

## 1964 Brink Hotel Bombing

The Brink Hotel bombing on the evening of Christmas Eve 1964, was a bomb attack on the Brinks Hotel in Saigon by the Vietcong during the Vietnam War. The Brink Hotel housed United States Defense Forces officers. The explosion killed two Americans and injured 58 others. The Vietcong commanders had planned the venture with two aims in mind. First, by attacking an American institution in the core of the heavily guarded capital, it demonstrated an ability to strike in Vietnam should the United States decide to launch air raids against North Vietnam. The second was to demonstrate to the South Vietnamese that the Americans were vulnerable and could not be relied upon for protection.

### Planning

The bombing was planned and performed by two Vietcong agents who escaped uninjured. One of them, related his story to historian Stanley Karnow after the war ended. Xuan and his comrade had received orders from an intermediary in late November. They reconnoitered the targeted building, mixing with the crowds in the busy street outside the hotel, noting that South Vietnamese officers mingled freely with Americans. They obtained Republic of Vietnam Army uniforms from Saigon's black market, and Xuan dressed himself as a military chauffeur, while his partner disguised himself as an officer and then mingled with the officers, copying their mannerisms, speaking style and even their smoking style. They then procured two cars and the explosives needed for the operation.

### Execution

The pair stashed the explosives in the trunk of one of the cars, setting a timing device so that the bomb would trigger at 1745, the happy hour in the officers' bar. The pair drove their vehicles into the hotel. Knowing from intelligence that a certain US colonel had left for home, the Vietcong "major" told the hotel clerk that he had an appointment with the colonel, claiming that he would be coming from Da Lat. Despite the clerk's reply that the colonel had left, the "major" insisted that he had not, and parked his car in the lot beneath the hotel, and told his "chauffeur" to go and fetch the American with the other vehicle. The "major" then left the hotel gate, asking the guard to tell the American colonel to wait, claiming that he had not eaten all the day and would go to a nearby café for something to eat. The explosion occurred while the "major" was there.

### Reaction

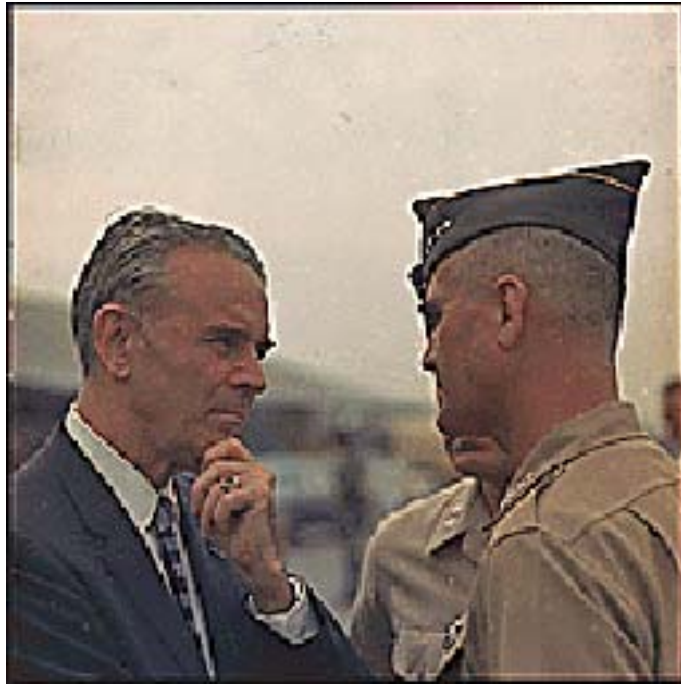
Maxwell Taylor, the US ambassador to South Vietnam, General William Westmoreland, the US Army Commander in Vietnam and other senior US officers in Saigon and in Washington DC urged President Lyndon Baines Johnson to authorize reprisal bombings against North Vietnam. Maxwell Taylor stated in a message "Hanoi will get the word that, despite our present tribulations, there is still bite in the tiger they call paper, and the U.S. stock in this part of the world will take sharp rise. Some of our local squabbles will probably disappear in the enthusiasm which our action would generate." Johnson declined, stating that an escalation during the Christmas period would be inappropriate as it would damage public morale.



The Brink Hotel following the Vietcong bombing on December 24, 1964.  
Two American officers were killed.



Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's February 1965 press conference at the Pentagon.  
(Photo taken February 7, 1965.)



Evacuation of U.S. military and civilian dependents from Vietnam in compliance with a directive by President L.B. Johnson.

U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Maxwell D. Taylor, chats with General William C. Westmoreland, Commanding General, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam at Tan Son Nhut Airport, Saigon.

They were at the Airport to see part of the dependents prior to their departure to CONUS.  
(Photo taken February 11, 1965.)