

Vietnam Day by Day September

SEPTEMBER 1

1970 McGovern-Hatfield amendment defeated in the Senate

The U.S. Senate rejects the McGovern-Hatfield amendment by a vote of 55-39. This legislation, proposed by Senators George McGovern of South Dakota and Mark Hatfield of Oregon, would have set a deadline of December 31, 1971, for complete withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam. The Senate also turned down 71-22, a proposal forbidding the Army from sending draftees to Vietnam. Despite the defeat of these two measures, the proposed legislation indicated the growing dissatisfaction with President Nixon's handling of the war. On this same day, a bipartisan group of 14 senators, including both the majority and minority leaders, signed a letter to the president asking him to propose a comprehensive "standstill cease-fire" in South Vietnam at the ongoing Paris peace talks. Under this plan, the belligerents would stop fighting where they were on the battlefield while a negotiated settlement was hammered out at the talks. This approach had been discussed and rejected earlier in the Nixon White House, but the president, concerned that senators from his own party had signed the letter, had to do something to quell the mounting opposition to the seemingly endless war. Accordingly, on October 7, in a major televised speech, he proposed what he called a "major new initiative for peace" -- a new truce plan for stopping the fighting in Vietnam. Although Nixon did not offer any new concessions, his speech got high marks in both Congress and the U.S. media. Unfortunately, the North Vietnamese rejected the overture, insisting that no truce was possible until the Thieu regime agreed to accept the authority of a coalition government in Saigon that "favors peace, independence, and democracy." Thieu stubbornly refused to participate in any coalition government with the communists. Subsequent negotiations with the North Vietnamese in Paris remained deadlocked and the war continued.

1966 De Gaulle urges the United States to get out of Vietnam

In a speech before 100,000 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, President Charles de Gaulle of France denounces U.S. policy in Vietnam and urges the U.S. government to pull its troops out of Southeast Asia. De Gaulle said that negotiations toward a settlement of the war could begin as soon as the United States committed to withdrawing its troops by a certain date. He and Prince Norodom Sihanouk signed a declaration calling for

noninterference in the Indochinese peninsula by foreign nations. Three days later, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy on NBC-TV's *Meet The Press* rejected de Gaulle's proposal and said that the United States intended to withdraw its forces when "the North Vietnamese get out." During the same speech, he also revealed that the United States now had 25,000 military people in Thailand, principally for air force operations.

1968 Fighter pilot nominated for Medal of Honor

Lt. Col. William A. Jones III leads a mission near Dong Hoi, North Vietnam, to rescue a downed pilot. Locating the pilot, who had activated his emergency locator beacon, Colonel Jones attacked a nearby gun emplacement. On his second pass, Colonel Jones' aircraft was hit and the cockpit of his Douglas A-1H Skyraider was set ablaze. He tried to eject, but the ejection system failed. He then returned to base and reported the exact position of the downed pilot before receiving medical treatment for his burns. The downed pilot was rescued by helicopter the next day. Colonel Jones was nominated for the Medal of Honor for his actions during the rescue attempt, but he died in an aircraft accident in the United States before he could be presented with the award.

SEPTEMBER 2

1969 Ho Chi Minh dies

President Ho Chi Minh of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam dies of a heart attack in Hanoi. North Vietnamese officials announced his death the next day. Ho Chi Minh had been the heart and soul of Vietnamese communism since the earliest days of the movement. Born in 1890, he was the son of a Vietnamese government official who resigned in protest against French domination of his country. He was educated in Hue and as a young man worked as a cook on a French steamship, travelling to the United States, Africa, and then Europe, where he took work in London and Paris. In 1920, having accepted Marxist Leninism because of its anticolonial stance, he changed his name to Nguyen Ai Quoc ("Nguyen the Patriot") and helped found the French Communist Party. He traveled to Moscow in 1923 for study and training. In 1924, he went to Canton, China, to meet with Phan Boi Chau, one of the leading Vietnamese nationalists of the era. While in China, Ho played the leading role in the founding of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1929. Ho spent most of the next 10 years writing and organizing, all while outside Vietnam. When the Japanese invaded Vietnam at the beginning of World War II, he changed his name to Ho Chi Minh ("Ho, the Bringer of Light") and moved his revolutionary group to the caves of Pac Bo in northern Vietnam. There, in May 1941, he organized the Viet Minh, a nationalist and communist organization created to mobilize the people.

During the war, Ho and the Viet Minh entered into a loose alliance with the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), helping to rescue downed American pilots. In 1945, when the Japanese surrendered, the Viet Minh seized power and proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with Ho as president. However, the French, wanting to reimpose colonial rule, refused to grant independence to the Vietnamese. In late 1946, war broke out between the Viet Minh and the French. It lasted for eight bloody years, ending finally with the Viet Minh defeating the French at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The subsequent Geneva Accords divided Vietnam into North and South Vietnam. Ho devoted his efforts to constructing a communist society in North Vietnam. In the early 1960s, a new war broke out in the South, where communist-led guerrillas mounted an insurgency against the U.S.-supported regime in Saigon. When the United States intervened militarily, Ho directed his forces in a protracted war against the Americans. During this period, Ho continued to provide inspirational leadership to his people, but as his health deteriorated, he increasingly assumed a more ceremonial role as policy was shaped by others. Still, he was the embodiment of the revolution and remained a communist icon after his death in 1969.

1972 47th North Vietnamese MiG shot down

Phuc Yen, 10 miles north of Hanoi, and one of the largest air bases in North Vietnam, is smashed by U.S. fighter-bombers. During the attack, a MiG was shot down, bringing the total to 47 enemy aircraft shot down since the beginning of the North Vietnamese offensive. At this point in the war, 18 U.S. planes had been shot down by MiGs.

SEPTEMBER 3

1950 U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group arrives in Saigon

A U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) of 35 men arrives in Saigon to screen French requests for American military aid, assist in the training of South Vietnamese troops, and advise on strategy.

President Harry Truman had approved National Security Council (NSC) Memorandum 64 in March 1950, proclaiming that French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) was a key area that could not be allowed to fall to the communists and that the United States would provide support against communist aggression in the area. However, NSC 64 did not identify who would receive the aid, the French or the South Vietnamese. The French did not want the aid to go directly to the South Vietnamese and opposed the presence of any American advisory group. Nevertheless, the U.S. government argued that such a team would be necessary to coordinate requisitioning, procurement, and dissemination of supplies and equipment. Accordingly, an advisory group was dispatched to Saigon. In the

long run, however, the French high command ignored the MAAG in formulating strategy, denied them any role in training the Vietnamese, and refused to keep them informed of current operations and future plans. By 1952, the United States would bear roughly one-third of the cost of the war the French were fighting, but find itself with very little influence over French military policy in Southeast Asia or the way the war was waged. Ultimately, the French would be defeated at the battle of Dien Bien Phu and withdraw from Vietnam, passing the torch to the United States. In 1964, MAAG Vietnam would be disbanded and its advisory mission and functions integrated into the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), which had been established in February 1962.

1967 Thieu-Ky ticket wins national election

In South Vietnam's national election, General Nguyen Van Thieu wins a four-year term as president with former Premier Nguyen Cao Ky as vice-president. They received only 34.8 percent of the votes cast, but the rest were divided among 10 other candidates. There were many allegations of corruption during the election, including charges of ballot rigging, but a favorable impression of the election process was reported by 22 prominent Americans who visited Vietnam as election observers. The Johnson administration cited the elections, held in the midst of war, as evidence that South Vietnam was maturing as a democratic nation.

SEPTEMBER 4

1969 Radio Hanoi announces the death of Ho Chi Minh

Radio Hanoi announces the death of Ho Chi Minh, proclaiming that the National Liberation Front will halt military operations in the South for three days, September 8-11, in mourning for Ho. He had been the spiritual leader of the communists in Vietnam since the earliest days of the struggle against the French and, later, the United States and its ally in Saigon. Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai and a delegation from China held talks with First Secretary Le Duan and other members of the North Vietnamese Politburo. The Chinese leaders assured the North Vietnamese of their continued support in the war against the United States. This support was absolutely essential if the North Vietnamese wished to continue the war. Many in the United States hoped the death of Ho Chi Minh would provide a new opportunity to achieve a negotiated settlement to the war in Vietnam, but this did not materialize.

1967 Marines in heavy fighting

The U.S. 1st Marine Division launches 1Operation SWIFT, a search and destroy operation in Quang Nam and Quang Tin

Provinces in I Corps Tactical Zone (the region south of the Demilitarized Zone). A fierce four-day battle ensued in the Que Son Valley, 25 miles south of Da Nang. During the course of the battle, 114 men of the U.S. 5th Marine Regiment were killed while the North Vietnamese forces suffered 376 casualties.

SEPTEMBER 5

1969 Calley charged for My Lai massacre

Lt. William Calley is charged with six specifications of premeditated murder in the death of 109 Vietnamese civilians at My Lai in March 1968. Calley, a platoon leader in Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade (Light) of the 23rd (Americal) Division had led his men in a massacre of Vietnamese civilians, including women and children, at My Lai 4, a cluster of hamlets that made up Son My village in Son Tinh District in Quang Ngai Province in the coastal lowlands of I Corps Tactical Zone on March 16, 1968.

The company had been conducting a search and destroy mission as part of the yearlong Operation Wheeler/Wallowa (November 1967 through November 1968). In search of the 48th Viet Cong (VC) Local Force Battalion, the unit entered Son My village but found only women, children, and old men. Frustrated by unanswered losses due to snipers and mines, the soldiers took out their anger on the villagers, indiscriminately shooting people as they ran from their huts and systematically rounding up the survivors, allegedly leading them to nearby ditch where they were executed.

Reportedly, the killing was only stopped when Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, an aero-scout helicopter pilot landed his helicopter between the Americans and the fleeing South Vietnamese, confronting the soldiers and blocking them from further action against the villagers. The incident was subsequently covered up, but eventually came to light a year later. An Army board of inquiry, headed by Lt. Gen. William Peers, investigated the massacre and produced a list of 30 persons who knew of the atrocity, but only 14, including Calley and his company commander, Captain Ernest Medina, were charged with crimes. All eventually had their charges dismissed or were acquitted by courts-martial except Calley, whose platoon allegedly killed 200 innocents. He was found guilty of personally murdering 22 civilians and sentenced to life imprisonment, but his sentence was reduced to 20 years by the Court of Military Appeals and further reduced later to 10 years by the Secretary of the Army. Proclaimed by much of the public as a "scapegoat," Calley was paroled by President Richard Nixon in 1974 after having served about a third of his 10-year sentence.

1970 U.S. forces launch last major American operation of the war

The 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), in coordination with the

South Vietnamese (ARVN) 1st Infantry Division, initiates Operation Jefferson Glenn in Thua Thien Province west of Hue. This operation lasted until October 1971, and was one of the last major large-scale military operations in which U.S. ground forces would take part.

President Nixon had begun his Vietnamization program in the summer of 1969; the objective was to increase the combat capability of the South Vietnamese forces so that they could assume responsibility for the war against the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese forces as U.S. combat units were withdrawn and sent home. Shortly after the completion of Jefferson Glenn, the 101st Airborne began preparations to depart South Vietnam and subsequently began redeployment to the United States in March 1972.

SEPTEMBER 6

1969 Ho Chi Minh to be succeeded by committee

South Vietnam's Communist Party newspaper *Nhan Dan* and Radio Hanoi announce that Ho Chi Minh is to be succeeded by a committee of leadership consisting of Le Duan, first secretary of the party; Truong Chin, member of the Politburo and chairman of the National Assembly; General Vo Nguyen Giap, defense minister, and Premier Pham Van Dong. Ho, the spiritual leader of North Vietnam and the Vietnamese communists in the South, had died on September 2. His passing led many in America to hope that the time might be right to negotiate an end to the war, but his death had little long-term impact on the war as he had long been only a ceremonial figurehead. The new committee carried on with the war until the Paris Peace Accords were signed in January 1973 and, after U.S. forces departed, directed North Vietnamese forces as the fighting renewed in the South until they were eventually victorious in April 1975.

1972 Thieu abolishes popular elections

South Vietnamese President Thieu abolishes popular elections in the country's 10,775 hamlets and supercedes a 1968 law establishing the election of hamlet and village officers. The 44 province chiefs, all appointed by Thieu, were ordered to reorganize local government and appoint hamlet officials. Thieu cited the continuing Communist Nguyen Hue offensive that had begun on March 31 as justification for the measures. He claimed that many hamlet chiefs were communists and provided support for insurgents – but the decree was in preparation before the offensive began.

SEPTEMBER 7

1967 McNamara Line announced

U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara announces

plans to build an electronic anti-infiltration barrier to block communist flow of arms and troops into South Vietnam from the north at the eastern end of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The "McNamra Line," as it became known, would employ state-of-the-art, high-tech listening devices to alert U.S. forces when North Vietnamese troops and supplies were moving south so that air and artillery strikes could be brought to bear on them. It was estimated that the cost of completing and maintaining the project would be more than \$800 million per year. Construction on the barrier line, initially code named "Practice Nine" and later changed to "Dye Marker," began almost at once. But in the end, the concept proved impractical as the North Vietnamese just shifted their infiltration routes to other areas.

1965 Marines launch Operation Piranha

U.S. Marines and South Vietnamese forces launch Operation Piranha on the Batangan Peninsula, 23 miles south of the Marine base at Chu Lai. This was a follow-up to Operation Starlight, which had been conducted in August. During the course of the operation, the Allied forces stormed a stronghold of the Viet Cong 1st Regiment, claiming 200 enemy dead after intense fighting.

SEPTEMBER 8

1954 SEATO established

Having been directed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to put together an alliance to contain any communist aggression in the free territories of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, or Southeast Asia in general, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles forges an agreement establishing a military alliance that becomes the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Signatories, including France, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Pakistan, Thailand, and the United States, pledged themselves to "act to meet the common danger" in the event of aggression against any signatory state. A separate protocol to SEATO designated Laos, Cambodia, and "the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam [South Vietnam]" as also being areas subject to the provisions of the treaty. The language of the treaty did not go as far as the absolute mutual defense commitments and force structure of the NATO alliance, instead providing only for consultations in case of aggression against a signatory or protocol state before any combined actions were initiated. This lack of an agreement that would have compelled a combined military response to aggression significantly weakened SEATO as a military alliance. It was, however, used as legal basis for U.S. involvement in South Vietnam. SEATO expired on June 30, 1977.

1968 ARVN general killed

Truong Quang An becomes the first South Vietnamese general killed in action when his aircraft is shot down. The commander of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division (more popularly known as the 'Big Red One'), Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware, suffered a similar fate when his helicopter was shot down on September 13. Maj. Gen. Ware was one of two U.S. division commanders killed during the war; the other was Maj. Gen. George W. Casey of the 1st Cavalry Division who was killed in a helicopter crash on July 7, 1970.

SEPTEMBER 9

1969 Ho Chi Minh buried in Hanoi

Funeral services, attended by 250,000 mourners, are held for Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi's Ba Dinh Square. Among those in attendance were Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin, Chinese Vice-Premier Li Hsien-nien and Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia. Ho had established the Indochinese Communist Party in 1929. In September 1945, as the defeated Japanese prepared to leave Vietnam, Ho declared Vietnamese independence from French colonial rule and announced the formation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The French, attempting to reimpose colonial rule, soon clashed with Ho and his Viet Minh forces.

After a bloody nine-year war, the French were finally driven from the country after they suffered a humiliating defeat by the Viet Minh at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. The Geneva Accords subsequently divided Vietnam into two countries. Ho then led a battle to reunite Vietnam under communist rule. When the United States intervened militarily, Ho directed his forces in a protracted war against the Americans and the Saigon regime. He served as the spiritual leader of the North Vietnamese people, exhorting them to continue the struggle until the Americans were defeated and Vietnam was reunited as one nation. His death resulted in a tremendous emotional outpouring and his successors used the life and teachings of "Uncle Ho" to motivate the people to continue the fight. Today, he is enshrined in central Hanoi in a public mausoleum that attracts thousands of visitors every year.

1967 Hickey receives Medal of Honor

Sergeant Duane D. Hackney is presented with the Air Force Cross for bravery in rescuing an Air Force pilot in Vietnam. He was the first living Air Force enlisted man to receive the award, the nation's second highest award for bravery in action.

1972 DeBellevue becomes leading American Ace

U.S. Air Force Capt. Charles B. DeBellevue (Weapons Systems Officer) flying with his pilot, Capt. John A. Madden, in a McDonnell Douglas F-4D, shoots down two MiG-19s near Hanoi. These were Captain DeBellevue's fifth and sixth victories, which made him the leading American ace (an unofficial designation awarded for having downed at least five enemy aircraft in air-to-air combat) of the war. All of his victories came in a four-month period. Captain Madden would record a third MiG kill two months later.

SEPTEMBER 10

1963 President Kennedy gets mixed signals

Maj. Gen. Victor Krulak, USMC, Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Joseph Mendenhall of the State Department report to President John F. Kennedy on their fact-finding mission to Vietnam.

The president had sent them to make a firsthand assessment of the situation in Vietnam with regard to the viability of the government there and the progress of the war. Having just returned from a whirlwind four-day visit, their perceptions differed greatly. Krulak concluded that progress was being made in the war against the Viet Cong, but Mendenhall perceived from talks with bureaucrats and politicians that the Diem regime in Saigon was near collapse and lacking popular support among the South Vietnamese people. A frustrated Kennedy responded, "You two did visit the same country, didn't you?" This was emblematic of the problem that faced the American president as he tried to determine what to do about the situation in Vietnam. Two months later, the Kennedy administration decided that the Diem government was too far gone to save and told opposition South Vietnamese generals that they would not oppose a coup. The coup began on November 1, 1963, and Diem and his brother were murdered in the early morning hours of the following day.

President Kennedy was assassinated shortly thereafter on November 22. His successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson oversaw a steady escalation of the war that ultimately involved the commitment of more than half a million U.S. troops.

1964 President Johnson sends signal to both North and South Vietnamese

Following the Tonkin Gulf incidents, in which North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked U.S. destroyers, and the subsequent passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution empowering him to react to armed attacks, President Lyndon Johnson authorizes a series of measures "to assist morale in South Vietnam and show the Communists [in North Vietnam] we still mean business." These measures included covert action such as the

resumption of the DeSoto intelligence patrols and South Vietnamese coastal raids to harass the North Vietnamese. Premier Souvanna Phouma of Laos was also asked to allow the South Vietnamese to make air and ground raids into southeastern Laos, along with air strikes by Laotian planes and U.S. armed aerial reconnaissance to cut off the North Vietnamese infiltration along the route that became known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Eventually, U.S. warplanes would drop over 2 million tons of bombs on Laos as part of Operations Steel Tiger and Tiger Hound between 1965 and 1973.

SEPTEMBER 11

1965 1st Cavalry Division arrives in country

1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) begins to arrive in South Vietnam at Qui Nhon, bringing U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam to more than 125,000. The unit, which had a long and storied history, was the first full U.S. Army division deployed to Vietnam. The division consisted of nine battalions of airmobile infantry, an air reconnaissance squadron, and six battalions of artillery. The division also included the 11th Aviation Group, made up of three aviation battalions consisting of 11 companies of assault helicopters, assault support helicopters, and gunships.

The division used a new concept by which the ground maneuver elements were moved around the battlefield by helicopters. Initially deployed to the II Corps area at Qui Nhon, the division took part in the first major engagement between U.S. and North Vietnamese forces during the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley fought in November, just two months after the division began arriving in Vietnam. Later, the division moved further north to I Corps in 1968 to relieve the embattled U.S. Marines at Hue during the Tet Offensive; in October of the same year, they redeployed to III Corps to conduct operations to protect Saigon; and in 1970, the division took part in the invasion of Cambodia and conducted operations in both III and IV Corps (the Mekong Delta). Thus, the 1st Cavalry Division, popularly known as the "First Team," was the only American division to fight in all four corps tactical zones. The bulk of the division began departing Vietnam in late April 1970, but the 3rd Brigade remained until June 1972. The 1st Cavalry Division was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and "First Team" soldiers won 25 Medals of Honor, 120 Distinguished Service Crosses, 2,766 Silver Stars, 2,697 Distinguished Flying Crosses, and 8,408 Bronze Stars for Valor.

1968 Heavy fighting rages in Tay Ninh

On this day, a major battle begins for control of Tay Ninh City. More than 1,500 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong attacked the provincial capital, capturing part of the city. The next day, 2,000 South Vietnamese reinforcements were sent in to aid the local garrison and after a four-day battle, the North Vietnamese were

driven out of the city. Elsewhere, South Vietnamese forces launched Operation Lam Son 261 in Thua Thien and Quang Tri Provinces in I Corps Tactical Zone. The operation lasted until April 24, 1969, resulting in 724 enemy casualties.

SEPTEMBER 12

1972 U.S. intelligence agencies report 100,000 troops in the South

U.S. intelligence agencies (the Central Intelligence Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency) report to the National Security Council that the North Vietnamese have 100,000 regular troops in South Vietnam and can sustain fighting “at the present rate” for two years.

The report further stated that while U.S. bombing had caused heavy casualties and prevented North Vietnam from doubling operations, the overall effects were disappointing because troops and supplies had kept moving south. It was estimated that 20,000 fresh troops had infiltrated into the South in the previous six weeks and that communist troops in the Mekong Delta had increased as much as tenfold – up to 30,000 – in the last year. This report was significant in that it showed that the North Vietnamese, who had suffered greatly since launching the Easter invasion on March 31, were steadily replacing their losses and maintaining troop levels in the south. These forces and their presence in South Vietnam were not addressed in the Paris Peace Accords that were signed in January 1973, and the North Vietnamese troops remained. Therefore, shortly after the ceasefire was initiated, new fighting erupted between the South Vietnamese forces and the North Vietnamese troops who remained in the South. The South Vietnamese held out for two years, but when the United States failed to honor the promises of continued support made by President Nixon (who resigned on August 9, 1974, in the wake of the Watergate scandal), the North Vietnamese launched a major offensive and the South Vietnamese were defeated in less than 55 days. Saigon fell on April 30, 1975.

1959 Situation deteriorates in South Vietnam

North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong tells the French Consul: “You must remember we will be in Saigon tomorrow.” In November, he would tell the Canadian Commissioner: “We will drive the Americans into the sea.” The U.S. Embassy in Saigon eventually passed these remarks along to Washington as evidence of the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam. The United States had taken over from the French in the effort to stem the tide of communism in Southeast Asia. When President John F. Kennedy took office in 1961, he was faced with a dilemma in Laos and Vietnam. He decided that the line against communism had to be drawn in Vietnam and therefore he increased the number of military advisers to President Ngo Dinh Diem’s government in Saigon. By the time of his assassination

in November 1963, there would be more than 16,000 U.S. advisers in South Vietnam. Under his successor, Lyndon Johnson, there would be a steady escalation of the war that ultimately resulted in the commitment of more than half a million U.S. troops in South Vietnam.

SEPTEMBER 13

1968 Large operation begins in the DMZ

The largest sustained operation inside the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) opens when U.S. and South Vietnamese infantry and armored troops, supported by planes, artillery, and U.S. Navy ships, move two miles into the buffer zone to relieve enemy pressure on Allied bases along the 40-mile stretch of South Vietnam's northern frontier.

The operation was also meant to prevent an anticipated offensive by two North Vietnamese divisions thought to be currently operating within the DMZ. On September 17, an additional 2,000 U.S. Marines were airlifted into the area and B-52 bombers, striking for the first time in a month, hit targets on both sides of the Ben Hai River, part of the demarcation between North and South Vietnam. Ten days later, an additional 4,000 U.S. Marines attacked into the buffer zone in a coordinated pincer movement designed to trap remaining communist forces. The operation achieved the desired objectives and resulted in 742 North Vietnamese killed; U.S. losses were 65 killed and 77 wounded.

1945 British troops arrive to disarm the Japanese

In accordance with the Potsdam Agreements at the end of WWII, 5,000 British troops of the 20th Indian Division, commanded by Gen. Douglas Gracey, arrive in southern Indochina to disarm the defeated Japanese forces. In August, Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh had seized power in Hanoi and proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and independence from French colonial rule. However, Gracey, who detested the Viet Minh, rearmed some 1,400 French soldiers who had been imprisoned by the Japanese. This effectively was the first step in the re-establishment of French colonial rule and set the stage for the conflict between the French and the Viet Minh that led to a bloody nine-year war which would not end until the Viet Minh inflicted a humiliating defeat on the French at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

1964 Attempted coup against Khanh government fails

Dissident South Vietnamese army officers attempt to overthrow General Nguyen Khanh's government in Saigon, calling their movement the People's Council for the Salvation of the Nation. General Lam Van Phat, who had been

dismissed as interior minister on September 3, and General Duong Van Duc, commander of 4th Corps, led the attempt. Government troops loyal to Khanh moved against the coup's main base near Tan Son Nhut, but the final blow to the coup came when Air Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky sent air force planes to fly over the insurgent generals' headquarters and threatened to bomb them if they did not surrender. This incident was part of the long-running political turbulence in South Vietnam that followed the assassination of former President Ngo Dinh Diem.

SEPTEMBER 14

1966 Operation Attleboro is launched in War Zone C

U.S. II Field Force initiates Operation Attleboro with an attack by the 196th Light Infantry Brigade against Viet Cong forces near the Cambodian Border in War Zone C (near Tay Ninh, 50 miles northwest of Saigon in III Corps Tactical Zone).

When the communists appeared to want to make a fight of it, the U.S. commander, Lt. Gen. Jonathan Seaman, sent in reinforcements from the U.S. 1st Infantry Division; the 173rd Airborne Brigade; a brigade each from the U.S. 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions; and a contingent from a South Vietnamese division. Before the operation was over, more than 20,000 U.S. and South Vietnamese troops were involved, making it the largest operation at that point in the war. After more than six weeks of hit-and-run fighting, the Viet Cong forces sustained 1,106 casualties and fell back to sanctuary areas in Cambodia. Operations like Attleboro, and others to follow such as Cedar Rapids and Junction City, were examples of the search and destroy tactic dictated by Gen. William Westmoreland, commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), the senior American headquarters in Saigon. The objective was to find the Viet Cong and engage them in decisive battle; the problem was that the communists often refused to engage in the type of set-piece battles for control of critical terrain that had been the norm in previous wars, like World War II. Westmoreland's search and destroy tactic led to a war of attrition in which battles were fought often over the same territory again and again and where each side inflicted as many casualties as possible on the other. This approach was criticized because it meant that the war would go on as long as the communists were prepared to accept and replace their losses on the battlefield.

1965 South Vietnamese forces and U.S. advisers conduct parachute assault

ARVN paratroopers and several U.S. advisers parachute into the Ben Cat area, 20 miles north of Saigon. This was the first major parachute assault of the war by the South Vietnamese. Although they failed to make contact with the enemy, they achieved their goal of driving the Viet Cong away from Route 13

(running between Saigon and the Cambodian border) at least temporarily.

SEPTEMBER 15

1972 South Vietnamese forces retake Quang Tri City

ARVN forces recapture Quang Tri City after four days of heavy fighting, with the claim that over 8,135 NVA had been killed in the battle.

The North Vietnamese forces had launched a massive offensive, called the Nguyen Hue or "Easter Offensive," on March 31, with three main attacks aimed at Quang Tri south of the Demilitarized Zone, Kontum in the Central Highlands, and An Loc just 60 miles north of Saigon. This invasion included 14 divisions and 26 separate regiments, a total force numbering over 120,000 troops, and was designed to knock South Vietnam out of the war and inflict a defeat on the remaining U.S. forces (which numbered less than 70,000 by this date due to President Nixon's Vietnamization policy and the American troop withdrawal schedule). The North Vietnamese attack was characterized by conventional combined arms attacks by tank and infantry forces supported by massive artillery barrages, resulting in some of the heaviest fighting of the war.

The South Vietnamese forces and their American advisors supported by U.S. tactical airpower and B-52 bombers were able to hold at An Loc and Kontum despite being vastly outnumbered, but the South Vietnamese forces at Quang Tri faltered under the communist assault and were quickly overwhelmed. It was only after President Thieu fired the I Corps commander and replaced him with Major General Ngo Quang Truong, arguably one of the best officers in the South Vietnamese army, that the ARVN were able to stop the North Vietnamese. Truong took measures to stabilize the situation and the South Vietnamese began to fight back. After a tremendously bloody four-and-a-half-month battle in which 977 South Vietnamese soldiers perished, Truong and his troops retook Quang Tri from the North Vietnamese, winning a major victory. President Nixon used this as proof positive that his Vietnamization policy had worked and that the South Vietnamese were prepared to take over responsibility for the war.

1964 NLF calls for general military offensive

The National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, or as it was more popularly known, the National Liberation Front (NLF), calls for a general military offensive to take advantage of the 'disarray' among the South Vietnamese, particularly after the abortive coup attempt against General Khanh's government in Saigon on September 13 and 14.

The NLF was the formal political organization behind the Viet Cong and sought to unite all aspects of the South Vietnamese people who were disaffected with the Saigon government. From

the beginning, the NLF was completely dominated by the communist Lao Dong Party Central Committee in Hanoi and served as North Vietnam's shadow government in the South.

SEPTEMBER 16

1960 U.S. Ambassador in Saigon warns that situation is worsening

In a cable to Secretary of State Christian A. Herter, U.S. Ambassador in Saigon, Elbridge Durbrow analyzes two separate but related threats to the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, danger from demonstration or coup, predominantly "non-Communist" in origin; and the danger of a gradual Viet Cong extension of control over the countryside.

Durbrow explained that any coup would be partly motivated by a "sincere desire to prevent Communist take-over in Vietnam." He suggested methods Diem might use to mitigate both threats, including sending his brother Nhu (head of the hated secret police) abroad and improving relations with the peasantry, and ended by declaring, "If Diem's position in country continues to deteriorate as result of a failure to adopt political, psychological, economic and security measures, it may become necessary for U.S. government to begin considerable alternative courses of action and leaders in order achieve our objective." President Kennedy and his administration were faced with a difficult quandary; President Diem was staunchly anticommunist, but he resisted any reforms that might have won him more support among the South Vietnamese people. Ultimately, the Kennedy administration decided the Diem would never make the necessary changes and subsequently let a group of dissident South Vietnamese generals know that the United States would not oppose a coup to remove Diem from office. In the process of the coup that occurred on November 1, Diem and his brother were murdered. A period of political instability ensued during which there was a series of "revolving door" governments.

1969 Nixon announces the withdrawal of a further 35,000 troops from Vietnam

President Richard Nixon announces the second round of U.S. troop withdrawals from Vietnam. This was part of the dual program that he had announced at the Midway conference on June 8 that called for "Vietnamization" of the war and U.S. troop withdrawals, as the South Vietnamese forces assumed more responsibility for the fighting. The first round of withdrawals was completed in August and totaled 25,000 troops (including two brigades of the 9th Infantry Division). There would be 15 announced withdrawals in total, leaving only 27,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam by November 1972.

SEPTEMBER 17

1970 PRG presents a new peace plan

The People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) for South Vietnam presents a new peace plan at the Paris talks. Nguyen Thi Binh, foreign minister of the PRG, attending the peace talks for the first time in three months, outlined the eight-point program, which was similar to another program first presented in May 1969. In exchange for the withdrawal of all U.S. and Allied forces by June 30, 1971, communist forces promised to refrain from attacking the departing troops and also offered to begin immediate negotiations on the release of POWs once the withdrawal was agreed to. The PRG statement demanded the purge of South Vietnam's top three leaders: President Nguyen Van Thieu, Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, and Premier Tran Thien Khiem. This demand was a major inhibitor to any meaningful peace negotiations, since the United States refused to abandon Thieu.

1972 Hanoi releases three POWs

Three U.S. pilots are released by Hanoi. They were the first POWs released since 1969. North Vietnamese officials cautioned the United States not to force the freed men to "slander" Hanoi, claiming that "distortions" about Hanoi's treatment of POWs from a previous release of prisoners in 1969 caused Hanoi to temporarily suspend the release of POWs. The conditions for their release stipulated that they would not do anything to further the U.S. war effort in Indochina. The rest of the POWs were released in March 1973 as part of the agreement that led to the Paris Peace Accords.

SEPTEMBER 18

1964 North Vietnamese Army begins infiltration

South Vietnamese officials claim that two companies from the North Vietnamese army have invaded South Vietnam. A battle resulted in Quang Tri Province, just south of the Demilitarized Zone, but the North Vietnamese forces were defeated with heavy casualties. Since North Vietnamese main force units had not been seen in South Vietnam before, U.S. military advisers questioned whether these were actually North Vietnamese troops, but in fact Hanoi had ordered its forces to begin infiltrating to the South. This marked a major change in the tempo and scope of the war in South Vietnam and resulted in President Lyndon Johnson committing U.S. combat troops. North Vietnamese forces and U.S. troops clashed for the first time in November 1965, when units from the newly arrived 1st Cavalry Division engaged several North Vietnamese regiments in the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley in the Central Highlands.

1969 "March Against Death" to be held in Washington

Antiwar protestors announce that they will organize a 36-hour "March Against Death" to take place in Washington in November; there will be a simultaneous rally in San Francisco. This effort was led by Dr. Benjamin Spock and 10 other representatives of the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.

SEPTEMBER 19

1966 Pressure mounts against continued U.S. involvement in Vietnam

The Johnson administration and its handling of the war in Vietnam comes under attack from several quarters. A group of 22 eminent U.S. scientists, including seven Nobel laureates, urged the President to halt the use of antipersonnel and anti-crop chemical weapons in Vietnam. In Congress, House Republicans issued a "White Paper" that warned that the United States was becoming "a full-fledged combatant" in a war that was becoming "bigger than the Korean War." The paper urged the President to end the war "more speedily and at a smaller cost, while safeguarding the independence and freedom of South Vietnam."

Johnson's handling of the war was also questioned in the United Nations, where Secretary General U Thant proposed a three-point plan for peace in Vietnam, which included cessation of U.S. bombing of the North; de-escalation of the ground war in South Vietnam; and inclusion of the National Liberation Front in the Paris peace talks. In Rome, Pope Paul VI appealed to world leaders in a papal encyclical to end the Vietnam War. Despite such calls, the United States launched extensive bombing raids by B-52s that lasted for four days against a mixture of targets in the DMZ, including infiltration trails, troop concentrations, supply areas, and base camps.

1969 Nixon cancels draft calls for November and December

President Nixon announces the cancellation of the draft calls for November and December. He reduced the draft call by 50,000 (32,000 in November and 18,000 in December). This move accompanied his twin program of turning the war over to the South Vietnamese concurrent with U.S. troop withdrawals and was calculated to quell antiwar protests by students returning to college campuses after the summer.

SEPTEMBER 20

1968 U.S. officials defend use of defoliants

U.S. military spokesmen defend the use of defoliants in Vietnam at a news conference in Saigon, claiming that the use of the agents in selected areas of South Vietnam had neither appreciably altered the country's ecology, nor produced any

harmful effects on human or animal life. However, a paper released at the same news conference by Dr. Fred T. Shirley, a U.S. Agriculture Department expert, suggested that U.S. officials in Saigon were underestimating the extent of ecological damage caused in Vietnam by defoliating agents and that they had caused "undeniable ecological damage" and that "recovery may take a long time." Defoliation had been used in Vietnam since 1961 to reduce the dense jungle foliage so communist forces could not use it for cover, as well as to deny the enemy use of crops needed for subsistence. During a nine-year period ending in 1971, over 19 million gallons of three major herbicides (Agents Orange, White, and Blue) would be used in Vietnam. As part of Operation Ranch Hand, conducted from 1962 to 1970, specially equipped C-123 aircraft sprayed these herbicides in a 300-foot swath about eight and half miles long. It was also applied by helicopter, truck, and hand sprayers. The heaviest use of the defoliants was in the III Corps Tactical Zone north of Saigon and along the Cambodian and Laotian borders. 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 were either sprayed or handled 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 and 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 defoliate agents were used.

1972 U.S. planes mine waters in northern Quang Tri

The USAF reveals that U.S. planes have been mining the coastal rivers and canals of northern Quang Tri province below the DMZ, the first mining of waterways within South Vietnam. This was an attempt to impede further reinforcement of North Vietnamese forces in the area and to remove the threat to the newly recaptured city of Quang Tri.

SEPTEMBER 21

1961 5th Special Forces Group is activated at Fort Bragg

The U.S. Army's 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, is activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The Special Forces were formed to organize and train guerrilla bands behind enemy lines. President John F. Kennedy, a strong believer in the potential of the Special Forces in counterinsurgency operations, visited the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg to review the program and authorized the Special Forces to wear the headgear that became their symbol, the Green Beret.

The 5th S.F. Group was sent to Vietnam in October 1964, to assume control of all Special Forces operations in Vietnam.

Prior to this time, Green Berets had been assigned to Vietnam only on temporary duty. The primary function of the Special Forces in Vietnam was to organize the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) among South Vietnam's Montagnard population. The Montagnards, "mountain people" or "mountaineers," were a group of indigenous people made up of several tribes, such as the Rhade, Bru, and Jarai, who lived mainly in the highland areas of Vietnam. These forces manned camps along the mountainous border areas to guard against North Vietnamese infiltration. At the height of the war the 5th S.F. controlled 84 CIDG camps with more than 42,000 CIDG strike forces and local militia units. The CIDG program ended in December 1970 with the transfer of troops and mission to the South Vietnamese Border Ranger Command. In February 1971, the 5th Special Forces Group was withdrawn as part of the U.S. troop drawdown.

1967 Thai troops arrive in Saigon

Gen. William Westmoreland, commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, welcomes 1,200 Thai troops as they arrive in Saigon. By 1969, Thai forces in Vietnam would number more than 12,000. The effort to get additional "Free World Military Forces" to participate in the war in support of South Vietnam was part of President Lyndon Johnson's "Many Flags" program. Under this program, 40 nations would send aid and assistance to the Saigon government. However, only five nations-- Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Korea, and the Philippines-- sent troops. A total of 351 Thai soldiers were killed in action in Vietnam.

SEPTEMBER 22

1964 Goldwater attacks Johnson's Vietnam policy

Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, Republican senator from Arizona, charges that President Lyndon Johnson lied to the American people and that he is committing the United States to war "recklessly." Having previously called the war "McNamara's War," he now described it as "Johnson's War." Goldwater said that the United States should do whatever it took to support U.S. troops in the war and that if the administration was not prepared to "take the war to North Vietnam," it should withdraw. Although Goldwater discussed the possibility of using low-yield nuclear weapons to defoliate infiltration routes in Vietnam, he never actually advocated the use of nuclear weapons against the North Vietnamese. Nevertheless, the Democrats easily painted Goldwater as a warmonger who would drop atomic bombs on Hanoi. The ploy worked extremely well and during the election, incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson inflicted a crushing defeat on Goldwater, winning 61 percent of the vote.

1971 Medina acquitted of all charges.

Captain Ernest Medina is acquitted of all charges relating to the My Lai massacre of March 1968. His unit, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade (Light) of the 23rd (Americal) Division, was charged with the murder of over 200 Vietnamese civilians, including women and children, at My Lai 4, a cluster of hamlets that made up Son My village in Son Tinh District in Quang Ngai Province in the coastal lowlands of I Corps Tactical Zone.

Medina had been charged with murder, manslaughter, and assault. All charges were dropped when the military judge at the Medina's court martial made an error in instructing the jury. After the charges were dropped, Medina subsequently resigned from the service. There were 13 others charged with various crimes in conjunction with the My Lai massacre, but only one, Lt. William Calley, was found guilty. Calley was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of 22 civilians, but his sentence was reduced first to 20 years, then 10 years, and he was ultimately paroled by President Nixon in November 1974, after having served about one-third of his sentence.

SEPTEMBER 23

1969 Chicago 8 trial opens in Chicago

The trial for eight antiwar activists charged with the responsibility for the violent demonstrations at the August 1968 Democratic National Convention opens in Chicago. The defendants included David Dellinger of the National Mobilization Committee (NMC); Rennie Davis and Thomas Hayden of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS); Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, founders of the Youth International Party ("Yippies"); Bobby Seale of the Black Panthers; and two lesser known activists, Lee Weiner and John Froines.

The group was charged with conspiracy to cross state lines with intent to incite a riot. All but Seale were represented by attorneys William Kunstler and Leonard Weinglass. The trial, presided over by Judge Julius Hoffman, turned into a circus as the defendants and their attorneys used the court as a platform to attack Nixon, the war, racism, and oppression. Their tactics were so disruptive that at one point, Judge Hoffman ordered Seale gagged and strapped to his chair. When the trial ended in February 1970, Hoffman found the defendants and their attorneys guilty of 175 counts of contempt of court and sentenced them to terms between two to four years. Although declaring the defendants not guilty of conspiracy, the jury found all but Froines and Weiner guilty of intent to riot. The others were each sentenced to five years and fined \$5,000. However, none served time because in 1972, a Court of Appeal overturned the criminal convictions and eventually most of the contempt charges were dropped as well.

1965 South Vietnam executes three accused VC agents

The South Vietnamese government executes three accused Viet Cong agents held at Da Nang. They did it at night to prevent foreign photographers from recording it, but nevertheless, the story got out. Three days later, a clandestine Viet Cong radio station announced North Vietnam's execution of two U.S. soldiers held captive since 1963, as "war criminals."

SEPTEMBER 24

1963 McNamara and Taylor assess situation in Vietnam

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Gen. Maxwell Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrive in Vietnam. At President John F. Kennedy's request, they were to determine whether South Vietnam's military situation had deteriorated as a result of the continuing clash between the Ngo Dinh Diem government and the Buddhists over Diem's refusal to institute internal political reform. Earlier in the month, Kennedy had sent Marine Corps Gen. Victor Krulak and State Department official Joseph Mendenhall to Saigon on a fact-finding mission. They returned with a conflicting report that left Kennedy unsure of the actual situation in Saigon. Consequently, Kennedy dispatched McNamara and Taylor in an attempt to clarify the situation. They were accompanied on the eight-day trip by William Bundy of the Defense Department, William Colby of the Central Intelligence Agency, White House advisor Michael Forrestall, and diplomat William Sullivan. Again, the individual perceptions of the group differed. Gen. Paul Harkins, commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) convinced General Taylor that the war against the Viet Cong was progressing on schedule, even to the point that Harkins thought that 1,000 advisors might be sent home by the end of the year. The civilians in the party were not so optimistic, agreeing with Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge's assessment that the Diem government was very fragile. They were even more convinced when they met with Diem and he rejected any discussion of meaningful political reforms that might have quieted the growing unrest among the Buddhists.

When the group returned to Washington in October, their report was an amalgamation of their differing views of the situation. While agreeing that some progress was being made in the field against the Viet Cong, they all agreed that the political situation threatened further progress. On the subject of a potential coup, the report said that there was only a slight chance and that the United States should not support any coup attempts "at this time." They recommended selective economic and psychological measures to convince Diem to institute reforms to redress the political unrest. Unfortunately, when the recommended measures were taken, they had no effect on Diem and his policies. The United States made clear its dissatisfaction with Diem's refusal to change his domestic policies, giving, in effect the green light to a coup by opposition

military officers. A coup was staged on November 1, 1963, in which Diem and his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, were murdered by South Vietnamese officers.

1967 Political instability continues in South Vietnam

In Saigon, Hue, and Da Nang, demonstrations are staged against the recent election of President Nguyen Van Thieu and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, led by the militant Buddhist faction, who charge that the elections were rigged and demand that the Constituent Assembly cancel the results. In the United States, the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) adopted a resolution against the Johnson administration's policy and strategy in Vietnam, charging that in Vietnam the United States was "in league with a corrupt and illiberal government supported by a minority of the people."

SEPTEMBER 25

1969 Congressional opponents of Nixon Vietnam policy renew opposition

Senator Charles Goodell (a maverick Republican from New York) proposes legislation that would require the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam by the end of 1970, and bar the use of congressionally appropriated funds after December 1, 1970, for maintaining U.S. military personnel in Vietnam.

The legislation failed to pass, but it was followed by 10 similar proposals over the next three weeks by legislators including Senators Jacob Javits, Frank Church, and Mark Hatfield. Nixon had temporarily silenced his critics earlier in the month by announcing a new troop withdrawal and a reduction in the draft call for the next two months, but many of those who opposed him in Congress felt that Nixon had ignored an opportunity to push for peace in Vietnam when Ho Chi Minh had died on September 1.

Also on this day: Two terrorist attacks occur near Da Nang in which 19 South Vietnamese die. Viet Cong commandos threw a grenade into a meeting place, killing four civilians and one policeman and wounding 26 others. At nearly the same time, a bus struck a mine 95 miles southeast of Da Nang killing 14 civilians.

1964 Political instability continues in South Vietnam

In South Vietnam, rumors of another coup cause government troops to take up key positions around Saigon, but nothing materializes. In Qui Nhon, South Vietnamese troops put down an antigovernment demonstration by Buddhist leaders. These incidents were part of the continuing instability in South Vietnam following the November 1963 coup that resulted in the death of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

SEPTEMBER 26

1945 First American soldier killed in Vietnam

Lt. Col. Peter Dewey, a U.S. Army officer with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Vietnam, is shot and killed in Saigon. Dewey was the head of a seven-man team sent to Vietnam to search for missing American pilots and to gather information on the situation in the country after the surrender of the Japanese.

According to the provisions of the Potsdam Conference, the British were assigned the responsibility of disarming Japanese soldiers south of the 16th parallel. However, with the surrender of the Japanese, Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh declared themselves the rightful government of Vietnam. This angered the French colonial officials and the remaining French soldiers who had been disarmed and imprisoned by the Japanese. They urged British Maj. Gen. Douglas D. Gracey to help them regain control. Gracey, not fond of the Viet Minh or their cause, rearmed 1,400 French soldiers to help his troops maintain order. The next day these forces ousted the Viet Minh from the offices that they had only recently occupied. Dewey's sympathies lay with the Viet Minh, many of whom were nationalists who did not want a return to French colonial rule. The American officer was an outspoken man who soon angered Gracey, eventually resulting in the British general ordering him to leave Indochina. On the way to the airport, accompanied by another OSS officer, Capt. Henry Bluechel, Dewey refused to stop at a roadblock manned by three Viet Minh soldiers. He yelled back at them in French and they opened fire, killing Dewey instantly. Bluechel was unhurt and escaped on foot. It was later determined that the Viet Minh had fired on Dewey thinking he was French. He would prove to be the first of nearly 59,000 Americans killed in Vietnam.

1969 Nixon responds to critics

President Nixon, speaking at a news conference, cites "some progress" in the effort to end the Vietnam War and says, "We're on the right course in Vietnam." Urging the American people to give him the support and time he needed to end the war honorably, Nixon said, "If we have a united front, the enemy will begin to talk [at the negotiating table in Paris]." Nixon branded the attitude of Senator Charles Goodell (R-NY), and others like him in Congress as "defeatist." Goodell had only days before proposed legislation which failed to pass, but would have required the withdrawal of U.S. troops by the end of 1970, and barred the use of congressionally appropriated funds after December 1, 1970, for maintaining U.S. military personnel in Vietnam. In response to Nixon's remarks, 24 liberal Democratic congressmen held a private caucus. The group decided to endorse the nationwide protest scheduled for October 15 and agreed to press in Congress for resolutions calling for an end to

the war and a withdrawal of U.S. troops; over the next three weeks, there would be 10 such proposals. None of these passed, but they indicated the mounting opposition to "Nixon's war."

SEPTEMBER 27

1967 Antiwar sentiment increases

An advertisement headed "A Call To Resist Illegitimate Authority," signed by over 320 influential people (professors, writers, ministers, and other professional people), appears in the *New Republic* and the *New York Review of Books*, asking for funds to help youths resist the draft.

In Washington, Senator Thurston B. Morton (Republican from Kentucky), told reporters that President Johnson had been "brainwashed" by the "military-industrial complex" into believing a military victory could be achieved in Vietnam. Johnson felt the sting of such criticism and he was also frustrated by contradictory advice from his advisors. Still, he thought that slow and steady progress was being made in Vietnam based on optimistic reports coming out of the U.S. military headquarters in Saigon. General Westmoreland, Commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, reported that U.S. operations were keeping the Viet Cong off balance and inflicting heavy losses. Still, the home front was crumbling as Johnson came under increasingly personal attacks for his handling of the war. The situation would reach a critical state when the communists launched a major surprise attack on January 31 during the 1968 Tet holiday, the traditional Vietnamese holiday celebrating the lunar new year.

1969 Thieu comments on Nixon's Vietnamization policy

President Nguyen Van Thieu says his government entertains no "ambition or pretense" to take over all fighting by the end of 1970, but given proper support South Vietnamese troops could replace the "bulk" of U.S. troops that year. Thieu said his agreement on any further U.S. troops withdrawals would hinge on whether his requests for equipment and funds for ARVN forces were granted. These comments were in response to President Nixon's continued emphasis on "Vietnamizing" the war so that U.S. forces could be withdrawn.

1972 Weekly casualty figures contain no U.S. fatalities

On this day, 1 weekly casualty figures are released that contain no U.S. fatalities for the first time since March 1965. There were several reasons for this. President Nixon's troop withdrawal program, first initiated in the fall of 1969, had continued unabated even through the height of the fighting during the 1972 North Vietnamese "Easter Offensive." By this time in the war, there were less than 40,000 U.S. troops left in South Vietnam. Of this total, only a small number, mostly advisors, were involved in

ground combat. In addition, it appeared that the North Vietnamese offensive, which had been blunted by the South Vietnamese with the aid of massive U.S. airpower, was finally winding down; there had been a general lull in ground fighting for the sixth straight day. South Vietnamese losses continued to be high since they had assumed the responsibility for fighting the ground battle in the absence of U.S. combat troops.

1968 Battle for Thuong Duc begins

A battle begins for the Special Forces camp at Thuong Duc, situated between Da Nang and the Laotian border. The communists briefly captured the base before being driven out by air and artillery strikes. They then besieged the base, which was only lifted after a relief column, led by the U.S. 7th Marines, reached the base and drove the enemy forces out of the area.

SEPTEMBER 29

1965 Hanoi announces that downed pilots will be treated as war criminals

Hanoi publishes the text of a letter it has written to the Red Cross claiming that since there is no formal state of war, U.S. pilots shot down over the North will not receive the rights of prisoners of war (POWs) and will be treated as war criminals. The U.S. State Department protested, but this had no impact on the way the American POWs were treated and most suffered extreme torture and other maltreatment while in captivity. The first pilot captured by the North Vietnamese was Navy Lieutenant Everett Alvarez, who was shot down on August 5, 1964. The American POW held longest was Army Special Forces Captain Floyd James Thompson, who had been captured in the South on March 26, 1964. American POWs were held in 11 different prisons in North Vietnam and their treatment by the North Vietnamese was characterized by isolation, torture, and psychological abuse. The exact number of POWs held by the North Vietnamese during the war remains a debatable issue, but the POWs themselves have accounted for at least 766 verified captives at one point. Under the provisions of the Paris Peace Accords, the North Vietnamese released 565 American military and 26 civilian POWs in February and March 1973, but there were still more than 2,500 men listed as Missing in Action (MIA).

1969 Charges dropped against Green Berets

Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor announces that the U.S. Army, conceding that it is helpless to enlist the cooperation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), is dropping the murder charges (of August 6) against eight Special Forces accused of killing a Vietnamese national.

Col. Robert B. Rheault, Commander of the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam, and seven other Green Berets had been charged with premeditated murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the summary execution of Thai Khac Chuyen, who had served as an agent for Detachment B-57. Chuyen was reportedly summarily executed for being a double agent who had compromised a secret mission. The case against the Green Berets was ultimately dismissed for reasons of national security when the CIA refused to release highly classified information about the operations in which Detachment B-57 had been involved. Colonel Rheault subsequently retired from the Army.

SEPTEMBER 30

1968 Humphrey announces that he would halt the bombing of North Vietnam

Apparently trying to distance himself from Johnson's policies, Democratic presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey announces that, if elected, he would halt the bombing of the North if there was any "evidence, direct or indirect, by deed or word, of communist willingness" to restore the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Vietnam.

Humphrey had become his party's candidate when incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson, devastated by the outcry that accompanied the communist Tet Offensive, had announced that he would not run for re-election. Despite Humphrey's hopes, many voters saw him as only a continuation of the Johnson approach to the war, which had been marked by escalation and continued stalemate. He was defeated by Richard Nixon, who hinted during the campaign that he had a secret plan to end the war and achieve "peace with honor."

Also on this day in Vietnam: The 900th US aircraft is shot down over the North and the USS *New Jersey*, the world's only active battleship, arrives in Vietnamese waters and begins bombarding the Demilitarized Zone from her station off the Vietnamese coast.

1964 First large scale antiwar demonstration staged at Berkeley

The first large-scale antiwar demonstration in the United States is staged at the University of California at Berkeley, by students and faculty opposed to the war. Nevertheless, polls showed that a majority of Americans supported President Lyndon Johnson's policy on the war.