the "the 44 Battalion request"

8<sup>th</sup>

State Dept Press Officer Robert McCloskey tells the press "American forces would be available to fight alongside Vietnamese forces when and if necessary"

12<sup>th</sup>

1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiments arrives in RVN

18<sup>th</sup>

RVN Prime Minister Phan Huy Quat forced to resign

19<sup>th</sup>

First Arc Light mission - B-52s strike VC targets near Saigon

Air Vice Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky becomes Prime Minister of RVN. Major General Nguyen Van Thieu assumes role of Chief of State

26<sup>th</sup>

General Westmoreland given the authority to commit U.S. forces to combat in support of GVN forces

27<sup>th</sup>

The first major ground combat operation by U.S. forces in the Vietnam War – 173rd Airborne together with Australian and ARVN troops begin a search and destroy operation into the Viet Cong base area of War Zone "D" northwest of Saigon

July

- 12<sup>th</sup>** 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division arrives in Vietnam  
U.S Army, Vietnam (USARV) is established, replacing the U.S. Army Support Command, Vietnam (USASCV )
- 20<sup>th</sup>** [Ho Chi Minh](#) claims that his people are willing to fight for 20 years or more until they win.
- 24<sup>th</sup>** First U.S. aircraft downed by a surface-to-air missile (SAM) over North Vietnam
- 28<sup>th</sup>** President Johnson announces U.S. troop levels will increase to 125,000 men and additional forces will be needed later. As a result the monthly draft call will rise from 17,000 to 35,000
- 29<sup>th</sup>** 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division deploys near Cam Ranh Bay
- August**
- 17<sup>th</sup>** U.S. Marines begin Operation Starlite against Viet Cong in the Van Tuong peninsula, the largest American military operation of the war to date.
- September**
- 14<sup>th</sup>** 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) arrives in RVN
- October**
- 8<sup>th</sup>** The first elements of a Republic of Korea (ROK) infantry Division arrive in Vietnam
- 19<sup>th</sup>** North Vietnamese soldiers launch a major attack on the [Special Forces](#) camp at Plei Me in the Central Highlands. The assault is eventually repelled on October 25th.
- November**
- 14<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>** The first major battle of the Vietnam War involving U.S. forces – In the Ia Drang valley of the Central Highlands, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) uses helicopter assault tactics to inflict heavy losses on the Vietnamese Peoples Army (VPA).
- 27<sup>th</sup>** ARVN 7th Regiment is overrun at Michelin Plantation
- December**
- 24<sup>th</sup>** President Johnson orders a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam to explore peace possibilities
- 31<sup>st</sup>** U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam: 184,314

## Vietnam War Timeline: 1966

**31<sup>st</sup> Jan.**

Rolling Thunder bombing operations resumed.

**11<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Johnson announces that the 205,000 troops will be increased gradually.

**19<sup>th</sup> March**

**South Korea decides to send a further 20,000 troops to South Vietnam, in addition to the 21,000 already there.**

**28<sup>th</sup> March**

**25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division deploys to Vietnam for operations in III Corps.**

**April**

**B-52's join bombing raids on North Vietnam, dropping huge quantities of bombs on the Mu Gia Pass.**

**25<sup>th</sup> May**

**1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade arrives for operations in Vietnam.**

**July**

**U.S. increases bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos, over a 100 missions a day.**

**U.S. Navy Seawolves (HC-1) is raised in Vietnam to support patrols in the Delta.**

**26<sup>th</sup> Aug.**

**196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade is deployed to Vietnam**

**1<sup>st</sup> Sept.**

**In a speech in Phnom Penh, President de Gaulle of France denounces U.S. policy and urges the U.S. government to pull its troops out of South East Asia.**

**10<sup>th</sup> Dec.**

**199<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (Light) arrives**

**16<sup>th</sup> Dec.**

**9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division arrives in Vietnam**

**31<sup>st</sup> Dec.**

**385,300 U.S. military personnel in Vietnam.**

**Vietnam War Timeline: 1967**

**Jan.**

**Operation Cedar Falls takes place with units of the 173<sup>rd</sup> / 1<sup>st</sup> Inf. / 25<sup>th</sup> Inf. / 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Cavalry and ARVN taking on the Viet Cong in 'The Iron Triangle'.**

**U.S. Navy forms the Mobile Riverine Force, Task Force 117 to support the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry in their operations in IV Corps.**

**March**

**U.S. aid to South Vietnam is increased by \$150 million to bring the total for the year to \$700 million.**

**April**

**Australia deploys 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment to join the First Australian Tactical Force for Operations in III Corps.**

**July**

**It emerges that out of the 464,000 troops in Vietnam, only 50,000 can at present be used for attacking ground operations.**

**Sept.**

**Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara announces that a barrier, the McNamara Line, is to be built to block communist infiltration of the eastern DMZ. It will include fencing and ground sensors.**

**25<sup>th</sup> Sept.**

**The Americal Division (23<sup>rd</sup> Inf. Div.) formed in Vietnam for operations in I Corps. Division includes previously separate 196<sup>th</sup> Light Inf. Brigade and soon to arrive 11<sup>th</sup> and 198<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigades.**

**Thailand sends 'Queen's Cobras' Regiment for operations in III Corps**

**Marines establish the Khe Sanh combat base in I Corps.**

**21<sup>st</sup> Oct.**

**198<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (Light) arrives in Vietnam**

**Nov.**

**General Westmoreland tells U.S. newsmen "I am absolutely certain that whereas in 1965 the enemy was winning, today he is certainly losing".**

**19<sup>th</sup> Nov.**

**101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Airmobile) deployed to Vietnam to join its 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade that is already in combat.**

**19<sup>th</sup> Dec.**

**11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (Light) arrives.**

**Australia deploys 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment to join the Australian Task Force in III Corps.**

**New Zealand deploys Infantry Company to III Corps.**

**31<sup>st</sup> Dec.**

**486,600 U.S. military personnel in Vietnam.**

**Vietnam War Timeline: 1968**

**Jan.**

**Khe Sanh is besieged by the NVA**

**30<sup>th</sup> Jan.**

**During the Tet holiday, V.C. and NVA mount major offensive across most of the country.**

**The U.S. Embassy in Saigon is attacked by VC sappers.**

**Hue is captured by the VC / NVA and will not finish until 25<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

**General Leonard F. Chapman replaces General Wallace M. Greene as commandant of the Marine Corp.**

**6-7<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

**NVA use Soviet built light tanks on the battlefield for the first time when they overrun the Special Forces camp at Lang Vei.**

**18<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division deploys to II Corps**

**March**

**My Lai massacre by members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 20<sup>th</sup> Inf. Americal Division**

**6<sup>th</sup> April**

**Siege of Khe Sanh combat base is lifted when the Air Cavalry breaks through.**

**10<sup>th</sup> May**

**Peace talks start in Paris.**

**27<sup>th</sup> May**

**Thailand announces it is to dispatch a further 5,000 troops to Vietnam.**

**27<sup>th</sup> June**

**Marines start to withdraw from Khe Sanh.**

**July**

**General Abrams takes over MACV from Westmoreland, who returns to Washington D.C. as the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army.**

**26<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup> Aug.**

**Anti War riots in Chicago at the Democratic Party's national conference**

**31<sup>st</sup> Oct.**

**Johnson orders a cessation of bombing of North Vietnam. The NLF and South Vietnam are allowed to take part in the Paris Peace talks.**

**31<sup>st</sup> Dec.**

**536,000 U.S. military personnel in Vietnam.**

**Vietnam War Timeline: 1969 - 1970**

**1969**

**Jan.**

**Richard M. Nixon becomes President replacing Lyndon Johnson.**

**Henry Kissinger becomes the new Secretary of State.**

**March 'Vietnamization' of the war is announced by Secretary of Defence Melvin Laird**

**30<sup>th</sup> April**

**U.S. military personnel peak at 543,400.**

**11<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> May**

**101<sup>st</sup> Airborne battle of Ap Bia which becomes known as 'Hamburger Hill'.**

**8<sup>th</sup> June**

**Nixon announces the withdrawal of 25,000 troops from Vietnam.**

**27<sup>th</sup> Aug.**

**9<sup>th</sup> Infantry (less 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade) returns home.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sept.**

**Ho Chi Minh dies at the age of 79 in Hanoi.**

**Nov.**

**My Lai massacre revealed**

**24<sup>th</sup> Nov.**

**Lt. William Calley will go on trial by General Court Marshall.**

**30<sup>th</sup> Nov.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division withdraws from Vietnam.**

**11<sup>th</sup> Dec.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division leaves Vietnam.**

**31<sup>st</sup> Dec.**

**475,200 U.S. military personnel left in Vietnam, a decline of 68,200.**

**1970**

**26<sup>th</sup> Jan.**

**U.S. Navy pilot Lt. Everett Alvarez Jr. spends his 2000<sup>th</sup> day as a POW. Alvarez was shot down on 5th August 1964 during Operation Pierce Arrow, the air strikes launched against North Vietnam in retaliation for the [Tonkin Gulf](#) incidents.**

**20<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

**Kissinger begins secret peace talks in Paris**

**18<sup>th</sup> March**

**Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia over thrown by General Lon Nol.**

**26<sup>th</sup> March**

**Marine Regiment, 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division departs Vietnam.**

**15<sup>th</sup> April**

**1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division leaves Vietnam.**

**29<sup>th</sup> April**

**The Cambodian 'incursion' begins to attack and clear out the NVA sanctuaries where the NVA have large supply and staging bases. It is also an attempt to capture COSVN, the communist's 'Central Office for South Vietnam'. Although the NVA withdraw before the US and ARVN troops can engage them, captured prisoners reveal that they knew a couple of days earlier from their spies in Saigon.**

**4<sup>th</sup> May**

**Four students are killed at Kent State University in Ohio during an anti-war rally.**

**16<sup>th</sup> June**

**Phnom Penh is virtually cut off by communist forces.**

**9<sup>th</sup> Oct.**

**Khmer Republic is proclaimed by the communists.**

**11<sup>th</sup> Oct.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry returns home.**

**21<sup>st</sup> Nov. U.S. Special Forces perform an audacious raid on the Son Tay POW camp a few miles outside Hanoi, no prisoners are liberated as they were moved a few days earlier due to flooding.**

**7<sup>th</sup> Dec.**

**4<sup>th</sup> Infantry leaves Vietnam along with the 1<sup>st</sup> Logistic Command.**

**8<sup>th</sup> Dec.**

**25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (less 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade) return home.**

**14<sup>th</sup> Dec.**

**44<sup>th</sup> Medical Brigade also leave Vietnam.**

**22<sup>nd</sup> Dec.**

**Congress prohibits US combat forces or advisors from Cambodia or Laos**

**31<sup>st</sup> Dec.**

**U.S. military personnel now total 334,600.**

**Vietnam War Timeline: 1971 - 1972**

**1971**

**8<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

**Operation Lam Son 719 is launched. ARVN troops invade Laos.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> March**

**5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group leaves Vietnam.**

**5<sup>th</sup> March**

**11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Cavalry Regiment (less 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron) leaves Vietnam.**

**14<sup>th</sup> April III Marine Amphibious Force withdrawals from Vietnam**

**29<sup>th</sup> April**

**1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (less 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade) also leaves Vietnam**

**30<sup>th</sup> April**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry returns home along with the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division**

**June**

**New York Times starts publishing the 'Pentagon Papers'**

**25<sup>th</sup> Aug.**

**173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade leaves for home.**

**27<sup>th</sup> Aug.**

**1<sup>st</sup> Brigade 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Mechanized) leaves Vietnam**

**20<sup>th</sup> Sept.**

**18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Engineer Brigades withdraws from Vietnam**

**29<sup>th</sup> Nov.**

**Americal Division, including 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade and 198<sup>th</sup> Brigade, disbanded.**

**31<sup>st</sup> Dec.**

**U.S. military personnel levels declines to 156,800.**

## **1972**

### **February**

**21<sup>st</sup> President Nixon visits Peking and meets with Mao Zedong. North Vietnam fears a deal to their disadvantage.  
Korean Marines leave Vietnam**

### **March**

**10<sup>th</sup> 101st Airborne leaves Vietnam**

**12<sup>th</sup> Australian Task Force withdraws**

**30<sup>th</sup> The [Easter Offensive](#) begins - Equipped with Soviet Tanks, [Vo Nguyen Giap's](#) North Vietnamese Army launch a large-scale assault across the [DMZ](#) into Quang Tri province**

### **April**

**4<sup>th</sup> In response to the Communist's Easter Offensive, President Nixon authorizes U.S. bombing of North Vietnam up to the 18th parallel**

**6<sup>th</sup> 2nd Squadron 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment departs Vietnam**

**7<sup>th</sup> Launching a second prong to their Easter Offensive, North Vietnamese forces drive into Binh Long Province and begin an assault on An Loc (65 miles northwest of Saigon)**

**12<sup>th</sup> North Vietnamese launch a third phase of the Easter Offensive, striking from northern Cambodia into the Central Highlands and aiming for Kontum City**

### **May**

**1<sup>st</sup> North Vietnamese forces capture Quang Tri city**

**8<sup>th</sup> Nixon orders the mining of North Vietnam's ports and rivers in order to cut off the Communist's supply line**

**10<sup>th</sup> U.S. Air Force begins Operation Linebacker, the sustained bombing of North Vietnam's military installations, storage facilities and transportation network. The campaign aims to destroy the Communist's ability to sustain it's Easter Offensive by cutting off supply routes into North Vietnam and by stopping any NVA reinforcements from entering South Vietnam.**

### **June**

**9<sup>th</sup> After weeks of fierce fighting, Kontum City is cleared of NVA and declared secure**

**17<sup>th</sup> Five burglars are arrested for breaking into the Democratic National**

Committee offices at the Watergate building in Washington D.C.

18<sup>th</sup> After withstanding heavy artillery bombardment, an [ARVN](#) counteroffensive, combined with US air strikes, forces the NVA to withdraw from An Loc

26<sup>th</sup> 3rd Brigade 1st Cavalry leaves Vietnam

29<sup>th</sup> 196th Infantry Brigade (Light) leaves for home

New Zealand troops leave Vietnam

30<sup>th</sup> General Frederick C. Weyand takes over as [MACV](#) Commander from General [Creighton Abrams](#)

July

18<sup>th</sup> Jane Fonda delivers an anti-war message on Hanoi Radio

31<sup>st</sup> 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade leaves Vietnam

August

23<sup>rd</sup> 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, the last U.S. ground combat Battalion withdraws from Vietnam

September

16<sup>th</sup> After weeks of intense fighting, ARVN forces recapture Quang Tri city effectively ending North Vietnam's Easter Offensive

October

8<sup>th</sup> North Vietnamese negotiator Le Duc Tho discusses a provisional peace agreement with Henry Kissinger. For the first time North Vietnam is prepared to accept a cease fire without insisting on the removal of South Vietnam President Nguyen Van Thieu or the creation of a coalition government.

Kissinger and Le Duc Tho draft a 9-point cease fire agreement to be signed in Paris on October 30th by the U.S., South Vietnam (GVN), North Vietnam (DRV) and the PRG. The agreement:

- Covers the exchange of POWs
- Allows North Vietnamese troops to remain in the South Vietnam after the cease fire
- Creates a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord (NCNRC) (comprised of the GVN, PRG and a neutral third party) to oversee implementation of the agreement in South Vietnam
- Reaffirms the 1954 agreement that the 17th parallel DMZ is a temporary demarcation line and not a political or territorial boundary. Reunification is to be achieved through peaceful means.
- Contains a U.S. pledge to supply aid for the reconstruction of Indochina including North Vietnam

18<sup>th</sup> Kissinger meets with President Nguyen Van Thieu in Saigon to discuss the peace agreement

23<sup>rd</sup> President Nixon suspends Operation Linebacker  
After discussions with Kissinger, Thieu rejects the peace deal

- 24<sup>th</sup>** Thieu publicly states that he will never sign an agreement that imposes a coalition government on South Vietnam or allows North Vietnamese troops to remain in the country
- 26<sup>th</sup>** Hanoi reveals elements of the peace proposal and accuses the U.S. of renegeing on the schedule to sign the agreement. In response, Kissinger tells the press "We believe peace is at hand"
- November**
- 4<sup>th</sup>** Hanoi agrees to resume negotiations with the U.S
- 7<sup>th</sup>** President Nixon is re-elected  
1st Signal Brigade departs Vietnam
- 11<sup>th</sup>** The logistical base at Long Bien is turned over to the South Vietnamese, marking the end of direct U.S. Army participation in the war
- December**
- 13<sup>th</sup>** The Paris peace negotiations collapse
- 14<sup>th</sup>** Nixon warns the North Vietnamese that they have 72-hours to return to negotiations. The ultimatum is rejected.
- 18<sup>th</sup>** Operation Linebacker II (aka Christmas bombing) begins. The most intensive bombing campaign of the Vietnam War, Linebacker II is designed to force the North Vietnamese to come to a quick agreement on the cease fire and targets the Hanoi and Haiphong areas
- 28<sup>th</sup>** Hanoi agrees to reopen negotiations in Paris
- 29<sup>th</sup>** Nixon suspends Linebacker II, though the bombing of military targets in southern North Vietnam continues
- 31<sup>st</sup>** U.S. troop levels in Vietnam: 24,200

## **Vietnam War Timeline: 1973 - 1975**

### **1973**

**15<sup>th</sup> Jan.**

**Nixon announces a halt to all U.S. offensive action against the North**

**27<sup>th</sup> Jan.**

**It is estimated that there is 145,000 NVA troops in South Vietnam**

**27<sup>th</sup> Jan.**

**Peace Pact is signed in Paris. End of military draft announced**

**10<sup>th</sup> March**

**ROK Capital Division returns home to South Korea.**

**18<sup>th</sup> March**

**Major Floyd Thompson is released by North Vietnam, he was captured in March 1964**

**28<sup>th</sup> March**

**1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade leaves for home and is the cut of date for the award of the Vietnam Service medal and Campaign medal**

**29<sup>th</sup> March**

**MACV HQ is disbanded and the 18<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade leaves Saigon.**

**The withdrawal of all U.S. troops from South Vietnam is complete and release of 590 U.S. POW's held by communist forces in Vietnam are completed.**

**1<sup>st</sup> July**

**U.S. Navy starts to clear mines from North Vietnamese ports and rivers.**

**14<sup>th</sup> August**

**U.S.A.F. Operations Arc Light and Freedom Deal end as U.S. officially ceases bombing in Cambodia and thus direct U.S. military action in South East Asia ceases.**

**31<sup>st</sup> Dec.**

**U.S. military personnel limited to 50.**

**1974**

**9<sup>th</sup> Aug.**

**Nixon resigns the Presidency. Vice President Gerald Ford becomes President**

**President Ford offers an amnesty to draft dodgers from the Vietnam War period.**

**31<sup>st</sup> Dec.**

**There are still only 50 U.S. military personnel in Vietnam.**

**1975**

**8<sup>th</sup> Jan.**

**North Vietnamese politburo orders offensive to 'Liberate' South Vietnam by NVA cross-boarder invasion.**

**14<sup>th</sup> March**

**President Nguyen Van Thieu orders the withdrawal of ARVN forces from II Corps, central highlands.**

**11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> April**

**U.S. Navy conducts Operation Eagle Pull to evacuate U.S. Embassy staff from Phnom Penh.**

**17<sup>th</sup> April**

**Cambodia falls to the Khmer Rouge**

**29<sup>th</sup> April**

**NVA begins attack on Saigon. Marines Corporal Charles McMahon, Jr. and Lance Corporal Darwin Lee Judge are the last U.S. military personnel killed in Vietnam, struck by shrapnel from an NVA rocket**

**29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> April**

**U.S. Navy conducts Operation Frequent Wind to evacuate all U.S. personnel and selected South Vietnamese from the rooftop of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. The final Marines who had been sent in to help with evacuation of the Embassy are the very last to leave South Vietnam as the NVA enter Saigon.**

**30<sup>th</sup> April**

**North Vietnamese troops enter Saigon and smash the gates of the Presidential Palace with a tank and accept the unconditional surrender of South Vietnam.**

**The Vietnam War has ended after almost 20 years of continuous fighting.**

**[Vietnam War casualties](#)**

**Vietnam War Casualties**

**[Number of military casualties in the 1st Indochina war](#)**



**Viet Minh**

**500,000 killed (est.)**



**French Union Forces**

**89,797 killed and missing in action<sup>1</sup>**

**Number of military casualties in the 2nd Indochina war**



**Democratic Republic of Vietnam & Viet Cong**

**1.1 million killed<sup>2</sup>**



**Republic of Vietnam**

**220,357 killed in action<sup>3</sup>**



**United States of America**

**58,286 killed and missing in action<sup>4</sup>**



**Republic of Korea**

**4,407 killed in action<sup>5</sup>**



**Australia**

**487 killed<sup>6</sup>**



## Thailand

351 killed<sup>5</sup>



New Zealand

37 killed<sup>7</sup>



Laotian Meo / Hmong

30,000 killed<sup>8</sup>

1. U.S.I.S., American Embassy, Paris, France: Facts and Figures, (March 1995), pp-39-40. Includes 72,200 from the [French Expeditionary Corps](#) and 17,597 from the Armies of the Associated States of Indochina.
2. Agence France Presse, Hanoi government press release, (April 3rd, 1995)
3. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Southeast Asia Statistical Summary, (18th February 1976)
4. Names inscribed on the wall of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. Includes U.S. casualties in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. The Wall was originally dedicated in 1982 with 57,939 names.
5. Tucker, [The Encyclopedia Of The Vietnam War](#), (2001), pp64.
6. [Australian War Memorial](#)
7. [Vietvet.org: New Zealand - Roll of Honour](#)
8. Estimated number of [Hmong](#) tribesmen killed in Laos fighting the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese.  
Warner, [Shooting At The Moon](#), (1996), pp366.

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