

Vietnam by Day June

JUNE 1

1964 Top U.S. officials meet in Honolulu

Top U.S. officials concerned about the Vietnam War gather for two days of meetings in Honolulu. Attendees included Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Gen. William Westmoreland, Gen. Maxwell Taylor, and CIA Director John McCone, among others. Much of the discussion focused on the projected air war against North Vietnam, including a list of 94 potential targets. There was also a discussion of the plan for a joint Congressional resolution.

The meeting was convened to develop options for President Lyndon B. Johnson in dealing with the rapidly deteriorating situation in Vietnam. In March 1964, Secretary of Defense McNamara had reported that 40 percent of the countryside was under Viet Cong control or influence. Johnson was afraid that he would be run out of office if South Vietnam fell to the communists, but he did not want to employ American military power on a large scale because of the impact that such actions might have on his Great Society domestic programs. Upon returning from the meeting in Honolulu, several of Johnson's advisers, led by William Bundy, developed a scenario of graduated overt pressures against North Vietnam, according to which the president, after securing a Congressional resolution, would authorize air strikes against selected North Vietnamese targets. Johnson rejected the idea of submitting the resolution to Congress because it would "raise a whole series of disagreeable questions" which might jeopardize passage of the administration's civil rights legislation. However, the idea of such a resolution would surface again in less than two months.

In August 1964, after North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked U.S. destroyers, in what became known as the Tonkin Gulf incident, McNamara and Rusk appeared before a joint Congressional committee on foreign affairs. They presented the Johnson administration's arguments for a resolution authorizing the president "to take all necessary measures" to defend Southeast Asia. Subsequently, Congress passed Public Law 88-408, the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, giving President Johnson the power to take whatever actions he deemed necessary, including "the use of armed force." The resolution passed 82 to 2 in the Senate, where Wayne K. Morse (D-Oregon) and Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska) were the only dissenting votes; the bill passed unanimously in the House of Representatives. President Johnson signed it into law on August 10. It became the legal basis for every presidential action taken by the Johnson administration during its conduct of the war.

1971 Vietnam Veterans group announces support for Nixon

In support of the Nixon Administration's conduct of the war, a group named the Vietnam Veterans for a Just Peace declares that it represents the majority of the U.S. veterans that had served in Southeast Asia, and calls the protests and congressional testimony of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War "irresponsible."

On April 19, as a prelude to a massive antiwar protest, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War began a five-day demonstration in Washington, D.C. The generally peaceful protest, called Dewey Canyon III in honor of the February and March operation in Laos, ended on April 23 with some 1,000 veterans throwing their combat ribbons, helmets, and uniforms along with toy weapons on the Capitol steps. Earlier they had lobbied with their congressmen, laid wreaths in Arlington National Cemetery, and staged mock "search and destroy" missions.

JUNE 2

1965 First contingent of Australian combat troops arrives

The first contingent of Australian combat troops arrives by plane in Saigon. They joined the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade at Bien Hoa air base. Another contingent of 400 Australian troops would arrive by ship on June 8. These Australian troops became part of the Free World Military Forces, an effort by President Lyndon B. Johnson to enlist other nations to support the American cause in South Vietnam by sending military aid and troops. The level of support was not the primary issue; Johnson wanted to portray international solidarity and consensus for U.S. policies in Southeast Asia and he believed that participation by a number of countries would do that. The effort was also known as the "many flags" program.

The Australian government had first sent a small aviation detachment and an engineer civic action team to Vietnam in 1964. They were increasing their commitment to the war with the deployment of the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (RAR). In 1966, the Australians once again increased their troop strength in Vietnam with the formation of the First Australian Task Force, which established its own base of operations near Ba Ria in Phuoc Tuy province. The task force included two infantry battalions, a medium tank squadron, a helicopter squadron, as well as signal, engineer, and other support forces. By 1969, Australian forces in Vietnam totaled an estimated 8,000 personnel.

1967 Green Beret doctor convicted in court-martial

Capt. Howard Levy, 30, a dermatologist from Brooklyn, is convicted by a general court-martial in Fort Jackson, South Carolina, of willfully disobeying orders and making disloyal statements about U.S. policy in Vietnam. Levy had refused to provide elementary instruction in skin disease to Green Beret medics on the grounds that the Green Berets would use medicine as "another tool of political persuasion" in Vietnam.

Levy, invoked the so-called "Nuremberg defense," justifying his refusal on the grounds that the Green Berets would use the training for criminal purposes. Levy's civilian attorney also argued that training the Green Berets compelled him to violate canons of medical ethics. The Green Berets were soldiers first and aid-men second; therefore, their provision of medical treatment to civilians in order to make friends was illegitimate, for it could be taken away as easily as given. The court was not persuaded and the ten-officer jury found him guilty on all charges, sentencing him to three years at hard labor and dismissal from the service. Levy was released in August 1969 after serving 26 months and immediately became active in the "GI coffeeshouse protests" in Army towns around the country.

JUNE 3

1970 Nixon calls Cambodian operation a success

In a televised speech, President Richard Nixon claims the Allied drive into Cambodia is the "most successful operation of this long and difficult war," and that he is now able to resume the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Vietnam.

U.S. and South Vietnamese forces had launched a limited "incursion" into Cambodia on April 29. The campaign included 13 major ground operations to clear North Vietnamese sanctuaries 20 miles inside Cambodia. Some 50,000 South Vietnamese soldiers and 30,000 U.S. troops were involved, making it the largest operation of the war since Operation Junction City in 1967. The announcement of the Cambodian operation gave the antiwar movement in the United States a new rallying point. News of the incursion set off a wave of antiwar demonstrations, including one at Kent State University that resulted in the killing of four students by Army National Guard troops and another at Jackson State in Mississippi, resulting in the shooting of two students when police opened fire on a women's dormitory.

In his speech, Nixon reaffirmed earlier pledges to bring the Cambodian operation to an end by June 30, with "all our major military objectives" achieved and reported that 17,000 of the 31,000 U.S. troops in Cambodia had already returned to South Vietnam. After June 30, said Nixon, "all American air support" for Allied troops in fighting in Cambodia would end, with the only remaining American activity being attacks on enemy troop movements and supplies threatening U.S. forces in South

Vietnam. Nixon promised that 50,000 of the 150,000 troops, whose withdrawal from Vietnam he had announced April 20, would "be out by October 15."

1968 Le Duc Tho joins negotiations in Paris

Le Duc Tho, a member of the North Vietnam Communist Party's Politburo, joins the North Vietnamese negotiating team as a special counselor. The Paris peace talks had begun in March 1968, but had made little headway in ending the war. In August 1969, Tho and Henry Kissinger would begin meeting secretly in a villa outside Paris in an attempt to reach a peace settlement. It was these private talks that would ultimately result in the January 1973 Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring the Peace in Vietnam. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with Kissinger in 1973, Tho, aware that the North Vietnamese were still planning to conquer South Vietnam, declined the honor.

JUNE 4

1961 Kennedy and Khrushchev agree on neutrality for Laos

President John F. Kennedy and Premier Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union, meeting in Vienna, strike a bargain to support a neutral and independent Laos.

Laos had been the scene of an ongoing communist insurgency by the Pathet Lao guerrillas. In July 1959, the North Vietnamese Politburo had formed Group 959 to furnish weapons and supplies to the Pathet Lao. By 1960, the Pathet Lao was threatening the survival of the Royal Lao government. On January 19, 1961, when President Eisenhower was about to leave office, he told Kennedy that Laos "was the key to the entire area of Southeast Asia." Kennedy considered intervening in Laos with U.S. combat troops, but decided against it.

Nevertheless, the American president did not want to lose Laos to the communists. Kennedy was prepared to accept neutrality for Laos as a solution. Eventually a 14-nation conference would convene in Geneva and an agreement was signed in July 1962, proclaiming Laos neutral. This took care of the situation in Laos for the time being, but both the communists and the United States soon ignored the declared neutrality of the area.

1965 Walt takes command of 3rd Marine Division

Maj. Gen. Lewis Walt takes command of the 3rd Marine Division from Maj. Gen. William Collins. Walt was concurrently named Commander of the III Amphibious Force (III MAF), the first corps-level Marine Corps headquarters in history. As such, Walt was in command of two Marine divisions and responsible for I

Corps Tactical Zone, the northernmost region of South Vietnam, which bordered the Demilitarized Zone. His command also included serving as Chief of Naval Forces Vietnam, as well as being Senior Adviser to the commander of South Vietnam's I Corps, who was responsible for the security of the northern portion of South Vietnam. After supervising the U.S. and South Vietnamese build up in that region from 1965 to 1967, General Walt returned to the United States and later served as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. He retired from active service on February 1, 1971.

JUNE 5

1968 Robert Kennedy shot after California primary

Senator Robert Kennedy (D-New York), a leading critic of the Johnson administration's policy in Vietnam, is shot after making a statement announcing his victory in California's Democratic presidential primary; he died the next day.

Kennedy had initially been a supporter of the Johnson administration's Vietnam War policy, but he became increasingly critical after President Lyndon B. Johnson approved the resumed bombing of North Vietnam in early 1966. Kennedy had declared his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination in March 1968 after Senator Eugene McCarthy's surprisingly strong showing in the New Hampshire primary. When Johnson announced that he would not run for his party's nomination, Kennedy became the front-runner. On the day of his death, he had just defeated McCarthy in the California primary.

1972 Laird testifies before Congress

Testifying before a joint Congressional Appropriations Committee, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird says the increase in U.S. military activity in Vietnam could add up to \$5 billion to the 1973 fiscal budget, doubling the annual cost of the war. This increased American activity was in response to the North Vietnamese Nguyen Hue Offensive, also called the Easter Offensive, which had been launched on March 31.

This offensive was a massive invasion by North Vietnamese forces designed to strike the blow that would win them the war. The attacking force included 14 infantry divisions and 26 separate regiments, with more than 120,000 troops and approximately 1,200 tanks and other armored vehicles. The main North Vietnamese objectives were Quang Tri in the north, Kontum in the Central Highlands, and An Loc farther to the south.

In response, President Richard Nixon had ordered massive support for the South Vietnamese defenders and their U.S.

advisers. The number of U.S. Air Force fighter-bombers in Southeast Asia was tripled, and B-52s were quadrupled. Nixon ordered additional ships to join the 7th Fleet, sending the aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk* from the Philippines to join the carriers already off the coast of Vietnam in providing air support.

JUNE 6

1972 South Vietnamese forces clear Kontum of communist troops

South Vietnamese forces drive out all but a few of the communist troops remaining in Kontum. Over 200 North Vietnamese had been killed in six battles in and around the city.

The city had come under attack in April when the North Vietnamese had launched their Nguyen Hue Offensive (later called the Easter Offensive), a massive invasion by North Vietnamese forces designed to strike the blow that would win them the war. The attacking force included 14 infantry divisions and 26 separate regiments, with more than 120,000 troops and approximately 1,200 tanks and other armored vehicles. In addition to Kontum, the other main North Vietnamese objectives were Quang Tri in the north and An Loc farther to the south.

Initially, the South Vietnamese defenders were almost overwhelmed, particularly in the northernmost provinces, where they abandoned their positions in Quang Tri and fled south in the face of the enemy onslaught. At Kontum and An Loc, the South Vietnamese were more successful in defending against the attacks, but only after weeks of bitter fighting. Although the defenders suffered heavy casualties, they managed to hold their own with the aid of U.S. advisors and American airpower. Fighting continued all over South Vietnam into the summer months, but eventually the South Vietnamese forces prevailed against the invaders and retook Quang Tri in September. With the communist invasion blunted, President Nixon declared that the South Vietnamese victory proved the viability of his Vietnamization program, which he had instituted in 1969 to increase the combat capability of the South Vietnamese armed forces so that U.S. troops could be withdrawn.

1964 U.S. reconnaissance jets shot down over Laos

Two U.S. Navy jets flying low-altitude target reconnaissance missions over Laos are shot down by communist Pathet Lao ground fire. Washington immediately ordered armed jets to escort the reconnaissance flights, and by June 9, escort jets were attacking Pathet Lao headquarters. The downing of the two reconnaissance aircraft and the retaliatory strikes were made public, but the full extent of the U.S. involvement in Laos was not. In fact, the U.S. fighter-bombers were flying combat missions in support of Royal Lao forces in their war against the

communist Pathet Lao and would continue to do so until 1973.

JUNE 7

1965 Westmoreland requests 44 battalions

General Westmoreland requests a total of 35 battalions of combat troops, with another nine in reserve. This gave rise to the "44 battalion" debate within the Johnson administration, a discussion of how many U.S. combat troops to commit to the war. Westmoreland felt that the South Vietnamese could not defeat the communists alone and he wanted U.S. combat troops to go on the offensive against the enemy. His plan was to secure the coastlines, block infiltration of North Vietnamese troops into the south, and then wage a war of attrition with "search and destroy" missions into the countryside, using helicopters for rapid deployment and evacuation. Westmoreland had some supporters in the Johnson administration, but others of the president's advisers did not support Westmoreland's request for more troops, because they disagreed with what would be a fundamental change in the U.S. role in Vietnam. In the end, Johnson acquiesced to Westmoreland's request; eventually there would be over 500,000 U.S. troops in South Vietnam.

1972 McGovern continues to campaign against the war

Senator George McGovern (D-South Dakota) announces at a news conference that he would go "anywhere in the world" to negotiate an end to the war and a return of U.S. troops and POWs. McGovern, who had swept the Democratic Party spring primaries, was one of the earliest and most vocal opponents of American policy in Vietnam and he made the war one of the central issues of the campaign. To many American voters, McGovern's call for an immediate end to the war was tantamount to unconditional surrender. Incumbent Richard Nixon, who had campaigned on pursuing "peace with honor" in Vietnam decisively defeated McGovern when it became known that his envoy, Henry Kissinger, was close to negotiating a settlement with the North Vietnamese in peace talks.

JUNE 8

1965 U.S. forces are available for ground support

A State Department press officer notes that, "American forces would be available for combat support together with Vietnamese forces when and if necessary," alerting the press to an apparently major change in the U.S. commitment to the war. Prior to this time, U.S. forces had been restricted to protecting American airbases and other installations. The next day, the White House tried to calm the protests by some in Congress and the media who were alarmed at this potential escalation of the war by issuing a statement claiming, "There has been no

change in the missions of United States ground combat units in Vietnam." The statement went on to explain that General Westmoreland, senior U.S. commander in Saigon, did have the authority to employ troops "in support of Vietnamese forces faced with aggressive attack."

Later in the month, Westmoreland was given formal authority to commit U.S. forces to battle when he decided they were necessary "to strengthen the relative position of the GVN [Government of Vietnam] forces." This authority and the influx of American combat troops that followed forever changed the role of the United States in the war.

1969 Nixon and Thieu meet at Midway

President Nixon and South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu meet at Midway Island in the Pacific. At the meeting, Nixon announced that 25,000 U.S. troops would be withdrawn by the end of August. Nixon and Thieu emphasized that South Vietnamese forces would replace U.S. forces. Along with this announcement of the first U.S. troop withdrawal, Nixon discussed what would become known as "Vietnamization." Under this new policy, Nixon intended to initiate steps to increase the combat capability of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces so that the South Vietnamese would eventually be able to assume full responsibility for the war.

After the initial withdrawal was accomplished in August, 14 more increments departed between late 1969 and 1972. By the time the Paris Peace Accords were signed in January 1973, there were only 27,000 U.S. troops left in South Vietnam (down from a high of over 540,000 in April 1969). These remaining personnel were withdrawn in March 1973 in accordance with the provisions of the Paris Peace Accords.

JUNE 9

1972 South Vietnamese soldiers reach An Loc

Part of a relief column composed mainly of South Vietnamese 21st Division troops finally arrives in the outskirts of An Loc. The division had been trying to reach the besieged city since April 9, when it had been moved from its normal station in the Mekong Delta and ordered to attack up Highway 13 from Lai Khe to open the route to An Loc. The South Vietnamese forces had been locked in a desperate battle with a North Vietnamese division that had been blocking the highway since the very beginning of the siege. As the 21st Division tried to open the road, the defenders inside An Loc fought off repeated attacks by two North Vietnamese divisions that had surrounded the city early in April. This was the southernmost thrust of the North Vietnamese invasion that had begun on March 30; the other main objectives were Quang Tri in the north and Kontum in the

Central Highlands.

Although the lead elements of the 21st Division reached the outskirts of the city on this day, they did not represent significant reinforcements for An Loc, having suffered tremendous casualties in their fight up the highway and the two-month siege was not lifted. It would not be lifted until large numbers of fresh reinforcements were flown in to a position south of the city from which they then successfully attacked the North Vietnamese forces that surrounded the city. By the end of the month, most of the communist troops within the city had been eliminated, but the North Vietnamese forces still blocked Route 13 and continued to shell An Loc.

Also on this day: John Paul Vann, the senior U.S. advisor in the Central Highlands, is killed in a helicopter crash, probably shot down by a North Vietnamese unit. Vann had successfully directed the battle against the North Vietnamese invaders at Kontum.

1964 CIA report challenges "domino theory"

In reply to a formal question submitted by President Lyndon B. Johnson--"Would the rest of Southeast Asia necessarily fall if Laos and South Vietnam came under North Vietnamese control?"--the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) submits a memo that effectively challenges the "domino theory" backbone of the Johnson administration policies. This theory contended that if South Vietnam fell to the communists, the rest of Southeast Asia would also fall "like dominoes," and the theory had been used to justify much of the Vietnam War effort.

The CIA concluded that Cambodia was probably the only nation in the area that would immediately fall. "Furthermore," the report said, "a continuation of the spread of communism in the area would not be inexorable, and any spread which did occur would take time--time in which the total situation might change in any number of ways unfavorable to the communist cause." The CIA report concluded that if South Vietnam and Laos also fell, it "would be profoundly damaging to the U.S. position in the Far East," but Pacific bases and allies such as the Philippines and Japan would still wield enough power to deter China and North Vietnam from any further aggression or expansion. President Johnson appears to have ignored the CIA analysis--he eventually committed over 500,000 American troops to the war in an effort to block the spread of communism to South Vietnam.

JUNE 10

1965 Battle begins at Dong Xoai

Some 1,500 Viet Cong start a mortar attack on the district

capital of Dong Xoai, about 60 miles northeast of Saigon, and then quickly overrun the town's military headquarters and an adjoining militia compound. Other Viet Cong forces conducted a raid on a U.S. Special Forces camp about a mile away. U.S. helicopters flew in South Vietnamese reinforcements, but the Viet Cong isolated and cut down the troops. Heavy U.S. air strikes eventually helped to drive off the Viet Cong, but not before the South Vietnamese had suffered between 800 and 900 casualties and the United States had 7 killed, 12 missing and presumed dead, and 15 wounded. The Viet Cong were estimated to have lost 350 in the ground combat and perhaps several hundred more in air attacks. Two Americans later received the Medal of Honor for their actions during this battle.

First Lt. Charles Q. Williams assumed command of the Special Forces camp when his commanding officer was seriously wounded in the early minutes of the battle. Williams repeatedly dashed through heavy gunfire to rally the outnumbered defenders, receiving five wounds in the process. At one point, the American forces were pinned down by a Viet Cong machine gun. Williams grabbed a 3.5-inch rocket launcher and asked for a volunteer to help him go after the gun. CM3 Marvin G. Shields, a member of the camp's Navy construction battalion (Seabees) who had already been wounded three times, stepped forward. Completely ignoring their own safety, the two attacked, with Shields loading and Williams firing as they assaulted the enemy position. They destroyed the enemy gun, but on the way back to friendly lines, Shields was mortally wounded. President Johnson presented the Medal of Honor to Charles Williams in the White House on June 23, 1966. On September 13, 1966, Joan Elaine Shields accepted her husband's posthumous Medal of Honor from the president.

1968 Westmoreland gives farewell press conference in Saigon

At a Saigon news conference on the day he is to turn over command of U.S. forces in Vietnam to Gen. Creighton Abrams, Gen. William Westmoreland offers his assessment of past and current trends in the war. In defense of his attrition policy, Westmoreland declared that it would ultimately make continued fighting "intolerable to the enemy." He also explained that, because it was impossible to "cut a surface line of communication with other than ground operations," Washington's ban on ground attacks to interdict communist infiltration through Laos precluded the achievement of military victory. Westmoreland denied, however, that the military situation was stalemated. Westmoreland's approach to the war had all but been discredited by the communist Tet Offensive, which was launched in January 30, 1968. In the wake of the widespread Viet Cong and North Vietnamese attacks, there was a review of U.S. policy by the Johnson administration. When it was decided to de-escalate the war, halt the bombing of North

Vietnam, and go to the negotiating table, Westmoreland was reassigned to become the Army Chief of Staff, a post he held until his retirement from the service in 1972.

JUNE 11

1963 Buddhist immolates himself in protest

Buddhist monk Quang Duc publicly burns himself to death in a plea for President Ngo Dinh Diem to show "charity and compassion" to all religions. Diem, a Catholic who had been oppressing the Buddhist majority, remained stubborn despite continued Buddhist protests and repeated U.S. requests to liberalize his government's policies. More Buddhist monks immolated themselves during ensuing weeks. Madame Nhu, the president's sister-in-law, referred to the burnings as "barbecues" and offered to supply matches. In November 1963, South Vietnamese military officers assassinated Diem and his brother during a coup.

1970 Battle for control of Kompong Speu in Cambodia

A force of 4,000 South Vietnamese and 2,000 Cambodian soldiers battle 1,400 communist troops for control of the provincial capital of Kompong Speu, 30 miles southwest of Phnom Penh. At 50 miles inside the border, it was the deepest penetration that South Vietnamese forces had made into Cambodia since the incursion began on April 29. The town was captured by the communists on June 13, but retaken by Allied forces on June 16. South Vietnamese officials reported that 183 enemy soldiers were killed, while 4 of their own died and 22 were wounded during the fighting. Civilian casualties in Kompong Speu were estimated at 40 to 50 killed.

JUNE 12

1972 Lavelle testifies before Congress

Gen. John D. Lavelle, former four-star general and U.S. Air Force commander in Southeast Asia, testifies before the House Armed Services Committee. He had been relieved of his post in March and later demoted after it was determined that he had repeatedly ordered unauthorized bombings of military targets in North Vietnam. Court-martial charges were brought against him by his subordinates but were dropped by the Air Force because the "interests of discipline" had already been served. Lavelle became the first four-star general in modern U.S. history to be demoted on retirement, although he continued to receive full general's retirement pay of \$27,000 per year.

1965 South Vietnamese premier resigns

Mounting Roman Catholic opposition to South Vietnamese Premier Phan Huy Quat's government leads him to resign. The next day a military triumvirate headed by Army General Nguyen Van Thieu took over and expanded to a 10-man National Leadership Committee on June 14. The Committee decreed the death penalty for Viet Cong terrorists, corrupt officials, speculators, and black marketeers. The Catholics approved of Quat's resignation and warned the military against favoring the Buddhists, who asked for an appointment of civilians to the new cabinet.

JUNE 13

1971 The *New York Times* publishes the "Pentagon Papers"

The *New York Times* begins publishing portions of the 47-volume Pentagon analysis of how the U.S. commitment in Southeast Asia grew over a period of three decades. Daniel Ellsberg, a former Defense Department analyst who had become an antiwar activist, had stolen the documents. After unsuccessfully offering the documents to prominent opponents of the war in the U.S. Senate, Ellsberg gave them to the *Times*.

Officially called *The History of the U.S. Decision Making Process on Vietnam*, the "Pentagon Papers" disclosed closely guarded communiques, recommendations, and decisions concerning the U.S. military role in Vietnam during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, along with the diplomatic phase in the Eisenhower years. The publication of the papers created a nationwide furor, with congressional and diplomatic reverberations as all branches of the government debated over what constituted "classified" material and how much should be made public.

The publication of the documents precipitated a crucial legal battle over "the people's right to know," and led to an extraordinary session of the U.S. Supreme Court to settle the issue. Although the documents were from the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, President Richard Nixon opposed their publication, both to protect the sources in highly classified appendices, and to prevent further erosion of public support for the war. On June 30, the Supreme Court ruled that the *Times* had the right to publish the material.

The publication of the "Pentagon Papers," along with previous suspected disclosures of classified information to the press, led to the creation of a White House unit to plug information leaks to journalists. The illegal activities of the unit, known as the "Plumbers," and their subsequent cover-up, became known collectively as the "Watergate scandal," which resulted in President Nixon's resignation in August 1974.

1973 Kissinger and Le Duc Tho sign new peace agreement

Representatives of the original signers of the January 27 cease-fire sign a new 14-point agreement calling for an end to all cease-fire violations in South Vietnam. Coming at the end of month-long negotiations between Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, the settlement included an end to all military activities at noon on June 15; an end to U.S. reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam and the resumption of U.S. minesweeping operations in North Vietnamese waters; the resumption of U.S. talks on aid to North Vietnam; and the meeting of commanders of opposing forces in South Vietnam to prevent outbreaks of hostilities. Fighting had erupted almost immediately after the original cease-fire that had been initiated as part of the Paris Peace Accords. Both sides repeatedly violated the terms of the cease-fire as they jockeyed for position and control of the countryside. This new agreement proved no more effective than the original peace agreement in stopping the fighting, which continued into early 1975 when the North Vietnamese launched a massive offensive that overran South Vietnam in less than 55 days. The war was finally over on April 30, 1975, when North Vietnamese tanks rolled into Saigon.

JUNE 14

1968 Dr. Spock convicted for aiding draft resisters

A Federal District Court jury in Boston convicts Dr. Benjamin Spock and three others, including Yale University Chaplain William Sloane Coffin, Jr., of conspiring to aid, abet, and counsel draft registrants to violate the Selective Service Act.

During the Johnson administration, Spock, a physician and the famous author of *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, was an ubiquitous figure at antiwar demonstrations. In April 1967, Spock, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and entertainer Harry Belafonte led an estimated 300,000 people on a march to the United Nations headquarters in New York City, the largest antiwar demonstration to date. Spock was one of the original signers of *A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority*, published in September 1967, which supported draft resistance and the right of servicemen to refuse to obey "illegal and immoral orders."

The 1968 convictions were overturned in 1969. In November of that year, Spock joined a Washington, D.C., antiwar demonstration of more than 250,000 people, sponsored by the New Mobilization Committee, a group organized by Spock and others on July 4. In 1969, Spock was arrested several times, but he continued his antiwar activities. On November 27, a new left-wing antiwar movement, the People's Party, nominated Spock as its candidate for president in the 1972 presidential election. Though he did not win the election, Spock remained a prominent antiwar activist until the U.S. withdrew from

Southeast Asia.

1969 U.S. command announces troop withdrawal

The U.S. command announces that three combat units will be withdrawn from Vietnam. They were the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the U.S. Army 9th Infantry Division and Regimental Landing Team 9 of the 3rd Marine Division--a total of about 13,000 to 14,000 men. These troops were part of the first U.S. troop withdrawal, which had been announced on June 8 by President Richard Nixon at the Midway conference with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu. Nixon had promised that 25,000 troops would be withdrawn by the end of the year, and more support troops were later sent home in addition to the aforementioned combat forces in order to meet that number.

JUNE 15

1964 Johnson decides against submitting resolution to Congress

At a meeting of the National Security Council, McGeorge Bundy, President Lyndon B. Johnson's national security advisor, informs those in attendance that President Johnson has decided to postpone submitting a resolution to Congress asking for authority to wage war. The situation in South Vietnam had rapidly deteriorated, and in March 1964, Secretary of State Robert McNamara reported that 40 percent of the countryside was under Viet Cong control or influence. Johnson was afraid that he would be run out of office if South Vietnam fell to the communists, but he was not prepared to employ American military power on a large scale. Several of his advisers, led by McGeorge Bundy's brother, William, had developed a scenario of graduated overt pressures against North Vietnam, according to which the president--after securing a Congressional resolution--would authorize air strikes against selected North Vietnamese targets. Johnson rejected the idea of submitting the resolution to Congress because it would "raise a whole series of disagreeable questions" which might jeopardize the passage of his administration's civil rights legislation. Just two months later, they revisited idea of a resolution in the wake of the Tonkin Gulf incident.

In August, after North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked U.S. destroyers in what became known as the Tonkin Gulf incident, Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk appeared before a joint Congressional committee on foreign affairs. They presented the Johnson administration's arguments for a resolution authorizing the president "to take all necessary measures" to defend Southeast Asia. Subsequently, Congress passed Public Law 88-408, which became known as the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which gave President Johnson the power to take whatever actions he deemed necessary, including

"the use of armed force." The resolution passed 82 to 2 in the Senate, where Wayne K. Morse (D-Oregon) and Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska) were the only dissenting votes; the bill passed unanimously in the House of Representatives. President Johnson signed it into law on August 10 and it became the legal basis for every presidential action taken by the Johnson administration during its conduct of the war.

1965 U.S. planes bomb North Vietnam

U.S. planes bomb targets in North Vietnam, but refrain from bombing Hanoi and the Soviet missile sites that surround the city. On June 17, two U.S. Navy jets downed two communist MiGs, and destroyed another enemy aircraft three days later. U.S. planes also dropped almost 3 million leaflets urging the North Vietnamese to get their leaders to end the war.

These missions were part of Operation Rolling Thunder, launched in March 1965, after President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered a sustained bombing campaign of North Vietnam. The operation was designed to interdict North Vietnamese transportation routes in the southern part of the North Vietnam and to slow infiltration of personnel and supplies into South Vietnam. During the early months of this campaign, there were restrictions against striking targets in or near Hanoi and Haiphong, but in July 1966, Rolling Thunder was expanded to include the bombing of North Vietnamese ammunition dumps and oil storage facilities. In the spring of 1967, it was further expanded to include power plants, factories, and airfields in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas.

The White House closely controlled Operation Rolling Thunder and at times President Johnson personally selected the targets. From 1965 to 1968, about 643,000 tons of bombs were dropped on North Vietnam. The operation continued, with occasional suspensions, until President Johnson halted it entirely on October 31, 1968, under increasing domestic political pressure

JUNE 16

1961 Kennedy agrees to send instructors to train troops

Following a meeting between President John F. Kennedy and South Vietnam envoy Nguyen Dinh Thuan, an agreement is reached for direct training and combat supervision of Vietnamese troops by U.S. instructors. South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem had earlier asked Kennedy to send additional U.S. troops to train the South Vietnamese Army. U.S. advisers had been serving in Vietnam since 1955 as part of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group. There would be only 900 U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam at the end of 1961, but in accordance with President Kennedy's pledge to provide American military assistance to South

Vietnam, the number of U.S. personnel rose to 3,200 by the end of 1962. The number would climb until it reached 16,000 by the time of President Kennedy's assassination in November 1963.

1965 More troops to be sent to Vietnam

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara announces that 21,000 more U.S. troops are to be sent to Vietnam. He also claimed that it was now known that North Vietnamese regular troops had begun to infiltrate South Vietnam. The new U.S. troops were to join the U.S. Marines and paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade that had arrived earlier to secure U.S. airbases and facilities. These forces would soon transition from defensive missions to direct combat operations. As the war escalated, more and more U.S. combat troops were sent to South Vietnam. By 1969, there were over 540,000 American troops in Vietnam.

1970 Communists isolate Phnom Penh

North Vietnamese and Viet Cong attacks almost completely isolate Phnom Penh. The principal fighting raged in and around Kompong Thom, about 90 miles north of the capital. On June 17, Cambodia's last working railway line, which ran to the border of Thailand, was severed when communist troops seized a freight train with 200 tons of rice and other food supplies at a station at Krang Lovea, about 40 miles northwest of Phnom Penh.

JUNE 17

1969 North Vietnamese reoccupy Ap Bia Mountain

U.S. intelligence reports that an estimated 1,000 North Vietnamese troops have reoccupied Ap Bia Mountain (Hill 937), one mile east of the Laotian border. U.S. and South Vietnamese forces had fought a fierce battle with North Vietnamese troops there in May. The battle was part of a 2,800-man Allied sweep of the A Shau Valley called Operation Apache Snow. The purpose of the operation was to cut off the North Vietnamese and stop any infiltration from Laos that was menacing Hue to the northeast and Da Nang to the southeast. Paratroopers from the 101st Airborne had engaged a North Vietnamese regiment on the slopes of Hill 937, known to the Vietnamese as Ap Bia Mountain. Entrenched in prepared fighting positions, the North Vietnamese 29th Regiment repulsed the initial American assault and beat back another attempt by the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry on May 14. An intense battle raged for 10 days as the mountain came under heavy Allied air strikes, artillery barrages,

and 10 infantry assaults.

On May 20, Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, commanding general of the 101st, sent in two additional U.S. airborne battalions and a South Vietnamese battalion as reinforcements. The communist stronghold was finally captured in the 11th attack when the American and South Vietnamese soldiers fought their way to the summit of the mountain. In the face of the four-battalion attack, the North Vietnamese retreated to sanctuary areas in Laos.

During the intense fighting, 597 North Vietnamese were reported killed and U.S. casualties were 56 killed and 420 wounded. Due to the bitter fighting and the high loss of life, the battle for Ap Bia Mountain received widespread unfavorable publicity in the United States and was dubbed "Hamburger Hill" in the U.S. media (a name evidently derived from the fact that the battle turned into a "meat grinder"). Since the operation was not intended to hold territory but rather to keep the North Vietnamese Army off balance, the mountain was abandoned soon after the battle. The news of the battle and subsequent U.S. withdrawal from the area resulted in public outrage over what appeared to be a senseless loss of American lives. This furor only increased when it was revealed that the North Vietnamese had reoccupied their original positions after the American soldiers left. Gen. Creighton Abrams, who had succeeded Gen. William Westmoreland as commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, was ordered to avoid such battles in the future.

1972 Watergate burglars arrested

Five men are arrested for breaking into the Democratic National Committee offices at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C. Senate investigations eventually revealed that President Richard Nixon had been personally involved in the subsequent cover-up of the break-in; additional investigation uncovered a related group of illegal activities that included political espionage and falsification of official documents, all sanctioned by the White House. Nixon became increasingly embroiled in the political scandal.

On July 29 and 30, 1974, the House Judiciary Committee approved three articles of impeachment, charging that Nixon had misused his powers to violate the constitutional rights of U.S. citizens, obstructed justice, and defied Judiciary Committee subpoenas. To avoid almost certain impeachment, Nixon resigned from office on August 9.

The Watergate affair had a far-ranging impact, both at home and abroad. In the United States, the scandal shook the faith of the American people in the presidency. In the final analysis

though, the nation survived the constitutional crisis, thus reinforcing the system of checks and balances and proving that not even the president is above the law.

Nixon's resignation had dire consequences for the Vietnam War. Nixon had always promised that he would come to the aid of South Vietnam if North Vietnam violated the terms of the Paris Peace Accords. With Nixon gone, there was no one left to make good on those promises. When the North Vietnamese began their final offensive in 1975, the promised U.S. support was not provided and the South Vietnamese were defeated in less than 55 days.

JUNE 18

1965 SAC B-52s are used for the first time in South Vietnam

For the first time, 28 B-52s fly-bomb a Viet Cong concentration in a heavily forested area of Binh Duong Province northwest of Saigon. Such flights, under the aegis of the Strategic Air Command (SAC), became known as Operation Arc Light. The B-52s that took part in the Arc Light missions had been deployed to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam and more bombers were later deployed to bases in Okinawa and U-Tapao, Thailand.

In addition to supporting ground tactical operations, B-52s were used to interdict enemy supply lines in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, and later to strike targets in North Vietnam. Releasing their bombs from 30,000 feet, the B-52s could neither be seen nor heard from the ground as they inflicted awesome damage. B-52s were instrumental in breaking up enemy concentrations besieging Khe Sanh in 1968 and An Loc in 1972. Between June 1965 and August 1973, 126,615 B-52 sorties were flown over Southeast Asia. During those operations, the Air Force lost 29 B-52s: 17 from hostile fire over North Vietnam and 12 from operational causes.

1966 Westmoreland requests more troops

Gen. William Westmoreland, senior U.S. military commander in Vietnam, sends a new troop request to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Westmoreland stated that he needed 542,588 troops for the war in Vietnam in 1967--an increase of 111,588 men to the number already serving there. In the end, President Johnson acceded to Westmoreland's wishes and dispatched the additional troops to South Vietnam, but the increases were done in an incremental fashion. The highest number of U.S. troops in South Vietnam was 543,500, which was reached in 1969.

JUNE 19

1965 Ky becomes premier of South Vietnam

Air Vice-Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky assumes the premiership of the ninth government to be installed within the last 20 months in the country. The Armed Forces Council had chosen Ky as premier on June 11, and Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu was chosen for the relatively powerless position of chief of state.

Having risen to the rank of lieutenant general in the fledgling South Vietnamese Air Force, Ky was one of a group of officers who had seized power earlier in 1965 to end the anarchy that had followed in the wake of the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963.

The new premier immediately took steps to strengthen the armed forces. He also instituted needed land reforms, programs for the construction of schools and hospitals, and price controls. Additionally, his government began a much-touted campaign to remove corrupt officials. At the same time, however, Ky instituted a number of unpopular repressive actions, including a ban on newspapers.

In 1966, Buddhists, among other political factions, demanded Ky's ouster, and protests took place in various cities. The disturbances ended partly as a result of a government crackdown and partly because of a loss of support for the Buddhists among dissident elements of the military. Ky continued in his post until the elections of 1967, when he became Vice President of South Vietnam and Thieu became president. Ky served in that position until 1971, when he chose not to run as an opposition candidate against President Nguyen Van Thieu. He reverted to the rank of Air Marshal in the air force.

1968 South Vietnamese president signs general mobilization bill

In a public ceremony at Hue, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu signs a general mobilization bill. Under the new measure, men between the ages of 18 and 43 were subject to induction into the regular armed forces. Men between the ages of 44 and 50 and youths between 16 and 17 years old were eligible to serve in the part-time civilian People's Self Defense Organization. An estimated 90,000 17-year-olds in the People's Self Defense Organization would be transferred to the regular army. It was believed that, by the end of 1968, the law would provide for the induction of an additional 200,000 men. This would begin a steady growth in the size of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces that would accelerate under President Richard Nixon's Vietnamization program. There would be 1.1 million men and women in the South Vietnamese forces by the end of 1972.

JUNE 20

1964 Westmoreland becomes Commander of MACV

Gen. William Westmoreland succeeds Gen. Paul Harkins as head of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). Westmoreland had previously been Harkins' deputy. Westmoreland's initial task was to provide military advice and assistance to the government of South Vietnam. However, he soon found himself in command of American armed forces in combat as the war rapidly escalated and U.S. combat forces were committed to the war.

One of the war's most controversial figures, Gen. Westmoreland was given many honors when the fighting was going well, but many Americans later blamed him for problems in Vietnam. Negative feeling about Westmoreland grew particularly strong following the Tet Offensive of 1968, when he requested a large number of additional troops for deployment to Vietnam. In the wake of the offensive, there was a review of U.S. policy by the Johnson administration. It was decided to de-escalate the war, halt the bombing of North Vietnam, and go to the negotiating table. On July 1, 1968, General Creighton Abrams replaced Westmoreland as MACV Commander. Westmoreland was reassigned to be the Army Chief of Staff, a post he held until he retired in 1972.

1972 Abrams appointed as Army Chief of Staff

President Richard Nixon appoints General Creighton W. Abrams, commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, to be U.S. Army Chief of Staff. Abrams had become Gen. William Westmoreland's deputy in 1967, and succeeded him as commander of all U.S. forces in Vietnam in July 1968 when Westmoreland returned to the United States to become the Chief of Staff of the Army. As Westmoreland's successor, Abrams faced the difficult task of implementing the Vietnamization program instituted by the Nixon administration. This included the gradual reduction of American forces in Vietnam while attempting to increase the combat capabilities of the South Vietnamese armed forces. At the same time, he had to keep the North Vietnamese forces at bay; the Cambodian "incursion" in 1970 was part of his plan to take pressure off the Vietnamization effort and the U.S. troop withdrawals. It was hoped that a successful campaign in Cambodia would reduce the infiltration of North Vietnamese troops and equipment into South Vietnam while the effort continued to increase the combat capability of the South Vietnamese armed forces so that U.S. troops could be withdrawn on schedule.

General Abrams again succeeded General Westmoreland in 1972 when he returned to the Pentagon to become the Chief of Staff of the Army. Among his major contributions in that position were the plans and strategies for the post-Vietnam U.S. Army

and his revitalization of the Army following its withdrawal from Vietnam. General Abrams died in office on September 4, 1974.

JUNE 21

1966 Rolling Thunder raids continue

U.S. planes strike North Vietnamese petroleum-storage facilities in a series of devastating raids. These missions were part of Operation Rolling Thunder, which had been launched in March 1965 after President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered a sustained bombing campaign of North Vietnam. The operation was designed to interdict North Vietnamese transportation routes in the southern part of North Vietnam and to slow infiltration of personnel and supplies into South Vietnam. During the early months of this campaign, there were restrictions against striking targets in or near Hanoi and Haiphong. In 1966, however, Rolling Thunder was expanded to include the bombing of North Vietnamese ammunition dumps and oil storage facilities. In the spring of 1967, it was further expanded to include power plants, factories, and airfields in the Hanoi and Haiphong area.

The White House closely controlled operation Rolling Thunder and at times President Johnson personally selected targets. From 1965 to 1968, about 643,000 tons of bombs were dropped on North Vietnam. The operation continued, with occasional suspensions, until President Johnson halted in on October 31, 1968, under increasing domestic political pressure.

1969 Communists storm U.S. base near Tay Ninh

Approximately 600 communist soldiers storm a U.S. base near Tay Ninh, 50 miles northwest of Saigon and 12 miles from the Cambodian border. The North Vietnamese had been shelling the base for two days, followed by six attacks on the city itself and the surrounding villages. About 1,000 civilians fled their homes as Allied and communist troops fought in the city streets. The Americans eventually prevailed and it was reported that 146 communist soldiers were killed in the bitter street fighting. Ten Americans were killed and 32 were wounded. Total communist losses around Tay Ninh during the two-day battle were put at 194 killed.

JUNE 22

1972 New troops sent to An Loc

South Vietnam's 21st Division, decimated by repeated attempts to relieve An Loc, is replaced by the 25th Division. At the same time, U.S. helicopters flew 18th Division troops to positions south of An Loc to replace badly battered 9th Division troops that had also been trying to get to the city.

The 21st Division and attached units had been trying to reach

the besieged city since April 9, when the group had been moved from its normal station in the Mekong Delta and ordered to attack up Highway 13 from Lai Khe to open the route to An Loc. The South Vietnamese forces had been locked in a desperate battle with a North Vietnamese division blocking the highway since the very beginning of the siege. As the 21st Division tried to open the road, the defenders inside An Loc fought off repeated attacks by two North Vietnamese divisions that had surrounded the city early in April. This was the southernmost thrust of the North Vietnamese invasion that had begun on March 30; the other main objectives were Quang Tri in the north and Kontum in the Central Highlands.

The arrival of the fresh South Vietnamese soldiers would eventually result in the lifting of the siege at An Loc. The 18th Division troops successfully attacked the North Vietnamese forces surrounding the city and most of the communist troops within An Loc had been eliminated by the end of the month. The 25th Division was less successful and the North Vietnamese forces continued to block Route 13 south of the city.

1971 South Vietnamese fight for Fire Base Fuller

In a major engagement near the Demilitarized Zone, some 1,500 North Vietnamese attack the 500-man South Vietnamese garrison at Fire Base Fuller. Despite U.S. B-52 raids dropping 60 tons of bombs on June 21 and a 1,000-man reinforcement on June 24, the South Vietnamese had to abandon the base since a North Vietnamese bombardment had destroyed 80 percent of their bunkers. In an attempt to clear the surrounding area of enemy mortar and rocket sites, South Vietnamese forces swept the region on June 25. On June 28, a Saigon spokesman announced that 120 South Vietnamese had reoccupied Fire Base Fuller, but would not rebuild the fortifications. Casualty figures were reported at nearly 500 North Vietnamese dead, with 135 wounded. On July 1, fighting again flared up around the base, as 300 communists were pushed back with the help of U.S. and South Vietnamese air power and with 150 additional South Vietnamese troops.

JUNE 23

1964 Johnson announces new ambassador to South Vietnam

At a news conference, President Lyndon B. Johnson announces that Henry Cabot Lodge has resigned as ambassador to South Vietnam and that Gen. Maxwell Taylor will be his replacement. It was reliably reported that virtually every top official in the administration volunteered to serve as ambassador. Johnson made a point of insisting that this change would in no way affect the U.S. commitment to South Vietnam.

It was also announced that General Westmoreland was to become the "executive agent" to supervise the civilian advisory and assistance programs in three provinces around Saigon, the first stage of a plan to coordinate the entire U.S. military and civilian program in South Vietnam under the military command.

Lodge had left his ambassadorial post to pursue the Republican presidential nomination. Ultimately, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona secured the nomination and was defeated by Johnson in the general election. Lodge returned to Saigon in 1965 for another two-year stint as ambassador.

1969 North Vietnamese encircle Ben Het

Ben Het, a U.S. Special Forces camp located 288 miles northeast of Saigon and six miles from the junction of the Cambodian, Laotian and South Vietnamese borders, is besieged and cut off by 2,000 North Vietnamese troops using artillery and mortars. The base was defended by 250 U.S. soldiers and 750 South Vietnamese Montagnard tribesmen. The siege lasted until July 2 when the defenders were reinforced by an allied relief column.

JUNE 24

1970 Senate repeals Tonkin Gulf Resolution

On an amendment offered by Senator Robert Dole (R-Kansas) to the Foreign Military Sales Act, the Senate votes 81 to 10 to repeal the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. In August 1964, after North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked U.S. destroyers (in what became known as the Tonkin Gulf incident), President Johnson asked Congress for a resolution authorizing the president "to take all necessary measures" to defend Southeast Asia. Subsequently, Congress passed Public Law 88-408, which became known as the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, giving the president the power to take whatever actions he deemed necessary, including "the use of armed force." The resolution passed 82 to 2 in the Senate, where Wayne K. Morse (D-Oregon) and Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska) were the only dissenting votes; the bill passed unanimously in the House of Representatives. President Johnson signed it into law on August 10. It became the legal basis for every presidential action taken by the Johnson administration during its conduct of the war.

Despite the initial support for the resolution, it became increasingly controversial as Johnson used it to increase U.S. commitment to the war in Vietnam. Repealing the resolution was meant as an attempt to limit presidential war powers. The Nixon administration took a neutral stance on the vote, denying that it relied on the Tonkin resolution as the basis for its war-making authority in Southeast Asia. The administration asserted

that it primarily drew on the constitutional authority of the president as commander-in-chief to protect the lives of U.S. military forces in justifying its actions and policies in prosecuting the war.

1973 Martin becomes the U.S. ambassador in Saigon

Graham Martin is sworn in as Ambassador to South Vietnam, replacing Ellsworth Bunker, who had served in that position since April 1967. Martin's instructions were to demonstrate unswerving U.S. support for South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu and thereby restore Thieu's faith in the United States as an ally. Thieu was worried that the United States would abandon South Vietnam when the U.S. forces departed following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords. As it turned out, Thieu's concern was justified. When Congress reduced and then completely halted aid to South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese launched a general offensive in early 1975. Without U.S. support, the South Vietnamese were defeated in less than 55 days. One of the last Americans to leave South Vietnam was Ambassador Martin, who departed Saigon on the morning of April 30, 1975.

JUNE 25

1969 U.S. Navy turns boats over to South Vietnamese Navy

The U.S. Navy turns 64 river patrol gunboats valued at \$18.2 million over to the South Vietnamese Navy in what is described as the largest single transfer of military equipment in the war thus far. The transfer raised the total number of boats in the South Vietnamese Navy to more than 600. This was part of the "Vietnamization" program, which President Richard Nixon initiated to increase the fighting capability of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (to include the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps) so that they could assume more responsibility for the war. Vietnamization included the provision of new equipment and weapons and an intensified advisory effort.

1965 Viet Cong blow up a floating restaurant

Two Viet Cong terrorist bombs rip through a floating restaurant on the Saigon River. Thirty-one people, including nine Americans, were killed in the explosions. Dozens of other diners were wounded, including 11 Americans.

JUNE 26

1965 Westmoreland given authority to commit U.S. forces

Gen. William Westmoreland, senior U.S. military commander in

Vietnam, is given formal authority to commit American troops to battle when he decides they are necessary "to strengthen the relative position of the GVN [Government of Vietnam] forces." This authorization permitted Westmoreland to put his forces on the offensive. Heretofore, U.S. combat forces had been restricted to protecting U.S. airbases and other facilities.

The first major offensive by U.S. forces under this new directive was launched two days later by 3,000 troops of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, in conjunction with 800 Australian soldiers and a Vietnamese airborne unit. These forces assaulted a jungle area known as Viet Cong Zone D, 20 miles northeast of Saigon. The operation was called off after three days when it failed to make any major contact with the enemy. One American was killed, and nine Americans and four Australians were wounded.

1972 U.S. aircraft shifted to Thailand

The shift of fighter-bomber squadrons, involving up to 150 U.S. planes and more than 2,000 pilots from Da Nang, to bases in Thailand is completed. The shift was necessitated by the pending withdrawal of the U.S. infantry brigade that provided security for flyers at Da Nang. The departure of the U.S. unit was part of President Richard Nixon's Vietnamization program that he had instituted in June 1969. Under this program, the responsibility for the war was to be gradually transferred to the South Vietnamese so U.S. forces could be withdrawn.

JUNE 27

1968 U.S. forces begin to evacuate Khe Sanh

The U.S. command in Saigon confirms that U.S. forces have begun to evacuate the military base at Khe Sanh, 14 miles below the Demilitarized Zone and six miles from the Laotian border. The command statement attributed the pullback to a change in the military situation. To cope with increased North Vietnamese infiltration and activity in the area, Allied forces were adopting a more "mobile posture," thus making retention of the outpost at Khe Sanh unnecessary. The new western anchor of the U.S. base system in the northern region would be located 10 miles east of Khe Sanh.

The siege of Khe Sanh during the 1968 Tet Offensive had been one of the most publicized battles of the war because of the similarities it shared with the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, in which the communist Viet Minh forces had decisively defeated the French and forced them from the war. Many in the American media had portrayed the battle for Khe Sanh as potentially "another Dien Bien Phu."

The battle began on January 22 with a brisk firefight involving

the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines and a North Vietnamese battalion entrenched between two hills northwest of the base. An incessant barrage kept Khe Sanh's Marine defenders--which included three battalions from the 26th Marines, elements of the 9th Marine Regiment, and the South Vietnamese 37th Ranger Battalion--pinned down in their trenches and bunkers. During the 66-day siege, U.S. planes, dropping 5,000 bombs daily, exploded the equivalent of five Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs in the area. The relief of Khe Sanh, called Operation Pegasus, began in early April as the 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) and a South Vietnamese battalion approached the base from the east and south, while the Marines pushed westward to re-open Route 9.

The siege was finally lifted on April 6, when the cavalrymen linked up with the 9th Marines south of the Khe Sanh airstrip. In a final clash a week later, the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines drove enemy forces from Hill 881 North. Gen. William Westmoreland, commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, contended that Khe Sanh played a vital blocking role at the western end of the Demilitarized Zone, and asserted that if the base had fallen, North Vietnamese forces could have outflanked Marine defenses along the buffer zone. Various statements in the North Vietnamese Communist Party newspaper suggested that Hanoi saw the battle as an opportunity to re-enact its famous victory at Dien Bien Phu.

There was much controversy over the battle at Khe Sanh, as both sides claimed victory. The North Vietnamese, although they failed to take the base, claimed that they had tied down a lot of U.S. combat assets that could have been used elsewhere in South Vietnam. This is true, but the North Vietnamese failed to achieve the decisive victory at Khe Sanh that they had won against the French at Dien Bien Phu. For their part, the Americans claimed victory because they had held the base against the North Vietnamese onslaught. It was a costly battle for both sides. The official casualty count for the Battle of Khe Sanh was 205 Marines killed in action and over 1,600 wounded (this figure did not include the American and South Vietnamese soldiers killed in other battles in the region). The U.S. military headquarters in Saigon estimated that the North Vietnamese lost between 10,000 and 15,000 men in the fighting at Khe Sanh.

1963 Kennedy appoints Lodge as ambassador

President John F. Kennedy appoints Henry Cabot Lodge, his former Republican political opponent, to succeed Frederick E. Nolting as ambassador to Vietnam. The appointing of Lodge and the recall of Nolting signaled a change in U.S. policy in South Vietnam. Lodge was a firm believer in the "domino theory," and when he became convinced that the United States could not defeat the communists in Vietnam with President Ngo

Dinh Diem in office, he became very critical of Diem's regime in his dispatches back to Washington. Diem was ultimately removed from office and assassinated during a coup by opposition South Vietnamese generals that began on November 1, 1963. On orders from the Kennedy administration, Lodge had conveyed to the coup plotters that the United States would not thwart any proposed coup. Lodge served in Saigon until June 1964, when he resigned his ambassadorial post to pursue the Republican presidential nomination. Ultimately, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona secured the nomination and was defeated by Johnson in the general election. Lodge returned to Saigon in 1965 for another two-year stint as ambassador.

JUNE 28

1965 U.S. forces launch first offensive

In the first major offensive ordered for U.S. forces, 3,000 troops of the 173rd Airborne Brigade--in conjunction with 800 Australian soldiers and a Vietnamese airborne unit--assault a jungle area known as Viet Cong Zone D, 20 miles northeast of Saigon. The operation was called off after three days when it failed to make any major contact with the enemy. One American was killed and nine Americans and four Australians were wounded. The State Department assured the American public that the operation was in accord with Johnson administration policy on the role of U.S. troops.

1972 Nixon announces draftees will not go to Vietnam

President Nixon announces that no more draftees will be sent to Vietnam unless they volunteer for such duty. He also announced that a force of 10,000 troops would be withdrawn by September 1, which would leave a total of 39,000 in Vietnam.

JUNE 29

1970 U.S. ground troops return from Cambodia

U.S. ground combat troops end two months of operations in Cambodia and return to South Vietnam. Military officials reported 354 Americans had been killed and 1,689 were wounded in the operation. The South Vietnamese reported 866 killed and 3,724 wounded. About 34,000 South Vietnamese troops remained in Cambodia.

U.S. and South Vietnamese forces had launched a limited "incursion" into Cambodia to clear North Vietnamese sanctuaries 20 miles inside the Cambodian border. Some 50,000 South Vietnamese soldiers and 30,000 U.S. troops were involved, making it the largest operation of the war since Operation Junction City in 1967.

The incursion into Cambodia had given the antiwar movement

in the United States a new rallying point. News of the crossing into Cambodia set off a wave of antiwar demonstrations, including one at Kent State University that resulted in the killing of four students by Army National Guard troops, and another at Jackson State in Mississippi resulting in the shooting of two students when police opened fire on a women's dormitory. The incursion also angered many in Congress, who felt that Nixon was illegally widening the scope of the war; this resulted in a series of congressional resolutions and legislative initiatives that would severely limit the executive power of the president.

1964 First New Zealand troops arrive

Twenty-four New Zealand Army engineers arrive in Saigon as a token of that country's support for the American effort in South Vietnam. The contingent was part of the Free World Military Forces, an effort by President Lyndon B. Johnson to enlist other nations to support the American cause in South Vietnam by sending military aid and troops. The level of support was not the primary issue; Johnson wanted to portray international solidarity and consensus for U.S. policies in Southeast Asia and he believed that participation by a number of countries would achieve that end. The effort was also known as the "many flags" program.

In June 1965, New Zealand increased their commitment to the war with the arrival of the Royal New Zealand Artillery's 161st Battery. Two rifle companies from the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment arrived in South Vietnam in 1967 along with a platoon from New Zealand's commando force, the Special Air Service. These New Zealand forces were integrated with the forces of the Australian Task Force and operated with them in Phuoc Tuy Province, southeast of Saigon along the coast. In 1971, New Zealand withdrew its military forces from South Vietnam.

JUNE 30

1967 Thieu becomes president

The South Vietnamese Armed Forces Council resolves rival claims to the presidency in favor of Nguyen Van Thieu, Chief of State. Former Premier Nguyen Cao Ky, who had announced on May 11 that he would run for president, was forced to accept second place on the presidential ticket.

Thieu had been an Army officer in command of the 5th Infantry Division near Saigon when he and other senior South Vietnamese officers led a coup against President Ngo Dinh Diem. Following the coup, a series of groups jockeyed for power. In June 1965, another coup against the civilian government momentarily in power resulted in a 10-man Military National Leadership Committee, which elected Ky as premier

and Thieu as Chairman and Chief of State. When elections were held in 1967, the situation was reversed and Thieu became president. In 1971, Ky would choose not to run against Thieu and Thieu would be re-elected to the presidency, although charges of a rigged election surfaced.

Pressured by the United States to agree to the Paris Peace Accords in 1973, which left the North Vietnamese in control of large segments of South Vietnam, President Thieu's position was further undermined when the U.S. Congress cut promised military aid. After an open North Vietnamese attack on Phuoc Long Province in November 1974, President Gerald Ford failed to honor U.S. promises to come to the aid of the South Vietnamese in the case of such an attack. With four North Vietnamese corps closing in on Saigon and all hope of outside assistance gone, President Thieu resigned, and on April 25, 1975, he left South Vietnam, flying to Taiwan and then to Great Britain.

1970 Cooper-Church Amendment passes in Senate

The Senate votes 58 to 37 in favor of adopting the Cooper-Church amendment to limit presidential power in Cambodia. The amendment barred funds to retain U.S. troops in Cambodia after July 1 or to supply military advisers, mercenaries, or to conduct "any combat activity in the air above Cambodia in direct support of Cambodian forces" without congressional approval. The amendment represented the first limitation ever passed in the Senate concerning the president's powers as commander-in-chief during a war situation. The House of Representatives rejected the amendment on July 9, and it was eventually dropped from the Foreign Military Sales Act.

In a written report on the U.S. incursion in Cambodia, President Nixon pronounced it a "successful" operation. Nixon ruled out the use of U.S. troops there in the future, suggesting that Cambodia's defense would be left largely to Cambodia and its allies. Regarding the use of U.S. air power in Cambodia, Nixon stated that the United States would not provide air or logistical support for South Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, but would continue bombing enemy personnel and supply concentrations "with the approval of the Cambodian government." Nixon noted that more than a year's supply of weapons and ammunition had been captured and that 11,349 enemy soldiers were killed by Allied forces during the incursion into the area.

JUNE 30

1967 Thieu becomes president

The South Vietnamese Armed Forces Council resolves rival claims to the presidency in favor of Nguyen Van Thieu, Chief of State. Former Premier Nguyen Cao Ky, who had announced on

May 11 that he would run for president, was forced to accept second place on the presidential ticket.

Thieu had been an Army officer in command of the 5th Infantry Division near Saigon when he and other senior South Vietnamese officers led a coup against President Ngo Dinh Diem. Following the coup, a series of groups jockeyed for power. In June 1965, another coup against the civilian government momentarily in power resulted in a 10-man Military National Leadership Committee, which elected Ky as premier and Thieu as Chairman and Chief of State. When elections were held in 1967, the situation was reversed and Thieu became president. In 1971, Ky would choose not to run against Thieu and Thieu would be re-elected to the presidency, although charges of a rigged election surfaced.

Pressured by the United States to agree to the Paris Peace Accords in 1973, which left the North Vietnamese in control of large segments of South Vietnam, President Thieu's position was further undermined when the U.S. Congress cut promised military aid. After an open North Vietnamese attack on Phuoc Long Province in November 1974, President Gerald Ford failed to honor U.S. promises to come to the aid of the South Vietnamese in the case of such an attack. With four North Vietnamese corps closing in on Saigon and all hope of outside assistance gone, President Thieu resigned, and on April 25, 1975, he left South Vietnam, flying to Taiwan and then to Great Britain.

1970 Cooper-Church Amendment passes in Senate

The Senate votes 58 to 37 in favor of adopting the Cooper-Church amendment to limit presidential power in Cambodia. The amendment barred funds to retain U.S. troops in Cambodia after July 1 or to supply military advisers, mercenaries, or to conduct "any combat activity in the air above Cambodia in direct support of Cambodian forces" without congressional approval. The amendment represented the first limitation ever passed in the Senate concerning the president's powers as commander-in-chief during a war situation. The House of Representatives rejected the amendment on July 9, and it was eventually dropped from the Foreign Military Sales Act.

In a written report on the U.S. incursion in Cambodia, President Nixon pronounced it a "successful" operation. Nixon ruled out the use of U.S. troops there in the future, suggesting that Cambodia's defense would be left largely to Cambodia and its allies. Regarding the use of U.S. air power in Cambodia, Nixon stated that the United States would not provide air or logistical support for South Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, but would continue bombing enemy personnel and supply concentrations "with the approval of the Cambodian government." Nixon noted

that more than a year's supply of weapons and ammunition had been captured and that 11,349 enemy soldiers were killed by Allied forces during the incursion into the area.