

# Vietnam History by day=all years

## January 1

### **1966 1st Marine Division advance elements arrive**

On this day, advance elements of the 1st Regiment of the Marine 1st Division arrive in Vietnam. The entire division followed by the end of March.

The division established its headquarters at Chu Lai and was given responsibility for the two southernmost provinces of I Corps (the military region just south of the DMZ). At the peak of its strength, the 1st Marine Division consisted of four regiments of infantry: the 1st, 5th, 7th, and 27th Marines. It also included the 11th Artillery regiment, which consisted of six battalions of 105-mm, 155-mm, and 8-inch howitzers. Other divisional combat units included the 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Antitank Battalion, 1st Amphibious Tractor Company, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, and the 1st Force Reconnaissance Company. The division numbered nearly 20,000 marines by the time all elements had arrived in South Vietnam.

During the Tet Offensive of 1968, the 1st Marine Division assisted the South Vietnamese army forces in recapturing the imperial city of Hue. The 1st Marine Division was withdrawn from Vietnam in the spring of 1971 and moved to its current base at Camp Pendleton, California. During the course of the Vietnam War, 20 members of the 1st Marine Division won the Medal of Honor for conspicuous bravery on the battlefield. The 1st Marine Division was twice awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for gallantry in action in Vietnam and received the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm and the Vietnamese Civil Action Award.

### **1967 Operation Sam Houston begins**

Operation Sam Houston begins as a continuation of border surveillance operations in Pleiku and Kontum Provinces in the Central Highlands by units from the U.S. 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions. The purpose of the operation was to interdict the movement of North Vietnamese troops and equipment into South Vietnam from communist sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos. The operation ended on April 5. A total of 169 U.S. soldiers were killed in action; 733 enemy casualties were reported.

## JANUARY 2

### **1963 Viet Cong are successful at Ap Bac**

At Ap Bac, a village in the Mekong Delta 50 miles southwest of Saigon, the Viet Cong inflict heavy casualties on a much larger South Vietnamese force.

About 2,500 troops of South Vietnam's 7th Infantry Division--equipped with automatic weapons, armored amphibious personnel carriers, and supported by bombers and helicopters--failed to defeat a group of 300 guerrillas who escaped after inflicting heavy losses on the South Vietnamese.

By the time the battle was over, the South Vietnamese suffered 80 killed and over 100 wounded in action. The battle was seen as symbolic of the poor fighting ability of the South Vietnamese army, revealing that government troops could neither cope with the strategy nor match the fighting spirit of the Viet Cong. Even with superior numbers and the assistance of American technology and planning, the South Vietnamese could not defeat the Viet Cong. South Vietnamese officials in Saigon were irate with U.S. advisers' candid assessments of the action, which were highly critical of the South Vietnamese soldiers and their leaders. The Lao Dong party (the ruling Vietnamese Workers' Party) in Hanoi called the battle at Ap Bac a victory, saying that it "signified the coming of the new revolutionary armed forces in the South."

### **1967 U.S. planes down seven enemy planes**

In what is described as the biggest air battle of the war to date, U.S. Air Force F-4 Phantom jets down seven communist MiG-21s over North Vietnam. The Phantoms were flying cover for F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bombers, which were attacking surface-to-air missile sites in the Red River Delta. During this operation, Col. Robin Olds shot down one of the MiGs, becoming the first and only U.S. Air Force ace with victories in both World War II and Vietnam ("ace" was a designation traditionally awarded for five enemy aircraft shot down).

## **JANUARY 3**

### **1968 McCarthy announces his presidential candidacy**

Senator Eugene McCarthy (D-Minnesota) announces his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

McCarthy had been a contender to be President Lyndon B. Johnson's running mate in the 1964 election, but since then he had become increasingly disenchanted with Johnson's policies in Vietnam and the escalation of the war. In 1967, he published *The Limits of Power*, an assessment of U.S. foreign policy that was very critical of the Johnson administration. When announcing his candidacy, McCarthy said he hoped to harness the growing antiwar sentiment in the country, particularly among the young. In March, much to the astonishment of most political pundits, McCarthy came within a few hundred votes of beating Johnson in the New Hampshire primary. Johnson, frustrated with his inability to reach a solution in Vietnam, announced on March 31, 1968, that he would neither seek nor accept the nomination of his party for re-election.

The rest of McCarthy's campaign was almost an anticlimax. Robert Kennedy entered the race and won most of the Democratic primaries until he was assassinated in June 1968. When the Democratic National Convention opened in Chicago,

a conflict immediately erupted over the party's Vietnam platform. While demonstrations against the war took place in the streets outside the convention hall, Vice President Hubert Humphrey won the party nomination.

Humphrey was defeated in the general election by Republican Richard Nixon. McCarthy retired from the Senate in 1971, but his brief run at the presidency demonstrated that there was a strong antiwar sentiment in the country that demanded to be heard.

### **1965 Antigovernment demonstrators clash with police**

The political crisis that had been undermining the South Vietnamese government and military for months is aggravated when thousands of antigovernment demonstrators in Saigon clash with government marines and police. There was also rioting in Hue, where students organized strikes against the local government. The main resistance to the Saigon regime came from Buddhists, who were strongly opposed to Tran Van Huong. Huong was a civilian who became premier on November 4, 1964, after a series of military governments had failed in the aftermath of November 1963 coup that resulted in the death of President Ngo Dinh Diem. The Buddhists were alarmed that Huong's government might pave the way for a return to power of Catholics and those faithful to Diem and his policies. In addition, many Buddhists had become increasingly concerned about American influence in South Vietnam and saw Huong as a puppet of the United States.

## **JANUARY 4**

### **1974 Thieu announces war has resumed**

South Vietnamese troops report that 55 soldiers have been killed in two clashes with communist forces. Claiming that the war had "restarted," South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu asserted, "We cannot allow the communists a situation in which...they can launch harassing attacks against us," and ordered his forces to launch a counter-offensive to retake lost territory. The announcement essentially marked the end of attempts to adhere to the agreements of the Paris Peace Accords.

A cease-fire had been initiated in Vietnam on January 28, 1973, under the provisions of the Paris Peace Accords. These most recent battles were only the latest rounds in ongoing fighting that had followed the brief lull provided by the cease-fire. A large part of the problem was that the Peace Accords had left an estimated 200,000 North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. Renewed fighting broke out after the cease-fire as both sides jockeyed for control of territory in South Vietnam. Each side held that military operations were justified by the

other side's violations of the cease-fire. What resulted was an almost endless chain of retaliations.

During the period between the initiation of the cease-fire and the end of 1973, there were an average of 2,980 combat incidents per month in South Vietnam. Most of these were generally low-intensity harassing attacks by the North Vietnamese designed to wear down the South Vietnamese forces, but the communists intensified their efforts in the Central Highlands in September when they attacked government positions with tanks west of Pleiku. As a result of these post-cease-fire actions, the South Vietnamese lost an estimated 25,473 soldiers in battle in 1973.

### **1965 Johnson reaffirms commitment to South Vietnam**

In his State of the Union message, President Lyndon B. Johnson reaffirms U.S. commitment to support South Vietnam in fighting communist aggression. In justifying the continued support to Saigon, Johnson pointed out that U.S. presidents had been giving the South Vietnamese help for 10 years, and, he said, "Our own security is tied to the peace of Asia."

## **JANUARY 5**

### **1967 Amphibious operations conducted in the Mekong Delta**

On this day, 1st Battalion, 9th U.S. Marines and South Vietnamese Marine Brigade Force Bravo conduct amphibious operations in the Kien Hoa Province in the Mekong Delta, located 62 miles south of Saigon.

This action, part of Operation Deckhouse V, marked the first time that U.S. combat troops were used in the Mekong Delta. The target area, called the Thanh Phu Secret Zone by the Viet Cong guerrillas, was believed to contain communist ammunition dumps, ordinance and engineering workshops, hospitals, and indoctrination centers. During the course of the operation, which lasted until January 15, seven U.S. Marines and 21 Viet Cong were killed.

### **1969 Lodge succeeds Harriman as chief negotiator**

President-elect Richard Nixon names Henry Cabot Lodge to succeed W. Averell Harriman as chief U.S. negotiator at the Paris peace talks. Lawrence Edward Walsh, a New York lawyer and former deputy attorney general, was named deputy chief negotiator to replace Cyrus R. Vance. Marshall Green, an Asian affairs expert and ambassador to Indonesia, was assigned to assist the negotiating team. The peace talks started on May 10, 1968, but had been plagued from the beginning by procedural

questions that inhibited any meaningful negotiations or progress. Unfortunately, the change in personnel had no effect in fostering more meaningful negotiations

## **JANUARY 6**

### **1971 Army drops charges of My Lai cover-up**

The Army drops charges of an alleged cover-up in the My Lai massacre against four officers. After the charges were dropped, a total of 11 people had been cleared of responsibility during the My Lai trials.

The trials were a result of action that occurred in March 1968. During the incident, 1st Lt. William Calley, a platoon leader in the 23rd (Americal) Division, allegedly led his men to massacre innocent Vietnamese civilians, including women and children, in a cluster of hamlets in Son Tinh District in the coastal south of Chu Lai.

By 1971, charges were pending only against Lt. Calley, Capt. Ernest Medina, and Capt. Eugene Kotouc. On March 29, 1971, a Fort Benning court-martial jury found Calley guilty of the premeditated murder of at least 22 South Vietnamese civilians and sentenced him to life in prison. Kotouc was cleared by a court-martial on April 29, and Medina was acquitted on September 22.

On May 19, the Army disciplined two generals for failing to conduct an adequate investigation of My Lai, demoting Maj. Gen. Samuel W. Koster from two-star to one-star rank. At the same time, both Koster and Brig. Gen. George W. Young Jr., his assistant divisional commander at the time of the massacre, were stripped of their Distinguished Service Medals, and letters of censure were placed in their personnel files. The trials ended on December 17, when Col. Oren K. Henderson was acquitted of cover-up charges. He was the highest-ranking officer to be tried.

Of those originally charged, only Calley was convicted. Many believed that Calley was a scapegoat, and the widespread public outcry against his life sentence moved President Nixon to intervene on April 3, 1971. He had Calley removed from the Fort Benning stockade and ordered him confined to quarters pending review of his case. On August 20, Calley's life term was reduced to 20 years. In November 1974, a Federal Court judge ruled that Calley was convicted unjustly, citing "prejudicial publicity." Although the Army disputed this ruling, Calley was paroled for good behavior after serving 40 months, 35 of which were spent in his own home.

### **1975 Phuoc Binh falls to the North Vietnamese**

Phuoc Binh, the capital of Phuoc Long Province, about 60 miles north of Saigon, falls to the North Vietnamese. Phuoc Binh was the first provincial capital taken by the communists since the fall of Quang Tri on May 1, 1972.

Two days later, the North Vietnamese took the last of the South Vietnamese positions in the region, gaining control of the entire province. The South Vietnamese Air Force lost 20 planes defending the province. Presidents Nixon and Ford had promised South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu that the United States would come to the aid of South Vietnam if the North Vietnamese launched a major offensive in violation of the Paris Peace Accords. However, the United States did nothing when Phuoc Binh fell to the communists. In fact, the passive response of the United States convinced North Vietnam that the Americans would not soon return to Vietnam, and encouraged the Politburo in Hanoi to launch a new attack in the hopes of creating ripe conditions for a general uprising in South Vietnam by 1976.

When the North Vietnamese launched the new offensive in early 1975, the South Vietnamese forces, demoralized by the failure of the United States to come to their aid, were defeated in just 55 days. North Vietnamese tanks crashed through the gates of the presidential palace on April 30 and South Vietnam surrendered fully to the communists.

## **JANUARY 7**

### **1965 Civilian government is restored in Saigon**

Gen. Nguyen Khanh and the newly formed Armed Forces Council--the generals who had participated in a coup on December 19, 1964--restore civilian control of the South Vietnamese government. Tran Van Huong was made the new premier.

A bloodless coup had occurred when Gen. Khanh and a group of generals led by Air Commodore Nguyen Cao Ky and Army Maj. Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu arrested three dozen high officers and civilian officials and took control of the government. The coup was part of the continuing political instability that erupted after the November 1963 coup that resulted in the murder of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

Tran Van Huong proved unable to put together a viable government, though, and the Armed Forces Council ousted him on January 27, installing General Khanh to power. Khanh was ousted by yet another coup on February 18, led by Ky and Thieu. Khanh moved to the United States and settled in Palm Beach, Florida. A short-lived civilian government under Dr. Phan Huy Quat was installed, but it lasted only until June 12, 1965. At that time, Thieu and Ky formed a new government with

Thieu as the chief of state and Ky as the prime minister. Thieu and Ky were made president and vice-president in general elections held in 1967. They served together until 1971, when Thieu was re-elected president.

### **1971 Laird visits Saigon**

Accompanied by Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird arrives in South Vietnam to assess the military situation.

The purpose of Laird's visit was to check on the progress of the "Vietnamization" effort. In the summer of 1969, President Richard Nixon ordered that measures be taken to "Vietnamize" the war--he hoped to increase the capabilities of South Vietnamese forces so U.S. troops could eventually be withdrawn and the South Vietnamese could assume more responsibility for the war. This effort included a rapid modernization of South Vietnamese forces with new equipment and weapons, and a renewed emphasis on the American advisory effort. American troop withdrawals began in the fall of 1969 and continued on a regular basis.

At the completion of his visit, Laird announced that the preponderance of U.S. "combat responsibility" would end by mid-summer. Upon his return to the United States, however, he warned President Nixon and his cabinet of "some tough days ahead." Admiral Moorer, who also had made a side trip to Phnom Penh, reported that the Cambodian situation was "deteriorating" as Premier Lon Nol's forces were being threatened by the communist Khmer Rouge forces and their North Vietnamese allies.

## **JANUARY 8**

### **1973 Peace talks resume in Paris**

National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and Hanoi's Le Duc Tho resume peace negotiations in Paris.

After the South Vietnamese had blunted the massive North Vietnamese invasion launched in the spring of 1972, Kissinger and the North Vietnamese had finally made some progress on reaching a negotiated end to the war. However, a recalcitrant South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu had inserted several demands into the negotiations that caused the North Vietnamese negotiators to walk out of the talks on December 13.

President Richard Nixon issued an ultimatum to Hanoi to send its representatives back to the conference table within 72 hours "or else." The North Vietnamese rejected Nixon's demand and the president ordered Operation Linebacker II, a full-scale air

campaign against the Hanoi area. On December 28, after 11 days of round-the-clock bombing (with the exception of a 36-hour break for Christmas), North Vietnamese officials agreed to return to the peace negotiations in Paris.

When the negotiators returned on January 8, the peace talks moved along quickly. On January 23, 1973, the United States, North Vietnam, the Republic of Vietnam, and the Viet Cong signed a cease-fire agreement that took effect five days later.

### **1967 Operation Cedar Falls is launched**

About 16,000 U.S. soldiers from the 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions, 173rd Airborne Brigade and 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment join 14,000 South Vietnamese troops to mount Operation Cedar Falls.

This offensive, the largest of the war to date, was designed to disrupt insurgent operations near Saigon, and had as its primary targets the Thanh Dien Forest Preserve and the Iron Triangle, a 60-square-mile area of jungle believed to contain communist base camps and supply dumps. During the course of the operations, U.S. infantrymen discovered and destroyed a massive tunnel complex in the Iron Triangle, apparently a headquarters for guerrilla raids and terrorist attacks on Saigon. The operation ended with 711 of the enemy reported killed and 488 captured. Allied losses were 83 killed and 345 wounded. The operation lasted for 18 days.

## **JANUARY 9**

### **1965 Support is pledged to civilian government**

Under pressure from United States officials, Gen. Nguyen Khanh and the newly formed Armed Forces Council--generals who participated in the bloodless coup on December 19, 1964--agree to support the civilian government of Premier Tran Van Huong.

The coup occurred when Khanh and a group of generals, led by Air Commodore Nguyen Cao Ky and Army Maj. Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu, arrested three dozen high officers and civilian officials and took control of the government. The coup was part of the continuing political instability that followed the November 1963 coup that resulted in the murder of President Ngo Dinh Diem. The period following the overthrow of Diem was marked by a series of coups and "revolving door" governments.

In addition to pledging to support Huong, Khanh and the generals agreed to release five High National Council members and 50 others arrested during the coup. They also promised to confine their activities to the military sphere. A national convention was to be convened to "assume legislative powers"



and to draw up a permanent constitution. However, this did not happen. Tran Van Huong was unable to put together a viable government and the Armed Forces Council ousted him on January 27 and installed General Khanh to power. Khanh was ousted by yet another coup on February 18, led by Ky and Thieu. Khanh then moved to the United States and settled in Palm Beach, Florida.

A short-lived civilian government under Dr. Phan Huy Quat was installed, but it lasted only until June 12, 1965. At that time, Thieu and Ky formed a new government with Thieu as the chief of state and Ky as the prime minister. Thieu and Ky were elected as president and vice-president in general elections held in 1967. They served together until 1971, when Thieu was re-elected president.

### **1967 U.S. officials try to counter claims of Saigon corruption**

The Agency for International Development (AID) attempts to respond to reports in the American media of widespread corruption and thievery of commodities sent to South Vietnam by the United States. In a report to the president, AID officials asserted, "No more than 5-6 percent of all economic assistance commodities delivered to Vietnam were stolen or otherwise diverted."

## **JANUARY 10**

### **1972 Hubert Humphrey criticizes President Nixon**

Former Vice President Hubert Humphrey criticizes President Richard Nixon, saying that it was taking longer for President Nixon to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam than it did to defeat Hitler.

Humphrey called for an immediate end to the war, declaring: "Had I been elected, we would now be out of that war." Humphrey ran against Nixon in the 1968 election, winning the Democratic nomination for president over Senator Eugene McCarthy (D-Minnesota) after President Lyndon Johnson declined to run for re-election. In the race, Humphrey had tried to distance himself from Johnson and his war policy, but Republican nominee Nixon, promising to "to end the war and win the peace," won the election by less than 1 percent of the popular vote.

### **1967 Johnson asks for surcharge to pay for the war**

President Johnson, in his annual State of the Union message to Congress, asks for enactment of a 6 percent surcharge on

personal and corporate income taxes to help support the Vietnam War for two years, or "for as long as the unusual expenditures associated with our efforts continue." Congress delayed for almost a year, but eventually passed the surcharge. The U.S. expenditure in Vietnam for fiscal year 1967 would be \$21 billion.

## **JANUARY 11**

### **1956 Diem issues Ordinance No. 6**

South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem issues Ordinance No. 6, allowing the internment of former Viet Minh members and others "considered as dangerous to national defense and common security."

The Viet Minh was a largely communist organization that overthrew French colonial rule in Vietnam and assumed control of the government in North Vietnam in October 1954. Diem's internment of former Viet Minh members was an attempt to consolidate his control of South Vietnam. He had already subdued opposition from various religious sects and had launched a drive against Viet Minh who remained in the South.

Although by the end of 1956, Diem had smashed 90 percent of the former Viet Minh insurgent agents in the Mekong Delta, his ruthless drive against all dissidents did little to enhance his popularity, and he lost many potential allies. He managed to stay in power until November 1963, when he was assassinated during a coup by South Vietnamese army generals.

### **1965 Demonstrations erupt in Saigon and Hue**

Major cities--especially Saigon and Hue--and much of central Vietnam are disrupted by demonstrations and strikes led by Buddhists.

Refusing to accept any government headed by Tran Van Huong, who they saw as a puppet of the United States, the Buddhists turned against U.S. institutions and their demonstrations took on an increasingly anti-American tone. Thich Tri Quang, the Buddhist leader, and other monks went on a hunger strike. A Buddhist girl in Nha Trang burned herself to death (the first such self-immolation since 1963). Although Huong tried to appease the Buddhists by rearranging his government, they were not satisfied.

In the end, Huong was unable to put together a viable government and, on January 27, the Armed Forces Council overthrew him in a bloodless coup and installed Gen. Nguyen Khanh in power. Khanh was ousted by yet another coup on February 18, led by Air Commodore Nguyen Cao Ky and Maj. Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu. A short-lived civilian government

under Dr. Phan Huy Quat was installed, but it lasted only until June 12, 1965. At that time, Thieu and Ky formed a new government with Thieu as the chief of state and Ky as the prime minister. Thieu and Ky would be elected as president and vice-president in general elections held in 1967.

## **JANUARY 12**

### **1962 Operation Ranch Hand initiated**

The United States Air Force launches Operation Ranch Hand, a "modern technological area-denial technique" designed to expose the roads and trails used by the Viet Cong.

Flying C-123 Providers, U.S. personnel dumped an estimated 19 million gallons of defoliating herbicides over 10-20 percent of Vietnam and parts of Laos between 1962-1971. Agent Orange--named for the color of its metal containers--was the most frequently used defoliating herbicide. The operation succeeded in killing vegetation, but not in stopping the Viet Cong. The use of these agents was controversial, both during and after the war, because of the questions about long-term ecological impacts and the effect on humans who either handled or were sprayed by the chemicals.

Beginning in the late 1970s, Vietnam veterans began to cite the herbicides, especially Agent Orange, as the cause of health problems ranging from skin rashes to cancer to birth defects in their children. Similar problems, including an abnormally high incidence of miscarriages and congenital malformations, have been reported among the Vietnamese people who lived in the areas where the defoliating agents were used.

### **1971 "Harrisburg Six" charged with conspiracy**

The Reverend Philip F. Berrigan, serving a six-year prison term on charges of destroying draft records, and five others are indicted by a grand jury on charges of conspiring to kidnap presidential adviser Henry Kissinger and of plotting to blow up the heating tunnels of federal buildings in Washington. The "Harrisburg Six," as they came to be known, denied the charges and denounced them as a government effort to destroy the peace movement.

## **JANUARY 13**

### **1962 First Operation Farm Gate missions flown**

In the first Farm Gate combat missions, T-28 fighter-bombers are flown in support of a South Vietnamese outpost under Viet Cong attack.

By the end of the month, U.S. Air Force pilots had flown 229

Farm Gate sorties. Operation Farm Gate was initially designed to provide advisory support to assist the South Vietnamese Air Force in increasing its capability. The 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron arrived at Bien Hoa Airfield in November 1961 and began training South Vietnamese Air Force personnel with older, propeller-driven aircraft. In December, President John F. Kennedy expanded Farm Gate to include limited combat missions by the U.S. Air Force pilots in support of South Vietnamese ground forces.

By late 1962, communist activity and combat intensity had increased so much that President Kennedy ordered a further expansion of Farm Gate. In early 1963, additional aircraft arrived and new detachments were established at Pleiku and Soc Trang. In early 1964, Farm Gate was upgraded again with the arrival of more modern aircraft. In October 1965, another squadron of A-1E aircraft was established at Bien Hoa. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara approved the replacement of South Vietnamese markings on Farm Gate aircraft with regular U.S. Air Force markings. By this point in the war, the Farm Gate squadrons were flying 80 percent of all missions in support of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). With the build up of U.S. combat forces in South Vietnam and the increase in U.S. Air Force presence there, the role of the Farm Gate program gradually decreased in significance. The Farm Gate squadrons were moved to Thailand in 1967, and from there they launched missions against the North Vietnamese in Laos.

### **1972 Nixon announces additional troop withdrawals**

President Nixon announces that 70,000 U.S. troops will leave South Vietnam over the next three months, reducing U.S. troop strength there by May 1 to 69,000 troops.

Since taking office, Nixon had withdrawn more than 400,000 American troops from Vietnam. With the reduction in total troop strength, U.S. combat deaths were down to less than 10 per week. However, Nixon still came under heavy criticism from those who charged that he was pulling out troops but, by turning to the use of air power instead of ground troops, was continuing the U.S. involvement in Vietnam rather than disengaging from the war. The last American troops would be withdrawn in March 1973 under the provisions of the Paris Peace Accords.

## **JANUARY 14**

### **1964 Westmoreland appointed as Harkins' deputy**

Lt. Gen. William Westmoreland is appointed deputy to Gen. Paul Harkins, chief of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). It was generally accepted that Westmoreland would soon replace Harkins, whose insistently optimistic views

on the progress of the war had increasingly come under criticism.

On June 20, 1964, Harkins departed and Westmoreland did assume command of MACV. His initial task was to provide military advice and assistance to the government of South Vietnam. However, with the commitment of U.S. ground troops, General Westmoreland assumed the added responsibility of commanding America's armed forces in combat in Vietnam.

One of the Vietnam War's most controversial figures, Westmoreland received many honors (including being named *Time* Man of the Year in 1965) when the fighting was going well, but many Americans blamed him for the problems in Vietnam when the war turned sour. Having provided continually optimistic reports about the war, Westmoreland came under particularly heavy criticism in 1968, when the communists launched the massive surprise Tet Offensive on January 30. In July 1968, Westmoreland was appointed Chief of Staff of the Army, and General Creighton W. Abrams Jr. replaced him as commander of MACV.

### **1968 Operation Niagara launched**

U.S. joint-service Operation Niagara is launched to support the U.S. Marine base at Khe Sanh.

The Khe Sanh base was the westernmost anchor of a series of combat bases and strongholds that stretched from the Cua Viet River on the coast of the South China Sea westward along Route 9 to the Laotian border. Intelligence sources revealed that the North Vietnamese Army was beginning to build up its forces in the area surrounding Khe Sanh. Operation Niagara was a joint U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps air campaign launched in support of the marines manning the base. Using sensors installed along the nearby DMZ and reconnaissance flights to pinpoint targets, 24,000 tactical fighter-bomber sorties and 2,700 B-52 strategic bomber sorties were flown between the start of the operation and March 31, 1968, when it was terminated. This airpower played a major role in the successful defense of Khe Sanh when it came under attack on January 21 and was subsequently besieged for 66 days until finally broken on April 7.

## **JANUARY 15**

### **1973 Nixon halts military action against North Vietnam**

Citing "progress" in the Paris peace negotiations between National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam, President Richard Nixon halts the most concentrated bombing of the war, as well as mining, shelling, and all other offensive action against North Vietnam. The

cessation of direct attacks against North Vietnam did not extend to South Vietnam, where the fighting continued as both sides jockeyed for control of territory before the anticipated cease-fire.

On December 13, North Vietnamese negotiators had walked out of secret talks with Kissinger. President Nixon issued an ultimatum to Hanoi to send its representatives back to the conference table within 72 hours "or else." The North Vietnamese rejected Nixon's demand and the president ordered Operation Linebacker II, a full-scale air campaign against the Hanoi area. This operation was the most concentrated air offensive of the war.

During the 11 days of the attack, 700 B-52 sorties and more than 1,000 fighter-bomber sorties dropped roughly 20,000 tons of bombs, mostly over the densely populated area between Hanoi and Haiphong. On December 28, after 11 days of intensive bombing, the North Vietnamese agreed to return to the talks. When the negotiators met again in early January, they quickly worked out a settlement. The Paris Peace Accords were signed on January 23 and a cease-fire went into effect five days later.

### **1962 Kennedy says U.S. troops are not fighting**

Asked at a news conference if U.S. troops are fighting in Vietnam, President Kennedy answers "No." He was technically correct, but U.S. soldiers were serving as combat advisers with the South Vietnamese army, and U.S. pilots were flying missions with the South Vietnamese Air Force. While acting in this advisory capacity, some soldiers invariably got wounded, and press correspondents based in Saigon were beginning to see casualties from the "support" missions and ask questions.

## **JANUARY 16**

### **1964 Johnson approves Oplan 34A**

President Johnson approves Oplan 34A, operations to be conducted by South Vietnamese forces supported by the United States to gather intelligence and conduct sabotage to destabilize the North Vietnamese regime.

Actual operations began in February and involved raids by South Vietnamese commandos operating under U.S. orders against North Vietnamese coastal and island installations. Although American forces were not directly involved in the actual raids, U.S. Navy ships were on station to conduct electronic surveillance and monitor North Vietnamese defense responses under another program called Operation De Soto.

The Oplan 34A attacks played a major role in what became known as the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. On August 2, 1964, North

Vietnamese patrol boats attacked the destroyer USS *Maddox*, which was conducting a De Soto mission in the area. Two days after the first attack, there was another incident that still remains unclear. The *Maddox*, joined by destroyer USS *C. Turner Joy*, engaged what were believed to be more attacking North Vietnamese patrol boats. Although it was questionable whether the second attack actually happened, the incident provided the rationale for retaliatory air attacks and the subsequent Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which became the basis for the initial escalation of the war in Vietnam and ultimately the insertion of U.S. combat troops into the area.

### **1969 Agreement to open peace talks reached**

An agreement is reached in Paris for the opening of expanded peace talks. It was agreed that representatives of the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the National Liberation Front would sit at a circular table without nameplates, flags or markings.

The talks had been plagued from the beginning by procedural questions, and the participants literally jockeyed for desirable positions at the negotiating table. Prolonged discussions over the shape of the negotiating table were finally resolved by the placement of two square tables separated by a round table. Seemingly insignificant matters as the table placement and seating arrangement became fodder for many arguments between the delegations at the negotiations.

## **JANUARY 17**

### **1972 Nixon threatens President Thieu**

President Richard Nixon warns South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu in a private letter that his refusal to sign any negotiated peace agreement would render it impossible for the United States to continue assistance to South Vietnam.

Nixon's National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger had been working behind the scenes in secret negotiations with North Vietnamese representatives in Paris to reach a settlement to end the war. However, Thieu stubbornly refused to even discuss any peace proposal that recognized the Viet Cong as a viable participant in the post-war political solution in South Vietnam. As it turned out, the secret negotiations were not close to reaching an agreement because the North Vietnamese launched a massive invasion of South Vietnam in March 1972. With the help of U.S. airpower and advisers on the ground, the South Vietnamese withstood the North Vietnamese attack, and by December, Kissinger and North Vietnamese representatives were back in Paris and close to an agreement.

Among Thieu's demands was the request that all North

Vietnamese troops had to be withdrawn from South Vietnam before he would agree to any peace settlement. The North Vietnamese walked out of the negotiations in protest. In response, President Nixon initiated Operation Linebacker II, a massive bombing campaign against Hanoi, to force the North Vietnamese back to the negotiating table. After 11 days of intense bombing, Hanoi agreed to return to the talks in Paris. When Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, the main North Vietnamese negotiator, met again in early January, they quickly worked out a settlement. The Paris Peace Accords were signed on January 23 and a cease-fire went into effect five days later.

Again, President Thieu refused to sign the Accords, but Nixon promised to come to the aid of South Vietnam if the communists violated the terms of the peace treaty, and Thieu agreed to sign. Unfortunately for Thieu and the South Vietnamese, Nixon was forced from office by the Watergate scandal in August 1974, and no U.S. aid came when the North Vietnamese launched a general offensive in March 1975. South Vietnam succumbed in 55 days.

### **1971 South Vietnamese forces raid POW camp**

Led by South Vietnamese Lt. Gen. Do Cao Tri, and with U.S. air support and advisers, some 300 paratroopers raid a communist prisoner of war camp near the town of Mimot in Cambodia on information that 20 U.S. prisoners were being held there. They found the camp empty, but captured 30 enemy soldiers and sustained no casualties.

## **JANUARY 18**

### **1971 McGovern begins his presidential campaign**

In a televised speech, Senator George S. McGovern (D-South Dakota) begins his antiwar campaign for the 1972 Democratic presidential nomination by vowing to bring home all U.S. soldiers from Vietnam if he is elected. McGovern won his party's nomination, but was defeated in the general election by incumbent Richard Nixon.

With only 55 percent of the electorate voting--the lowest turnout since 1948--Nixon carried all states but Massachusetts, taking 97 percent of the electoral votes. During the campaign, Nixon pledged to secure "peace with honor" in Vietnam. Aided by the potential for a peace agreement in the ongoing Paris negotiations and the upswing in the American economy, Nixon easily defeated McGovern, an outspoken dove whose party was divided over several issues, including McGovern's extreme views on the war. McGovern said during the campaign, "If I were president, it would take me 24 hours and the stroke of a pen to terminate all military operations in Southeast Asia." He further stated that he would withdraw all American troops within



90 days of taking office, whether or not U.S. POWs were released. To many Americans, including a large number of Democrats, McGovern's position was tantamount to total capitulation in Southeast Asia. Given this alternative, most voters chose Nixon.

### **1950 China and Soviet Union recognize Democratic Republic of Vietnam**

People's Republic of China formally recognizes the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam and agrees to furnish it military assistance; the Soviet Union extended diplomatic recognition to Hanoi on January 30. China and the Soviet Union provided massive military and economic aid to North Vietnam, which enabled North Vietnam to fight first the French and then the Americans. Chinese aid to North Vietnam between 1950 and 1970 is estimated at \$20 billion. It is thought that China provided approximately three-quarters of the total military aid given to Hanoi since 1949, with the Soviets providing most of the rest. It would have been impossible for the North Vietnamese to continue the war without the aid from both the Chinese and Soviets.

## **JANUARY 19**

### **1961 Eisenhower cautions successor about Laos**

Outgoing President Dwight D. Eisenhower cautions incoming President John F. Kennedy that Laos is "the key to the entire area of Southeast Asia," and might even require the direct intervention of U.S. combat troops.

Fearing that the fall of Laos to the communist Pathet Lao forces might have a domino effect in Southeast Asia, President Kennedy sent a carrier task force to the Gulf of Siam in April 1961. However, he decided not to intervene in Laos with U.S. troops and in June 1961, he sent representatives to Geneva to work out a solution to the crisis. In 1962, an agreement was signed that called for the neutrality of Laos and set up a coalition government to run the country. By this time, Kennedy had turned his attention to South Vietnam, where a growing insurgency threatened to topple the pro-western government of Ngo Dinh Diem.

Kennedy had already sent combat advisers to the South Vietnamese army and this commitment expanded over time. By the time Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, he had overseen the assignment of over 17,000 U.S. advisers to South Vietnam.

### **1968 Operation McLain is launched**

"Sky Soldiers" from the 173rd Airborne Brigade begin Operation McLain with a reconnaissance-in-force operation in the Central Highlands. The purpose of this operation was to find and destroy the communist base camps in the area in order to promote better security for the province. The operation ended on January 31, 1970, with 1,042 enemy casualties.

## **JANUARY 20**

### **1969 Richard Nixon takes office**

Richard Nixon is inaugurated as president of the United States and says, "After a period of confrontation [in Vietnam], we are entering an era of negotiation." Eight years after losing to John F. Kennedy in the 1960 election, Nixon had defeated Hubert H. Humphrey for the presidency.

Shortly after taking office, Nixon put his new team in place. William Rogers replaced Dean Rusk as Secretary of State, Melvin Laird replaced Clark Clifford as Secretary of Defense, and Henry Kissinger replaced Walt Rostow as National Security Adviser.

In 1962, Nixon ran for governor of California and lost in a bitter campaign to Edmund G. ("Pat") Brown. Most observers believed that Nixon's political career was over at that point, but by February 1968, he had sufficiently recovered his political standing in the Republican Party to announce his candidacy for president. Taking a stance between the more conservative elements of his party led by Ronald Reagan, and the liberal northeastern wing led by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Nixon won the nomination on the first ballot at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach.

For his running mate, he chose Spiro T. Agnew, the governor of Maryland. His Democratic opponent, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, was weakened by internal divisions within his own party and the growing dissatisfaction with the Johnson administration's handling of the war in Vietnam. Although Nixon and Humphrey each gained about 43 percent of the popular vote, the distribution of Nixon's nearly 32 million votes gave him a clear majority in the electoral college.

### **1972 New communist offensive anticipated**

In continued efforts to disrupt an anticipated communist offensive, a contingent of more than 10,000 South Vietnamese troops begin a sweep 45 miles northwest of Saigon to find and destroy enemy forces. There was much speculation that the North Vietnamese would launch such an offensive around the Tet (Chinese New Year) holiday. Although the communists did not attack during the Tet holiday in early February, in March

they launched a massive invasion involving more than 150,000 main force troops and large amounts of tanks and artillery pieces. The battles raged throughout South Vietnam into the fall and resulted in some of the fiercest fighting of the war.

## **JANUARY 21**

### **1968 Battle for Khe Sanh begins**

One of the most publicized and controversial battles of the war begins at Khe Sanh, 14 miles below the DMZ and six miles from the Laotian border.

Seized and activated by the U.S. Marines a year earlier, the base, which had been an old French outpost, was used as a staging area for forward patrols and was a potential launch point for contemplated future operations to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. The battle began on this date with a brisk firefight involving the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines and a North Vietnamese battalion entrenched between two hills northwest of the base. The next day North Vietnamese forces overran the village of Khe Sanh and North Vietnamese long-range artillery opened fire on the base itself, hitting its main ammunition dump and detonating 1,500 tons of explosives.

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. Because the base had to be resupplied by air, the American high command was reluctant to put in any more troops and drafted a battle plan calling for massive artillery and air strikes. 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 DMZ, 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, when the communists had defeated the French in a climactic decisive battle that effectively ended the war between France and the Viet Minh.

There has been 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. 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.

## **JANUARY 22**

### **1964 U.S. Joint Chiefs foresee larger U.S. commitment**

The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff inform Defense Secretary Robert McNamara that they "are wholly in favor of executing the covert actions against North Vietnam."

President Johnson had recently approved Oplan 34A, provocative operations to be conducted by South Vietnamese forces (supported by the United States) to gather intelligence and conduct sabotage to destabilize the North Vietnamese regime. Actual operations would begin in February and involve raids by South Vietnamese commandos operating under American orders against North Vietnamese coastal and island installations. Although American forces were not directly involved in the actual raids, U.S. Navy ships were on station to conduct electronic surveillance and monitor North Vietnamese defense responses under another program called Operation De Soto.

Although the Joint Chiefs agreed with the president's decision on these operations, they further advocated even stronger measures, advising McNamara: "... We believe, however, that it would be idle to conclude that these efforts will have a decisive effect on the communist determination to support the insurgency, and it is our view that we must therefore be prepared fully to undertake a much higher level of activity." Among their recommendations were "aerial bombing of key North Vietnamese targets," and "commit[ment of] additional U.S. forces, as necessary, in support of the combat actions within South Vietnam."

President Johnson at first resisted this advice, but in less than a year, U.S. airplanes were bombing North Vietnam, and shortly thereafter the first U.S. combat troops began arriving in South Vietnam.

## **1968 Operations Jeb Stuart and Pershing II kick off**

Operating in the two northernmost military regions, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) launches two major operations. In the first operation, conducted by the 1st Cavalry Division in Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces, south of the Demilitarized Zone, "First Team" units launched Operation Jeb Stuart. This operation was a large-scale reinforcement of the Marines in the area and focused on clearing enemy Base Areas 101 and 114. Jeb Stuart was terminated on March 31 with enemy casualties listed at 3,268; U.S. casualties were 291 killed in action and 1,735 wounded. On the same day that Jeb Stuart was launched, other 1st Cavalry units launched Operation Pershing II in the coastal lowlands in Binh Dinh Province. This operation, designed to clear enemy forces from the area, lasted until February 29.

## **JANUARY 23**

### **1973 Nixon announces peace settlement reached in Paris**

President Nixon announces that Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, the chief North Vietnamese negotiator, have initialled a peace agreement in Paris "to end the war and bring peace with honor in Vietnam and Southeast Asia."

Kissinger and Tho had been conducting secret negotiations since 1969. After the South Vietnamese had blunted the massive North Vietnamese invasion launched in the spring of 1972, Kissinger and the North Vietnamese had finally made some progress on reaching a negotiated end to the war. However, a recalcitrant South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu had inserted several demands into to the negotiations that caused the North Vietnamese negotiators to walk out of the talks with Kissinger on December 13.

President Nixon issued an ultimatum to Hanoi to send its representatives back to the conference table within 72 hours "or else." The North Vietnamese rejected Nixon's demand and the president ordered Operation Linebacker II, a full-scale air campaign against the Hanoi area. This operation was the most concentrated air offensive of the war. During the 11 days of the attack, 700 B-52 sorties and more than 1,000 fighter-bomber sorties dropped roughly 20,000 tons of bombs, mostly over the densely populated area between Hanoi and Haiphong. On December 28, after 11 days of intensive bombing, the North Vietnamese agreed to return to the talks. When the negotiators met again in early January, they quickly worked out a settlement.

Under the terms of the agreement, which became known as the Paris Peace Accords, a cease-fire would begin at 8 a.m., January 28, Saigon time (7 p.m., January 27, Eastern Standard Time). In addition, all prisoners of war were to be released within 60 days and in turn, all U.S. and other foreign troops

would be withdrawn from Vietnam within 60 days. With respect to the political situation in South Vietnam, the Accords called for a National Council of Reconciliation and Concord, with representatives from both South Vietnamese sides (Saigon and the National Liberation Front) to oversee negotiations and organize elections for a new government.

The actual document was entitled "An Agreement Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam" and it was formally signed on January 27.

## **JANUARY 24**

### **1966 Operation Masher/White Wing/Thang Phong II launched**

In the largest search-and-destroy operation to date--Operation Masher/White Wing/Thang Phong II--the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), South Vietnamese, and Korean forces sweep through Binh Dinh Province in the central lowlands along the coast.

The purpose of the operation was to drive the North Vietnamese out of the province and destroy enemy supply areas. In late January, it became the first large unit operation conducted across corps boundaries when the cavalrymen linked up with Double Eagle, a U.S. Marine Corps operation intended to destroy the North Vietnamese 325A Division. Altogether, there were reported enemy casualties of 2,389 by the time the operation ended.

Also on this day: Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, in a memorandum to President Johnson, recommends raising the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam to more than 400,000 by the end of the year. However, he warned that planned deployments and increased bombing would not ensure military success. Ultimately, McNamara was correct and the war raged on even as total U.S. troop strength in country went over 500,000 soldiers in 1969.

### **1973 Truce is expected in Laos and Cambodia.**

National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger announces that a truce is also expected in Laos and Cambodia. Kissinger had been meeting privately with Le Duc Tho and other North Vietnamese and Viet Cong representatives in Paris since early January. They had worked out a peace agreement that was initialled in Paris on January 23 "to end the war and bring peace with honor in Vietnam and Southeast Asia." Under the provisions of the agreement, a cease-fire would begin in Vietnam at 8 a.m., January 28, Saigon time (7 p.m., January 27, Eastern Standard Time). Kissinger said that the terms of the agreement would be extended to Cambodia and Laos, where

government troops had been locked in deadly combat with the local communist forces (Khmer Rouge and Pathet Lao, respectively) and their North Vietnamese allies.

## **JANUARY 25**

### **1972 Nixon reveals information about secret negotiations**

President Richard Nixon, in response to criticism that his administration has not made its best efforts to end the war, reveals that his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger has held 12 secret peace negotiating sessions between August 4, 1969, and August 16, 1971. The negotiations took place in Paris with Le Duc Tho, a member of Hanoi's Politburo, and/or with Xuan Thuy, Hanoi's chief delegate to the formal Paris peace talks.

Nixon also disclosed the text of an eight-point peace proposal presented privately to the North Vietnamese on October 11, 1971. The main features of the eight-point plan were: withdrawal of all U.S. and Allied troops and all communist troops from South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos within six months of an agreement; simultaneous release of all military and civilian prisoners of both sides; supervision of the cease-fire by an international commission; and presidential elections in South Vietnam organized and supervised by a coalition of factions including the Viet Cong, with President Nguyen Van Thieu and Vice President Tran Van Huong resigning one month after the voting.

The North Vietnamese rejected the U.S. peace proposal and presented a proposal of their own. While Washington wanted the withdrawal of all foreign forces from South Vietnam with the condition of an agreement in principle on a final solution, Hanoi insisted on the withdrawal of U.S. and Allied troops from all of Indochina without condition. Hanoi also wanted the immediate resignation of the Thieu regime. With the secret talks now public and at an impasse, the North Vietnamese leadership decided to order a massive invasion of South Vietnam, which was launched in March 1972.

### **1969 First plenary session of the formal Paris Peace talks is held**

The first fully attended meeting of the formal Paris peace talks is held. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, the chief negotiator for the United States, urged an immediate restoration of a genuine DMZ as the first "practical move toward peace." Lodge also suggested a mutual withdrawal of "external" military forces and an early release of prisoners of war. Tran Buu Kiem and Xuan Thuy, heads of the National Liberation Front and North Vietnamese delegations respectively, refused Lodge's proposals and condemned American "aggression."

## JANUARY 26

### **1970 POW spends 2,000th day in captivity**

U.S. Navy Lt. Everett Alvarez Jr. spends his 2,000th day in captivity in Southeast Asia. First taken prisoner when his plane was shot down on August 5, 1964, he became the longest-held POW in U.S. history. Alvarez was downed over Hon Gai during the first bombing raids against North Vietnam in retaliation for the disputed attack on U.S. destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964.

Alvarez was released in 1973 after spending over eight years in captivity, the first six months as the only American prisoner in North Vietnam. From the first day of his captivity, he was shackled, isolated, nearly starved, and brutally tortured. Although he was among the more junior-rank prisoners of war, his courageous conduct under horrendous conditions and treatment helped establish the model emulated by the many other POWs that later joined him. After retirement from the Navy, he served as deputy director of the Peace Corps and deputy administrator of the Veterans Administration during the Reagan administration.

### **1972 North Vietnam rejects U.S. peace proposal**

Radio Hanoi announces North Vietnam's rejection of the latest U.S. peace proposal. Revealing more details of the secret Paris peace talks, Henry Kissinger responds publicly, condemning the North Vietnamese announcement and criticizing Hanoi's nine-point counter-proposal, which had been submitted during the secret talks.

Kissinger took exception with the communist insistence on the end of all U.S. support for the South Vietnamese government. The communists maintained that "withdrawal" meant not only withdrawal of U.S. troops, but also the removal of all U.S. equipment, aid, and arms in the possession of the South Vietnamese army. Kissinger asserted that the abrupt removal of all U.S. aid would guarantee the collapse of the Saigon regime. With the peace talks at a virtual impasse, the North Vietnamese leadership decided to launch a massive invasion of South Vietnam in March 1972.

## JANUARY 27

### **1973 Paris Peace Accords signed**

The United States, South Vietnam, Viet Cong, and North Vietnam formally sign "An Agreement Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam" in Paris. Due to South Vietnam's unwillingness to recognize the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government, all references to it were confined to a two-party version of the document signed by North Vietnam



and the United States-the South Vietnamese were presented with a separate document that did not make reference to the Viet Cong government. This was part of Saigon's long-time refusal to recognize the Viet Cong as a legitimate participant in the discussions to end the war.

The settlement included a cease-fire throughout Vietnam. In addition, the United States agreed to the withdrawal of all U.S. troops and advisors (totalling about 23,700) and the dismantling of all U.S. bases within 60 days. In return, the North Vietnamese agreed to release all U.S. and other prisoners of war.

Both sides agreed to the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Laos and Cambodia and the prohibition of bases in and troop movements through these countries. It was agreed that the DMZ at the 17th Parallel would remain a provisional dividing line, with eventual reunification of the country "through peaceful means." An international control commission would be established made up of Canadians, Hungarians, Poles, and Indonesians, with 1,160 inspectors to supervise the agreement. According to the agreement, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu would continue in office pending elections. Agreeing to "the South Vietnamese People's right to self-determination," the North Vietnamese said they would not initiate military movement across the DMZ and that there would be no use of force to reunify the country.

Footnote: The last U.S. serviceman to die in combat in Vietnam, Lt. Col. William B. Nolde, was killed by an artillery shell at An Loc, 60 miles northwest of Saigon, only 11 hours before the truce went into effect.

### **1967 Donald Evans earns Medal of Honor**

Specialist Four Donald W. Evans, a 23-year-old medic from Covina, California, was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor for action on this day in the Kontum Province.

Evans' platoon had not yet been committed to the battle near the hamlet of Tri Tam when firing broke out in an adjacent unit. Without hesitation, Evans charged forward through 100 yards of open ground to reach six wounded soldiers. With total disregard for his own safety, he moved among the soldiers, treating the men and carrying two of the more seriously wounded back to his platoon. Grenade fragments hit Evans, but he ignored his wounds to rejoin his unit as it entered the battle. Twice more he carried the wounded out of the line of fire. He was running toward another man when he was killed by enemy fire. His devotion to duty and uncommon valor won him the nation's highest award for bravery.

**JANUARY 28**

### **1973 Cease-fire goes into effect**

A cease-fire goes into effect at 8 a.m., Saigon time (midnight on January 27, Greenwich Mean Time).

When the cease-fire went into effect, Saigon controlled about 75 percent of South Vietnam's territory and 85 percent of the population. The South Vietnamese Army was well equipped via last-minute deliveries of U.S. weapons and continued to receive U.S. aid after the cease-fire. The CIA estimated North Vietnamese presence in the South at 145,000 men, about the same as the previous year. The cease-fire began on time, but both sides violated it. South Vietnamese forces continued to take back villages occupied by communists in the two days before the cease-fire deadline and the communists tried to capture additional territory.

Each side held that military operations were justified by the other side's violations of the cease-fire. What resulted was an almost endless chain of retaliations. During the period between the initiation of the cease-fire and the end of 1973, there were an average of 2,980 combat incidents per month in South Vietnam. Most of these were low-intensity harassing attacks designed to wear down the South Vietnamese forces, but the North Vietnamese intensified their efforts in the Central Highlands in September when they attacked government positions with tanks west of Pleiku. As a result of these post-cease-fire actions, about 25,000 South Vietnamese were killed in battle in 1973, while communist losses in South Vietnam were estimated at 45,000.

### **1975 Ford asks for additional aid**

President Gerald Ford asks Congress for an additional \$522 million in military aid for South Vietnam and Cambodia. He revealed that North Vietnam now had 289,000 troops in South Vietnam, and tanks, heavy artillery, and anti-aircraft weapons "by the hundreds." Ford succeeded Richard Nixon when he resigned the presidency in August 1974. Despite his wishes to honor Nixon's promise to come to the aid of South Vietnam, he was faced with a hostile Congress who refused to appropriate military aid for South Vietnam and Cambodia; both countries fell to the communists later in the year.

## **JANUARY 29**

### **1974 Fighting continues in South Vietnam**

The fighting continues in South Vietnam despite the cease-fire that was initiated on January 28, 1973, under the provisions of the Paris Peace Accords.

This latest fighting was part of the ongoing battles that followed

the brief lull of the cease-fire. The Peace Accords had left an estimated 145,000 North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam when the cease-fire went into effect. Renewed fighting broke out after the cease-fire as both sides jockeyed for control of territory throughout South Vietnam. Each side held that military operations were justified by the other side's violations of the cease-fire, resulting in an almost endless chain of retaliations.

During the period between the initiation of the cease-fire and the end of 1973, there were an average of 2,980 combat incidents per month in South Vietnam. Most of these were low-intensity harassing attacks designed to wear down the South Vietnamese forces, but the North Vietnamese intensified their efforts in the Central Highlands in September when they attacked government positions with tanks west of Pleiku. As a result of these post-cease-fire actions, approximately 25,000 South Vietnamese were killed in battle in 1973, while communist losses in South Vietnam were estimated at 45,000.

### **1968 President Johnson requests additional funds**

In his annual budget message, President Lyndon B. Johnson asks for \$26.3 billion to continue the war in Vietnam, and announces an increase in taxes. The war was becoming very expensive, both in terms of lives and national treasure. Johnson had been given a glowing report on progress in the war from Gen. William Westmoreland, senior U.S. commander in South Vietnam. Westmoreland stated in a speech before the National Press Club that, "We have reached an important point when the end begins to come into view. I am absolutely certain that, whereas in 1965 the enemy was winning, today he is certainly losing. The enemy's hopes are bankrupt."

The day after Johnson's budget speech, the communists launched a massive attack across the length and breadth of South Vietnam. This action, the Tet Offensive, proved to be a critical turning point for the United States in Vietnam. In the end, the offensive resulted in a crushing military defeat for the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese, but the size and scope of the communist attacks caught the American and South Vietnamese allies by surprise. The heavy U.S. and South Vietnamese casualties incurred during the offensive, coupled with the disillusionment over the administration's earlier overly optimistic reports of progress in the war, accelerated the growing disenchantment with the president's conduct of the war. Johnson, frustrated with his inability to reach a solution in Vietnam, announced on March 31, 1968, that he would neither seek nor accept the nomination of his party for re-election.

## **JANUARY 30**

### **1968 Tet Offensive begins**

At dawn on the first day of the Tet holiday truce, Viet Cong forces--supported by large numbers of North Vietnamese troops--launch the largest and best coordinated offensive of the war, driving into the center of South Vietnam's seven largest cities and attacking 30 provincial capitals from the Delta to the DMZ.

Among the cities taken during the first four days of the offensive were Hue, Dalat, Kontum, and Quang Tri; in the north, all five provincial capitals were overrun. At the same time, enemy forces shelled numerous Allied airfields and bases. In Saigon, a 19-man Viet Cong suicide squad seized the U.S. Embassy and held it for six hours until an assault force of U.S. paratroopers landed by helicopter on the building's roof and routed them. Nearly 1,000 Viet Cong were believed to have infiltrated Saigon, and it took a week of intense fighting by an estimated 11,000 U.S. and South Vietnamese troops to dislodge them.

By February 10, the offensive was largely crushed, but with heavy casualties on both sides. The former Imperial capital of Hue took almost a month of savage house-to-house combat to regain. Efforts to assess the offensive's impact began well before the fighting ended. On February 2, President Johnson announced that the Viet Cong had suffered complete military defeat. General Westmoreland echoed that appraisal four days later in a statement declaring that Allied forces had killed more enemy troops in the previous seven days than the United States had lost in the entire war.

Militarily, Tet was decidedly an Allied victory, but psychologically and politically, it was a disaster. The offensive was a crushing military defeat for the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese, but the size and scope of the communist attacks caught the American and South Vietnamese allies by surprise. The early reporting of a smashing communist victory went largely uncorrected in the media and led to a psychological victory for the communists. The heavy U.S. and South Vietnamese casualties incurred during the offensive, coupled with the disillusionment over the earlier overly optimistic reports of progress in the war, accelerated the growing disenchantment with President Johnson's conduct of the war. Johnson, frustrated with his inability to reach a solution in Vietnam, announced on March 31, 1968, that he would neither seek nor accept the nomination of his party for re-election.

### **1971 Operation Dewey Canyon II begins**

Operation Dewey Canyon II begins as the initial phase of Lam Son 719, the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos that would commence on February 8. The purpose of the South Vietnamese operation was to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail,

advance to Tchepone in Laos, and destroy the North Vietnamese supply dumps in the area.

In Dewey Canyon II, the vanguard of the U.S. 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division began moving from Vandegrift Combat Base along highway Route 9 toward Khe Sanh with an armored cavalry/engineer task force. These units were to clear the way for the move of 20,000 South Vietnamese troops along the highway to reoccupy 1,000 square miles of territory in northwest South Vietnam and to mass at the Laotian border in preparation for Lam Son 719.

U.S. ground forces were not to enter Laos, in accordance with a U.S. congressional ban. Instead they gave logistical support, with some 2,600 helicopters on call to airlift Saigon troops and supplies. In addition, U.S. artillerymen provided long-range artillery fires into Laos from American firebases just inside the South Vietnamese border.

## **JANUARY 31**

### **1968 Viet Cong attack U.S. Embassy**

As part of the Tet Offensive, Viet Cong soldiers attack the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. A 19-man suicide squad seized the U.S. Embassy and held it for six hours until an assault force of U.S. paratroopers landed by helicopter on the building's roof and routed them.

The offensive was launched on January 30, when communist forces attacked Saigon, Hue, five of six autonomous cities, 36 of 44 provincial capitals, and 64 of 245 district capitals. The timing and magnitude of the attacks caught the South Vietnamese and American forces off guard, but eventually the Allied forces turned the tide. Militarily, the Tet Offensive was a disaster for the communists. By the end of March 1968, they had not achieved any of their objectives and had lost 32,000 soldiers and had 5,800 captured. U.S. forces suffered 3,895 dead; South Vietnamese losses were 4,954; non-U.S. allies lost 214. More than 14,300 South Vietnamese civilians died.

While the offensive was a crushing military defeat for the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese, the early reporting of a smashing communist victory went largely uncorrected in the media and this led to a great psychological victory for the communists. The heavy U.S. casualties incurred during the offensive coupled with the disillusionment over the earlier overly optimistic reports of progress in the war accelerated the growing disenchantment with President Johnson's conduct of the war. Johnson, frustrated with his inability to reach a solution in Vietnam announced on March 31, 1968, that he would neither seek nor accept the nomination of his party for re-election.

## **1972 North Vietnam presents nine-point peace proposal**

In a communiqué charging President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger with "unilaterally" divulging the substance of the secret talks, creating the impasse at the secret meeting, and distorting the facts, North Vietnam publishes the nine-point plan they submitted during the secret talks.

Since August 1969, talks between Kissinger and North Vietnamese representatives had been going on secretly in Paris. On January 25, Nixon, in response to criticism that his administration had not made its best efforts to end the war, revealed that Kissinger had been involved in the secret talks. Nixon also disclosed the text of an eight-point peace proposal presented privately to the North Vietnamese on October 11, 1971.

In their communiqué, the North Vietnamese answered with their own peace plan. While Washington requested the withdrawal of all foreign forces from South Vietnam with the condition of an agreement in principle on a final solution, Hanoi insisted on the withdrawal of U.S. and Allied troops from all of Indochina without condition. Hanoi also demanded the immediate resignation of the South Vietnamese Thieu regime. With the secret talks made public and at an impasse, the North Vietnamese leadership decided to launch a massive invasion of South Vietnam in March 1972.