

# Vietnam Day by Day October

## OCTOBER 1

### **1961 South Vietnam requests a bilateral defense treaty**

On this day, South Vietnam requests a bilateral defense treaty with the United States. President John F. Kennedy was faced with a serious dilemma in Vietnam. The government of Ngo Dinh Diem in Saigon was increasingly unpopular with the South Vietnamese people because of his refusal to institute political reform and the suppression of opposing political and religious factions. However, Diem was staunchly anticommunist, which made him attractive to the American president, who was concerned about the growing strength of the Communists in Southeast Asia.

The United States had taken over the fight against the Communists in Vietnam from the French, who had been defeated by the Viet Minh at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. The United States had been providing military aid to the South Vietnamese through the French since 1951. In 1955, this aid, which included American military advisers, was provided directly to the Diem government in Saigon. With the formal request for a bilateral defense treaty, the number of U.S. personnel in South Vietnam grew to more than 3,000 by the end of 1961, and the American commitment to Saigon grew steadily over the next two years. When President Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, there were over 16,000 American personnel in Vietnam. Under Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, this number would grow to more than 500,000.

## OCTOBER 2

### **1966 Soviets report that Russian military personnel have come under fire**

The Soviet Defense Ministry newspaper, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, reports that Russian military experts have come under fire during U.S. raids against North Vietnamese missile sites while the Soviets were training North Vietnamese soldiers in the use of Soviet-made anti-aircraft missiles.

This was extremely significant because it was the first public acknowledgment that Soviets had trained North Vietnamese missile crews and were observing them in action. U.S. officials had long maintained that the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China were providing military aid--including training advisers, weapons, and equipment--that permitted the North Vietnamese to continue the war. Until this point, both the Soviets and Chinese had denied they had personnel in North Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese fired over 10,000 SA-2 SAMs (surface-to-air missiles) at U.S. aircraft from 1965 to 1972, and each of those missiles was supplied by the Soviet Union. This was also true for the T-54 medium tanks, 130-mm field guns, and other

sophisticated weapons and equipment the North Vietnamese used to launch their 1972 and 1975 offensives. The only time that this steady source of weapons and equipment from the Soviets was significantly impeded was during 1972, when President Richard Nixon ordered the stepping up of air raids against Hanoi and the mining of Haiphong harbor, through which most of the weapons and heavy equipment normally came.

### **1967 Aerial offensive against North Vietnam continues**

The increased U.S. aerial offensive against North Vietnam that had started August 11 continues. According to U.S. State and Defense officials, the offensive had slowed the flow of war supplies from Communist China to Hanoi. Intelligence overflights revealed that the bombing of bridges had halted the movement of military material on the key rail line from Dong Dang, near the Chinese border, to Hanoi. However, U.S. officials conceded that Communist military equipment was reaching Hanoi by other means.

In Congress, dissention continued over the bombing issue. Senator John Sherman Cooper (R-New York) urged the United States to take the "first step" toward negotiations with an "unconditional cessation" of the bombing of North Vietnam. Senator Gale McGee (D-Wyoming) defended the Vietnam policies of the Johnson administration saying the "stake is not only Vietnam but all the nations in Southeast Asia."

## **OCTOBER 3**

### **1967 Operation Wallowa commences**

Elements of the 1st Cavalry Division launch Operation Wallowa in South Vietnam's northernmost provinces.

A task force was sent in to relieve pressure on the U.S. Marines, who were fighting a heavy series of engagements along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). As these operations commenced, U.S. planes raided North Vietnamese supply routes and attacked bridges only 10 miles from the Chinese frontier.

### **1968 Twenty-four die in Army helicopter accident**

At Camp Evans, 11 miles north of Hue, 24 U.S. military personnel die when a U.S. Army CH-47 helicopter collides with an American C-7 Caribou transport aircraft. All aboard both aircrafts perished. Meanwhile, U.S. planes severed roads in more than 20 places, destroying over 75 supply vehicles in the heaviest raids over North Vietnam since July 2.

## OCTOBER 4

### **1964 Johnson orders the commencement of Oplan 34A raids**

President Johnson issues the order to reactivate North Vietnamese coastal raids by South Vietnamese boats as part of Oplan 34A.

These raids had been suspended after the Gulf of Tonkin incident in early August. On August 2, North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked the destroyer USS *Maddox*, which was conducting an intelligence gathering mission in the same general area that had just come under attack by several Oplan 34A raids. Two days after the first attack, there was another incident, the details of which remain unclear. The *Maddox*, joined by destroyer USS *C. Turner Joy*, engaged what were, at the time, 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 against the North Vietnamese 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. After two months, approval was given to continue the Oplan 34A raids against North Vietnamese coastal installations.

### **1966 Pope calls for end to the Vietnam War**

Pope Paul VI addresses 150,000 people in St. Peter's Square in Rome and calls for an end to the war in Vietnam through negotiations. Although the Pope's address had no impact on the Johnson administration and its policies in Southeast Asia, his comments were indicative of the mounting antiwar sentiment that was growing both at home and overseas.

## OCTOBER 5

### **1963 South Vietnamese generals plan coup**

Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge reports to President John F. Kennedy from Saigon that South Vietnamese generals are planning a coup against President Ngo Dinh Diem. Kennedy and his administration had become increasingly concerned about Diem because of the rising tide of dissent against the Diem regime in South Vietnam. Diem, a Catholic in a predominantly Buddhist nation, refused to institute promised political reforms. He was opposed by numerous factions, not the least of which were the Buddhist priests. Several South Vietnamese generals led by General Duong Van Minh met with CIA operative Lucien Conein to ask for assurances that the United States would not thwart a coup, and that economic and military aid would continue. Kennedy had already come to the conclusion that Diem could never provide the necessary

leadership to unite his country against the Communist insurgents. He told Conein to give the South Vietnamese generals the assurances they wanted. Kennedy also warned that, as a representative of the United States, Conein should avoid getting involved with operational details.

The coup plotters received additional motivation in the wake of another Buddhist monk's self-immolation (on June 11, 1963, Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc had set fire to himself in protest; his self-immolation was followed by several others) when Diem reacted with intensified political repression, including the arrest of scores of women and children who had marched against the government. Another attempt was made by the Kennedy administration to convince Diem to make the necessary reforms, but once again he refused. There was disagreement among Kennedy's advisors as to what to do about Diem; some believed that Diem had to go and others were unsure. Ultimately the president decided to do nothing. In this case, that was tantamount to support of the coup plotters. On November 1, rebel forces seized the radio station and police headquarters while laying siege to the presidential palace. In the early morning hours of the next day, Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu surrendered to representatives from the rebel generals. They were later found murdered in the back of an M-113 armored personnel carrier. What followed was a period of extreme political instability as a series of "revolving door" governments took turns in an attempt to rule and stem the tide of the ongoing insurgency in the countryside.

#### **1964 President Johnson under fire from his own party**

Senator Gaylord Nelson (D-Wisconsin), disturbed by growing reports that the Johnson administration is preparing to escalate U.S. operations in Vietnam, states that Congress did not intend the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to endorse escalation.

The resolution had been passed on August 7 in response to what became known as the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Allegedly, North Vietnamese patrol boats had fired on U.S. warships in the waters off North Vietnam on two separate occasions between August 2-4. Though the second attack on August 4 was questionable, the incident provided the motivation for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The resolution, which passed unanimously in the House of Representatives and with only two dissenting votes in the Senate, gave the president power to "take all necessary measures to repel an armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." Johnson used the resolution as the basis for his escalation of the war. In 1966, Senator Wayne Morse (D-Oregon) would propose repealing the resolution, but there would be little support to do so at that time. However, as the war progressed, sentiment shifted and Congress repealed the resolution in 1970.

### **OCTOBER 6**

#### **1967 U.S. jets strike targets in North Vietnam**

U.S. Navy pilots fly 34 missions as they again strike the Chien Chiang and Lang Son bridges near the Chinese border, another bridge 39 miles northeast of Hanoi, a railroad yard near Mo Trang, and two anti-aircraft sites south of Dong Hoi.

Other jets attacked the Nam Dinh power plant that lay 45 miles southwest of Haiphong; a railway and highway bridge 24 miles southeast of Hanoi; and eight buildings in the Yen Bac military storage area. These raids were all part of Operation Rolling Thunder, which had been initiated in March 1965 and became the longest bombing campaign ever conducted by the United States Air Force. It was designed to destroy North Vietnam's industrial base and war-making capability.

During the protracted campaign, more than 643,000 tons of bombs fell on North Vietnam, destroying 65 percent of North Vietnam's petroleum storage capacity and an estimated 60 percent of its power-generating capability. Despite these results, Rolling Thunder has generally been assessed as a failure. For a number of reasons, conventional airpower used on North Vietnam did not have the desired impact on the unconventional war being fought in South Vietnam. First, North Vietnam was primarily a pre-industrial, agricultural society without major industrial targets. Second, the overall effectiveness of the bombing campaign was hampered by political constraints that limited targeting and other operational planning factors. Third, and perhaps most important, the North Vietnamese were a determined people who were prepared to continue fighting as long as it took to achieve their war aims. In essence, the United States was fighting a limited war, but the North Vietnamese were fighting a total war to the finish.

### **1970 South Vietnamese forces withdraw from Cambodia**

South Vietnamese military officials announce the end of a three-month operation in southeastern Cambodia and the withdrawal of the 12,000-man task force involved. During the operation, which was designed to eliminate Communist base camps and supply areas along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, 453 enemy soldiers were reported killed. South Vietnamese losses were 93 killed and 642 wounded.

## **OCTOBER 7**

### **1969 Wheeler announces progress in the Vietnamization effort**

At his departure from Saigon following a four-day inspection of South Vietnam, General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reports that "progress in Vietnamization is being steadily and realistically achieved," but that U.S. forces will have to assist the South Vietnamese "for some time to come." President Nixon had announced his intention to "Vietnamize" the war at the Midway Conference in June, saying that it was

time that the South Vietnamese assumed more responsibility for the war. Accordingly, he announced that as the South Vietnamese improved in combat capability, U.S. forces would be withdrawn and returned to the United States. Supposedly, these withdrawals would be predicated on the rate of improvement in the South Vietnamese armed forces and the level of combat on the battlefield. However, once the U.S. troop withdrawals began in the fall of 1969, the schedule achieved a life of its own and the subsequent increments were withdrawn with very little consideration of the original criteria. By January 1972, less than 75,000 U.S. troops remained in South Vietnam.

### **1970 Nixon announces a new peace proposal**

In a televised speech, President Richard Nixon announces a five-point proposal to end the war, based on a "standstill" cease-fire in place in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. He proposed eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces, unconditional release of prisoners of war, and political solutions reflecting the will of the South Vietnamese people. Nixon said that the Communist proposals for the ouster of Nguyen Van Thieu, Nguyen Cao Ky, and Tran Thiem Van Thieu were "totally unacceptable" and rejected them. These proposals were well received at home, but were rejected by the Communists a few days later.

## **OCTOBER 8**

### **1968 U.S. and South Vietnamese navies commence Operation Sealords**

Operation Sealords is launched in the Mekong Delta by U.S. and South Vietnamese forces. This operation was ordered by newly appointed Commander Naval Forces Vietnam, Vice-Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., who established Task Force 194 to operate along the canals and less-traveled waterways of the Mekong Delta to interdict Viet Cong infiltration routes from Cambodia. Additionally, TF 194 was to harass Communist forces in the area and, with the assistance of ground and air forces, pacify the Delta region. Under Zumwalt's direction, U.S. and South Vietnamese naval forces worked together to secure the waterways of the Mekong Delta. When the Vietnamization program began in 1969, the U.S. Navy instituted ACTOV (Accelerated Turnover to Vietnam), the Navy's Vietnamization plan, and by April 1971, all Sealords operations had been turned over to the South Vietnamese Navy.

### **1970 Communists reject Nixon's peace proposal**

The Communist delegation in Paris rejects President Richard Nixon's October 7 proposal as "a maneuver to deceive world

opinion." Nixon had announced five-point proposal to end the war, based on a "standstill" cease-fire in place in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. He proposed eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces, unconditional release of prisoners of war, and political solutions reflecting the will of the South Vietnamese people. The U.S. Senate had adopted a resolution expressing support for President Nixon's initiative, calling the proposals "fair and equitable," and there was hope that the Communists would respond accordingly. However, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong negotiators refused to even consider Nixon's proposal, reiterating their previous and long-standing demand for an unconditional and total withdrawal of U.S. forces from Indochina and the overthrow of the "puppet" leaders in Saigon. U.S. officials publicly urged the Soviet Union to use its "considerable influence" with the Communists to persuade them to accept President Nixon's new proposals, but the North Vietnamese stood their ground.

### **1972 Possible breakthrough at Paris peace talks**

Rumors arise that there is a breakthrough in the secret talks that had been going on in a villa outside Paris since August 1969. Henry Kissinger, President Richard Nixon's national security advisor, and North Vietnamese negotiators conducted the peace talks. Le Duc Tho, who had taken over as chief negotiator for Hanoi from Xuan Thuy, presented a draft peace agreement proposing that two separate administrations remain in South Vietnam to negotiate general elections. This proposal accepted in substance earlier U.S. terms, and by doing so dropped previous Communist demands for a political solution to accompany a military one.

Tho, believing that the Americans were eager for peace in Vietnam before the elections, proposed that the United States and North Vietnam arrange a cease-fire, governing all military matters between themselves. The proposal also suggested leaving the political questions to be settled by the Vietnamese sides, who would be governed by a "National Council of Reconciliation" until a final settlement could be reached. Hanoi and Saigon would continue to occupy the territory each presently held until then. Kissinger, who considered Hanoi's offer a breakthrough, cabled South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu "to seize as much territory as possible." In light of this new development in Paris, President Nixon ordered the commencement of Operation Enhance Plus, a program designed to provide South Vietnam with \$2 billion worth of military equipment to replace what was lost during the heavy fighting of the 1972 North Vietnamese Easter Offensive.

## **OCTOBER 9**

### **1969 The National Guard breaks up protests at home**

In the United States, the National Guard is called in as demonstrations continue in Chicago protesting the trial of the



"Chicago Eight."

The trial had begun on September 24 and involved charges against David Dellinger, Rennie Davis, Thomas Hayden, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Lee Weiner, John Froines, and Bobby Seale for conspiracy to cross state lines with intent to cause a riot. These charges stemmed from the violent antiwar demonstrations in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

When the trial finally ended in February 1970, Judge Julius Hoffman found the seven defendants (Seale had been separated from the others for a separate trial due to his courtroom antics) and their lawyers guilty of 175 counts of contempt and sentenced them to terms of two to four years. Although the jury found the defendants not guilty on the conspiracy charge, the jury did find all except Froines and Weiner guilty of intent to riot. Those found guilty were sentenced to five years and a \$5,000 fine, but none served time. In 1972, a Court of Appeals overturned the criminal convictions and eventually most of the contempt charges were also dismissed.

Laird describes new orders to U.S. commanders in Vietnam. U.S. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, reporting on Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle Wheeler's trip to Vietnam at a news conference in Washington, announces that U.S. commanders in Vietnam have been given new orders aimed at placing the "highest priority" on shifting the burden of the fighting to the South Vietnamese forces.

Laird described the new tactics as "protective reaction," but said that the new orders did not forbid U.S. commanders from seeking out and attacking enemy troops that posed threats. This was all part of the Vietnamization program announced by President Richard Nixon at the Midway Conference with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu in June.

### **1970 Khmer Republic proclaimed in Cambodia.**

The Khmer Republic is proclaimed in Cambodia. In March, a coup led by Cambodian General Lon Nol had overthrown the government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Phnom Penh. Between 1970 and 1975, Lon Nol and his army, the Forces Armees Nationales Khmer (FANK), with U.S. support and military aid, fought the Communist Khmer Rouge for control of Cambodia. During those five years of bitter fighting, approximately 10 percent of Cambodia's 7 million people died. When the U.S. forces departed South Vietnam in 1973, both the Cambodians and South Vietnamese found themselves fighting the Communists alone. Without U.S. support, Lon Nol's forces succumbed to the Khmer Rouge in April 1975. The Khmer Rouge promptly evacuated Phnom Penh and set about to reorder Cambodian society, which resulted in a killing spree and the notorious "killing fields." Under the brutal rule of the Khmer Rouge, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians were murdered or died from exhaustion, hunger, and disease.



## OCTOBER 10

### 1965 1st Cavalry Division commences operations

In the first major operation since arriving the previous month, the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) joins with South Vietnamese Marines to strike at 2,000 North Vietnamese troops 25 miles from An Khe in the Central Highlands.

The 1st Cavalry Division was a new kind of division, which was built around the helicopter and the airmobile concept. The division contained 434 helicopters and had the capability to move one-third of its combat power at one time into terrain inaccessible to normal infantry vehicles. During its first major mission, faulty U.S.-South Vietnamese coordination prevented their forces from entrapping the North Vietnamese Army 325th Infantry Division, but they managed to reopen Route 19, between Pleiku and An Khe, the main east-west supply route in the region. During the course of its employment in South Vietnam, the "First Team," as the 1st Cavalry Division came to be known, would prove to be one of the most effective U.S. combat units in the war.

### 1969 U.S. Navy transfers vessels to South Vietnamese

The U.S. Navy transfers 80 river-patrol boats to the South Vietnamese Navy in the largest single transfer of naval equipment since the war began. This was part of the ongoing Vietnamization program, which had been announced by President Richard Nixon at Midway in June. Under this program, the United States sought to turn over responsibility for the fighting to the South Vietnamese so that U.S. troops could be withdrawn from Vietnam. The plan included a massive transfer of equipment and weapons to the South Vietnamese and a stepped-up training program by U.S. advisers designed to prepare the South Vietnamese armed forces to stand alone against their Communist opponents. The transfer of vessels by the U.S. Navy was only part of the effort that also included a modernization of the South Vietnamese Air Force and new tanks, artillery pieces, and other weapons and equipment for the Army of South Vietnam.

Also on this day: South Vietnamese armed forces assume responsibility for the defense of Saigon as the last U.S. combat contingent in the city was moved to an area 20 miles away. As the Vietnamization progressed, more U.S. forces were withdrawn and by January 1972, less than 70,000 American troops were in South Vietnam.

## OCTOBER 11

### 1954 Viet Minh take control in the north

The Viet Minh formally take over Hanoi and control of North Vietnam.

The Vietnam Doc Lap Dong Minh (Vietnam Independence

League), or Viet Minh as it would become known to the world, was a Communist front organization founded by Ho Chi Minh in 1941 to organize resistance against French colonial rule and occupying Japanese forces.

With the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945, the French attempted to reimpose colonial rule. The Viet Minh launched a long and bloody guerrilla war against French colonial forces in what came to be known as the First Indochina War. Ultimately, the Viet Minh, under the leadership of General Vo Nguyen Giap, decisively defeated the French at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. On August 1, the armistice ending the war went into effect. The triumphant Viet Minh marched into Hanoi as the French prepared to withdraw their forces.

Under the provisions of the agreement signed at the Geneva Conference in July, Vietnam was to be temporarily split into approximately equal halves. The two halves were to be separated by a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) running along the 17th parallel. The northern half was to be governed by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which had been proclaimed by Ho Chi Minh, and the southern half would be governed by the noncommunist State of Vietnam until 1956, at which time the two zones were to be reunified following internationally supervised elections. Ngo Dinh Diem, who had become premier of the State of Vietnam in June, was a Catholic and staunchly anticommunist. Diem disliked the Geneva Accords and set about to consolidate his power in the south. By the middle of 1955, Diem had effectively gained control of most of South Vietnam, and in July of that year, he declared his refusal to permit the elections called for at Geneva. This announcement led to a stepped-up insurgency in the south and ultimately to the Second Indochina War, when North Vietnamese regular units were committed in the south and U.S. forces arrived. Vietnam was not reunited until April 1975, when North Vietnamese troops captured Saigon.

### **1961 Kennedy ponders the Vietnam situation**

At a meeting of the National Security Council, President John F. Kennedy is asked by his advisers to accept "as our real and ultimate objective the defeat of the Vietcong." The Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated that 40,000 U.S. troops could clean up "the Vietcong threat" and another 120,000 could cope with possible North Vietnamese or Chinese Communist intervention. Kennedy wanted to prevent the fall of South Vietnam to the Communist insurgents, but decided to send General Maxwell Taylor to Vietnam to study the situation. Ultimately, Kennedy would send advisers, helicopters, and other military support to South Vietnam to aid President Ngo Dinh Diem in his fight against the Viet Cong.

## **OCTOBER 12**

### **1972 Racial violence breaks out aboard U.S. Navy ships**

On this day, racial violence flares aboard U.S. Navy ships. Forty six sailors are injured in a race riot involving more than 100 sailors on the aircraft carrier USS *Kitty Hawk* enroute to her station in the Gulf of Tonkin off Vietnam. The incident broke out when a black sailor was summoned for questioning regarding an altercation that took place during the crew's liberty in Subic Bay (in the Philippines). The sailor refused to make a statement and he and his friends started a brawl that resulted in sixty sailors being injured during the fighting. Eventually 26 men, all black, were charged with assault and rioting and were ordered to appear before a court-martial in San Diego.

Four days later, a group of about 12 black sailors aboard the USS *Hassayampa*, a fleet oiler docked at Subic Bay, told ship's officers that they would not sail with the ship when the ship put to sea. The group demanded the return of money that allegedly had been stolen from the wallet of one of the group. The ship's leadership failed to act quickly enough to defuse the situation and later that day, a group of seven white sailors were set upon by the group and beaten. It took the arrival of a Marine detachment to restore order. Six black sailors were charged with assault and rioting.

These incidents indicated the depth of the racial problems in the Navy. All of the services had experienced similar problems earlier, but the Navy had lagged behind the others in addressing the issues that contributed to the racial tensions that erupted on the *Kitty Hawk* and the *Hassayampa*. Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., Chief of Naval Operations, instituted new race relations programs and made significant changes to Naval Regulations to address many of the very real issues raised by the black sailors regarding racial injustice in the Navy.

### **1967 Dean Rusk criticizes Congress while fighting continues in South Vietnam**

At a news conference, Secretary of State Dean Rusk makes controversial comments in which he says that congressional proposals for peace initiatives--a bombing halt or limitation, United Nations action, or a new Geneva conference--were futile because of Hanoi's opposition.

Without the pressure of the bombing, he asked, "Where would be the incentive for peace?" He added that the Vietnam War was a test of Asia's ability to withstand the threat of "a billion Chinese...armed with nuclear weapons." Critics claimed that he had invoked the familiar "yellow peril" of Chinese power.

### **1970 Nixon announces another round of troop withdrawals**

Nixon announces that the United States will withdraw 40,000 more troops before Christmas. He had first announced his intention to withdraw U.S. troops from South Vietnam in June at the Midway Conference with President Nguyen Van Thieu. The first U.S. troops, from the 9th Infantry Division, had left Saigon in August. The troop withdrawals continued as the "Vietnamization" program turned fighting responsibility over to the South Vietnamese. By January 1972, there were less than 75,000 U.S. troops remaining in South Vietnam.

## OCTOBER 13

### **1966 McNamara claims that war is progressing satisfactorily**

Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara declares at a news conference in Saigon that he found that military operations have "progressed very satisfactorily since 1965."

McNamara had arrived in Saigon on October 11 for his eighth fact-finding visit to South Vietnam. He conferred with General William Westmoreland, the senior U.S. military commander; Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge; various military leaders; and South Vietnam's Premier Nguyen Cao Ky and President Nguyen Van Thieu. McNamara said he was pleased with the overall progress in South Vietnam, but he later revealed to President Lyndon Johnson in private that he thought progress was "very slow indeed" in the pacification program. McNamara wrote after the war that he realized early on "the complexity of the situation and the uncertainties of our ability to deal with it by military means." Though he did understand the obstacles, he was dedicated to the U.S. commitment to preventing Communist takeover of South Vietnam. By the end of 1965, however, even McNamara had begun to doubt that a military solution in Southeast Asia could be achieved. Still, as late as July 1967, he told President Johnson that the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces were making headway in the war. Johnson tired of McNamara's vacillation and eventually replaced him with Clark Clifford in February 1968.

### **1970 Sir Robert Thompson advises President Nixon**

In a report prepared at the request of President Nixon, counterinsurgency expert Sir Robert Thompson explains that smashing the Viet Cong is a prerequisite for solving the political troubles of South Vietnam. After a five-week secret mission to Saigon in September and early October at the request of the president, Thompson reported that U.S. and Allied intelligence and police efforts had failed to destroy the Communist subversive apparatus in South Vietnam. His report concluded that success in other areas of pacification could not solve the basic political problems of South Vietnam after the withdrawal of the bulk of U.S. forces as long as the Viet Cong apparatus

remained virtually intact.

## OCTOBER 14

### **1964 Khrushchev ousted as premier of Soviet Union**

Nikita Khrushchev is ousted as both premier of the Soviet Union and chief of the Communist Party after 10 years in power. He was succeeded as head of the Communist Party by his former protégé Leonid Brezhnev, who would eventually become the chief of state as well. The new Soviet leadership increased military aid to the North Vietnamese without trying to persuade them to attempt a negotiated end to hostilities. With this support and no external pressure to negotiate, the North Vietnamese leadership was free to carry on the war as they saw fit.

Also on this day, U.S. aircraft are permitted to fly with Laotian planes on operations against Communist movements along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. After considerable pressure from both Laos and the U.S. Air Force, the Pentagon authorized the Yankee Team jets to fly cover with the Laotian Air Force T-28s that were bombing the trails and installations used by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops making their way into Laos. The U.S. jets protected the Laotian planes from North Vietnamese MiGs attacks.

### **1968 U.S. servicemen sent to Vietnam for second tours**

U.S. Defense Department officials announce that the Army and Marines will be sending about 24,000 men back to Vietnam for involuntary second tours because of the length of the war, high turnover of personnel resulting from the one year of duty, and the tight supply of experienced soldiers. This decision had an extremely negative impact on troop morale and the combat readiness of U.S. forces elsewhere in the world as troops were transferred to meet the increased personnel requirements in Vietnam.

## OCTOBER 15

### **1965 First draft card burned**

In a demonstration staged by the student-run National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the first public burning of a draft card in the United States takes place. These demonstrations drew 100,000 people in 40 cities across the country. In New York, David Miller, a young Catholic pacifist, became the first U.S. war protestor to burn his draft card in direct violation of a recently passed law forbidding such acts. Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation later arrested him; he was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to two years imprisonment.

### **1966 Operation Attleboro continues in Tay Ninh Province**

U.S. troops move into Tay Ninh Province near the Cambodian border, about 50 miles north of Saigon, and sweep the area in search of Viet Cong as part of Operation Attleboro, which had begun in September.

The purpose of this operation was to find and eliminate all enemy troops west of the Michelin rubber plantation. It was the largest U.S. operation to date and included elements of the U.S. 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions; the 196th Light Infantry Brigade; the 173rd Airborne Brigade; and at least two South Vietnamese army battalions. Engagements continued through the middle of November. At the height of the fighting, a record 20,000 Allied troops were committed. They were opposed by major elements of the 9th Viet Cong Division, one of the best-trained Communist formations. Communist resistance was strong because the Tay Ninh area contained the site of the principal Viet Cong command center for guerrilla operations in South Vietnam and the central office of the National Liberation Front. Operation Attleboro ended on November 25. By then, 2130 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops had been killed.

### **1969 National Moratorium demonstrations held across the United States**

National Moratorium antiwar demonstrations are conducted across the United States involving hundreds of thousands of people. The National Moratorium was an effort by David Hawk and Sam Brown, two antiwar activists, to forge a broad-based movement against the Vietnam War. The organization initially focused its effort on 300 college campuses, but the idea soon grew and spread beyond the colleges and universities. Hawk and Brown were assisted by the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, which was instrumental in organizing the nation-wide protest.

One of the largest demonstrations occurred when 100,000 people converged on the Boston Common, but demonstrations nationwide also included smaller rallies, marches, and prayer vigils. The demonstrations involved a broad spectrum of the population, including those who had already participated in antiwar demonstrations and many who had never before raised their voices against the war. The protest, as a nationally coordinated antiwar demonstration, was considered unprecedented; Walter Cronkite called it "historic in its scope. Never before had so many demonstrated their hope for peace."

## **OCTOBER 16**

### **1968 Bombing halt discussed**

In a series of meetings with U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu insists that

North Vietnam assent to three conditions prior to a bombing halt. He said the North Vietnamese had to (1) agree to respect the neutrality of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), (2) stop shelling South Vietnamese cities and towns, and (3) agree to South Vietnamese participation in the Paris talks. He also demanded that the National Liberation Front, the Communist political organization in South Vietnam, be excluded from the negotiations. Thieu seemed to soften during his discussions with Bunker: on October 22, he announced that he would not oppose a bombing halt.

### **1973 Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho awarded Nobel Peace Prize**

Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese diplomat Le Duc Tho are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for negotiating the Paris peace accords. Kissinger accepted, but Tho declined the award until such time as "peace is truly established."

## **OCTOBER 17**

### **1966 President Johnson goes to Asia**

President Johnson leaves Washington for a 17-day trip to seven Asian and Pacific nations and a conference scheduled in Manila.

En route to Manila, Johnson visited New Zealand and Australia; in Melbourne, antiwar demonstrators heckled him. In Manila, he met with other Allied leaders who had forces in South Vietnam and they pledged to withdraw their troops within six months if North Vietnam "withdraws its forces to the North and ceases infiltration of South Vietnam." A communiqué signed by the seven participants (the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, South Vietnam, Thailand, and the United States) included a four-point "Declaration of Peace" that stressed the need for a "peaceful settlement of the war in Vietnam and for future peace and progress" in the rest of Asia and the Pacific. When the conference concluded on October 26, Johnson flew to South Vietnam for a surprise two-and-a-half hour visit with U.S. troops at Cam Ranh Bay.

## **OCTOBER 18**

### **1955 Emperor Bao Dai attempts to dismiss Diem**

A communiqué from Emperor Bao Dai's office in Paris announces that he has dismissed Ngo Dinh Diem from the premiership and annulled his powers.

In a message to the Vietnamese people Bao Dai prophetically declared, "police methods and personal dictatorship must be brought to an end, and I can no longer continue to lend my name and my authority to a man who will drag you into ruin, famine and war." Unfortunately, Diem suppressed the message and it was never publicly transmitted to the people.



Bao Dai had appointed Diem prime minister in June 1954, but soon decided that he was the wrong man to lead South Vietnam. However, by late 1955, Diem was firmly entrenched, having retained control of the government through a questionable referendum. Emperor Bao Dai retired and remained in France. From the beginning, Communists and other rivals caused trouble for Diem's regime. His refusal to institute necessary political reforms and the rising unrest among the people, especially the Buddhists, eventually led to a coup in November 1963, in which he and his brother were murdered.

### **1968 Stock market soars with rumors of bombing halt in Vietnam**

Rumors that the Johnson administration will soon announce a bombing halt send sales volume on the New York Stock Exchange soaring; U.S. bond prices also climb. The rumors were true and on October 31, in a televised address to the nation, Johnson said that based on recent developments in the Paris peace negotiations, he had ordered a cessation of all bombing raids over North Vietnam.

## **OCTOBER 19**

### **1965 Communists attack Plei Me Special Forces camp**

## **OCTOBER 20**

### **1973 Watergate special prosecutor dismissed**

Solicitor General Robert Bork dismisses Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox; Attorney General Richardson and Deputy Attorney General Ruckelshaus resign in protest. Cox had conducted a detailed investigation of the Watergate break-in that revealed that the burglary was just one of many possible abuses of power by the Nixon White House. Nixon had ordered Richardson to fire Cox, but he refused and resigned, as did Ruckelshaus when Nixon then asked him to dismiss the special prosecutor. Bork agreed to fire Cox and an immediate uproar ensued. This series of resignations and firings became known as the Saturday Night Massacre and outraged the public and the media. Two days later, the House Judiciary Committee began to look into the possible impeachment of Nixon. The Watergate scandal involved the bungled burglary of the offices of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate apartment complex in Washington, D.C., on June 23, 1972. It was eventually learned that the cover-up went all the way to the White House; President Nixon, facing impeachment, resigned from the presidency in August 1974. This had a major impact on the situation in Vietnam. Nixon had convinced President Nguyen Van Thieu to consent to the provisions of the Paris peace accords by personally promising (on more than 30

occasions) that the United States would re-enter the conflict if the North Vietnamese violated the peace agreement. However, Nixon's successor, Gerald R. Ford, was not able to keep Nixon's promises because he could not, despite Thieu's desperate pleas for help, get Congress to appropriate significant funds to help the South Vietnamese. Having lost its sole source of aid and support, South Vietnam fell in April 1975.

### **1964 Relations between South Vietnam, the United States, and Cambodia deteriorate**

A series of incidents and charges bring relations between Cambodia, South Vietnam, and the United States to a low point. Cambodia under Prince Norodom Sihanouk had tried to maintain its neutrality in the growing conflict between Saigon and the Communists in Vietnam, but the country became a sanctuary for Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces fighting the Saigon government. Sihanouk, not strong enough to prevent the Communists from using his territory, came under increasing political and military pressure from the United States and South Vietnam.

In this incident, South Vietnamese planes strafed a Cambodian village; when Cambodia protested, Saigon replied by reiterating its accusation that Cambodia was providing refuge for Viet Cong forces that were attacking across the border into South Vietnam. On October 22, the United States charged that Cambodian troops crossed over into South Vietnam and seized an U.S. officer advising South Vietnamese forces. On October 25, the officer's body was recovered just inside South Vietnam, and Cambodia was accused of placing the body there to allow the rescue force to be fired on. The next day, Cambodians shot down a U.S. Air Force C-123 cargo plane, loaded with ammunition for a Special Forces camp; eight U.S. servicemen aboard were killed. By October 28, the United States admitted that the plane had strayed over Cambodian territory by mistake, but argued that such incidents arose because of the poorly defined border and the activities of the Viet Cong in the area. Despite the charges and threats from Prince Sihanouk and U.S. losses in personnel and planes, neither side pursued the matter. However, the use of Cambodia as a sanctuary by the Communists remained a contentious issue; in 1970, President Richard Nixon ordered U.S. and South Vietnamese forces to attack the sanctuaries in what became known as the Cambodian Incursion.

## **OCTOBER 21**

### **1967 100,000 people march on the Pentagon**

Demonstrators including radicals, liberals, black nationalists, hippies, professors, women's groups, and war veterans march on the Pentagon.

The rally in front of the Lincoln Memorial started peacefully,

though Dr. Benjamin Spock--baby specialist, author, and outspoken critic of the war--did call President Johnson "the enemy." After the rally, the demonstrators, many waving the red, blue, and gold flag of the Viet Cong, began marching toward the Pentagon. Violence erupted when the more radical element of the demonstrators clashed with the soldiers and U.S. Marshals protecting the Pentagon.

The protesters surrounded and besieged the military nerve center until the early hours of October 23. By the time order was restored, 683 people, including novelist Norman Mailer and two United Press International reporters, had been arrested. This protest was paralleled by demonstrations in Japan and Western Europe, the most violent of which occurred outside the U.S. Embassy in London when 3,000 demonstrators attempted to storm the building.

## OCTOBER 22

### **1972 President Thieu turns down peace proposal**

In Saigon, Henry Kissinger meets with South Vietnamese President Thieu to secure his approval of a proposed cease-fire that had been worked out at the secret peace talks with the North Vietnamese in Paris.

The proposal presumed a postwar role for the Viet Cong and Thieu rejected the proposed accord point for point and accused the United States of conspiring with China and the Soviet Union to undermine his regime. Kissinger, who had tentatively agreed to initial the draft in Hanoi at the end of the month, cabled President Nixon that Thieu's terms "verge on insanity" and flew home. Meanwhile, in the countryside, with a future cease-fire under discussion, both sides in the conflict ordered their forces to seize as much territory as possible and the fighting continued. The Communists hit Bien Hoa airbase with rockets and South Vietnamese commanders in the field reported that the peace talks had no effect on military action. To support the South Vietnamese forces, U.S. B-52 bombers continued to strike Communist positions in an arc north of Saigon, while other U.S. planes flew 220 missions over North Vietnam.

### **1965 173rd Airborne trooper saves comrades**

In action this day near Phu Cuong, about 35 miles northwest of Saigon, PFC Milton Lee Olive III of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, throws himself on an enemy grenade and saves four soldiers, including his platoon leader, 1st Lt. James Sanford.

The action came during a patrol that made contact with Communist forces on the southern fringes of the infamous "Iron Triangle," a traditional Communist stronghold. Private Olive's body absorbed the full, deadly blast of the grenade and he died saving his comrades. Lieutenant Sanford later said of Olive's act that "It was the most incredible display of selfless

bravery I ever witnessed." Olive, a native of Chicago, was only 18 years old when he died; he received the Medal of Honor posthumously six months later. The city of Chicago honored its fallen hero by naming a junior college, a lakefront park, and a portion of the McCormick Place convention center after him.

### **1957 American forces suffer first casualties in Vietnam**

U.S. military personnel suffer their first casualties in the war when 13 Americans are wounded in three terrorist bombings of Military Assistance Advisory Group and U.S. Information Service installations in Saigon. The rising tide of guerrilla activity in South Vietnam reached an estimated 30 terrorist incidents by the end of the year and at least 75 local officials were assassinated or kidnapped in the last quarter of 1957.

## **OCTOBER 23**

### **1965 1st Cavalry Division launches Operation Silver Bayonet**

In action following the clash at the Plei Me Special Forces camp 30 miles southwest of Pleiku earlier in the month, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) launches Operation Silver Bayonet. U.S. troops, in conjunction with South Vietnamese forces, sought to destroy North Vietnamese forces operating in Pleiku Province in II Corps Tactical Zone (the Central Highlands). The operation concluded in November with a week of bitter fighting when fleeing North Vietnamese troops decided to protect an important staging area and supply base in the Ia Drang Valley. It was the bloodiest battle of the war to date. In one engagement, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry fought a desperate three-day battle at Landing Zone X-Ray with the North Vietnamese 33rd and 66th Regiments; when the fighting was over, 834 Communists lay dead on the battlefield. In an associated engagement, 500 North Vietnamese ambushed another battalion from the 1st Cavalry Division at Landing Zone Albany, wiping out almost an entire company. Reported enemy casualties for Operation Silver Bayonet totaled 1,771. U.S. casualties included 240 killed in action.

### **1972 U.S. negotiators ask for further talks in Paris**

Citing difficulties with South Vietnamese President Thieu, U.S. negotiators cable Hanoi requesting further negotiations in Paris over the proposed draft peace accord. Thieu felt that he was being sold out by the United States to secure a peace agreement at any terms. President Richard Nixon and chief negotiator Henry Kissinger were attempting to craft a peace agreement that would satisfy Thieu but also bring the war to an end so that the rest of U.S. forces could be disengaged. In an attempt to show good faith to the North

Vietnamese, Nixon suspended the Linebacker raids against Hanoi and Haiphong that had been initiated when the North Vietnamese had launched their Easter Offensive earlier in the year.

## OCTOBER 24

### **1954 U.S. president pledges support to South Vietnam**

President Eisenhower pledges support to Diem's government and military forces.

Eisenhower wrote to South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem and promised direct assistance to his government.

Eisenhower made it clear to Diem that U.S. aid to his government during Vietnam's "hour of trial" was contingent upon his assurances of the "standards of performance [he] would be able to maintain in the event such aid were supplied."

Eisenhower called for land reform and a reduction of government corruption. Diem agreed to the "needed reforms" stipulated as a precondition for receiving aid, but he never actually followed through on his promises. Ultimately his refusal to make any substantial changes to meet the needs of the people led to extreme civil unrest and eventually a coup by dissident South Vietnamese generals in which Diem and his brother were murdered.

### **1966 Manila Conference attendees issue "Declaration of Peace"**

In Manila, President Johnson meets with other Allied leaders and they pledge to withdraw troops from Vietnam within six months if North Vietnam "withdraws its forces to the North and ceases infiltration of South Vietnam." A communiqué signed by the seven participants (Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, South Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, and the United States) included a four-point "Declaration of Peace" that stressed the need for a "peaceful settlement of the war in Vietnam and for future peace and progress" in the rest of Asia and the Pacific. After the conference, Johnson flew to South Vietnam for a surprise two-and-a-half-hour visit with U.S. troops at Cam Ranh Bay.

## OCTOBER 25

### **1972 Nixon suspends bombing of North Vietnam**

The White House orders a suspension of bombing above the 20th parallel as a signal of U.S. approval of recent North Vietnamese concessions at the secret peace talks in Paris. According to Nixon administration officials, the principal obstacle to a cease-fire was in Saigon. South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu broadcast a denunciation of the cease-fire treaty, calling all peace proposals discussed by Kissinger and Hanoi in Paris unacceptable, and urged his

troops to wipe out Communist presence in the South "quickly and mercilessly."

Thieu feared the peace treaty because it did not address the 160,000 North Vietnamese troops that were currently in South Vietnam. Ultimately, he would sign the accords, but only after repeated promises by President Nixon that he would come to the aid of South Vietnam if the North Vietnamese violated the terms of the agreement. However, the Watergate scandal erupted and Nixon was forced to resign. His successor could not make good Nixon's promises and the South Vietnamese government fell in 1975.

### **1973 Nixon vetoes War Powers Resolution**

President Nixon vetoes the War Powers Resolution, which would limit presidential power to commit armed forces abroad without Congressional approval.

The bill, introduced by Senator Jacob K. Javits of New York, required the president to report to Congress within 48 hours after commitment of armed forces to foreign combat and limited to 60 days the time they could stay there without Congressional approval. The legislation was an attempt by Congress to regain control of the power to make war. Nixon claimed that the bill imposed "unconstitutional and dangerous restrictions" on presidential authority. Nevertheless, Congress passed the law over Nixon's veto on November 7, 1973.

Also on this day: U.S. intelligence officials report that since the cease-fire, North Vietnamese military presence in South Vietnam had been built up by 70,000 troops, 400 tanks, at least 200 artillery pieces, 15 anti-aircraft artillery, and 12 airfields. Intelligence reports also indicated that an all-weather road from North Vietnam to Tay Ninh province to the north of Saigon had been almost completed. The cease-fire had gone into effect on January 27 at midnight as part of the Paris Peace Accords. The provisions of the cease-fire left over 100,000 Communist troops in South Vietnam. The build-up of these forces did not bode well for the South Vietnamese because the fighting had continued after only a momentary lull when the cease-fire was instituted. Congress was cutting U.S. military aid to South Vietnam while the North Vietnamese forces in the south grew stronger.

## **OCTOBER 26**

### **1955 Diem wins referendum in South Vietnam**

Ngo Dinh Diem defeats Emperor Bao Dai in national referendum. In June 1954, Bao Dai had appointed Diem prime minister. In early 1955, Diem made a move to consolidate his power as the real ruler of Vietnam. Earlier in October, Bao Dai, then in France, tried to dismiss Diem, but Diem effectively ignored the order. Diem then called for an election for the people to choose their leader. Diem closely managed the election and received 98.2 percent of the vote. Using the referendum as justification, Diem proclaimed the Republic of

Vietnam with himself as its first president. He also became Prime Minister, defense minister, and supreme commander of the armed forces. The new regime was recognized immediately by France, the United States, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Japan, Thailand, and South Korea.

### **1966 Fire breaks out on U.S. aircraft carrier**

A fire breaks out on board the 42,000-ton U.S. aircraft carrier *Oriskany* in the Gulf of Tonkin. The accident occurred when a locker filled with night illumination magnesium flares burst into flame. The fire spread quickly through most of the ship, resulting in 35 officers and eight enlisted men killed and a further 16 injured. The loss of life would have been much higher except for the valor of crewmen who pushed 300 500-pound, 1,000-pound, and 2,000-pound bombs that lay within reach of the flames on the hangar deck overboard. The fire destroyed four fighter-bombers and two helicopters, but it was brought under control after three hours. The fallen were returned to the United States for burial.

Also on this day: President Lyndon Johnson flies to South Vietnam after attending a meeting in Manila for a surprise two-and-a-half-hour visit with U.S. troops at Cam Ranh.

### **1968 Big battle begins in Tay Ninh Province**

The 1st Infantry Division troops are attacked in Binh Long Province (III Corps), 60 miles north of Saigon near the Cambodian border. Communist forces launched a mortar, rocket, and ground attack against Fire Support Base (FSB) Julie, eight miles west of An Loc. Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry, manned the FSB. U.S. B-52s conducted 22 strikes over the area in an effort to disperse a reported massing of North Vietnamese forces. The defenders were successful in fending off the Communist attack but eight soldiers were killed and 33 were wounded.

## **OCTOBER 27**

### **1966 Ambassador Harriman sent to explain Manila offer**

U.S. Ambassador-at-Large Averell Harriman visits 10 nations to explain the results of the Manila conference and the current U.S. evaluation of the situation in Southeast Asia.

Harriman, acting as Johnson's personal emissary, visited leaders in Ceylon, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Italy, France, West Germany, Britain, and Morocco to explain the results of the Manila conference and the "Declaration of Peace" signed



there by Allied leaders with troops in Vietnam. They pledged they would pull their troops out of Vietnam within six months after all North Vietnamese troops were withdrawn from South Vietnam. Harriman reported to the president on November 11 that the pledge was received favorably and "Every country in the world wants to see peace, with the exception of Red China and North Vietnam." The Communist Chinese news agency Hsinhua had already denounced the Manila pledge as "out-and-out blackmail and shameless humbug." The North Vietnamese did not respond favorably to the Manila pledge and it had no impact on the conduct of the war, which continued unabated.

### **1971 Cambodian troops battle Communists north of Phnom Penh**

Fighting intensifies as Cambodian government forces battle with Khmer Rouge, Viet Cong, and North Vietnamese forces northeast of Phnom Penh. In March 1970, a coup led by Cambodian General Lon Nol had overthrown the government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Phnom Penh. Lon Nol and his army, the Forces Armees Nationales Khmer (FANK), with U.S. support and military aid, fought the Communist Khmer Rouge for control of Cambodia. In addition, the government forces had to contend with the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, who continued to use Cambodia as a sanctuary for their forces attacking into South Vietnam. In this round of the fighting, the major engagements occurred around the provincial capitals of Kompong Thom and Rumloung. The Communists began a siege of these garrisons after their demolition frogmen destroyed a crucial bridge along Route 6, the main supply line for the 20,000 Cambodians on the northeast front. Some 400 government soldiers were reported dead as a result of the combat

## **OCTOBER 28**

### **1964 U.S. officials deny any involvement in bombing of North Vietnam.**

U.S. T-28 airplanes flown by Thai pilots bomb and strafe North Vietnamese villages in the Mugia Pass area. North Vietnam charged publicly that U.S. personnel participated in the raids, but U.S. officials denied that any Americans were involved.

### **1965 Viet Cong commandos raid U.S. airfields**

Viet Cong commandos damage and destroy a number of allied aircraft in two separate raids on U.S. air bases, including Chu Lai, on the coast of the South China Sea in Quang Tin Province, I Corps.

### **1962 Khrushchev orders withdrawal of missiles from Cuba**

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev orders withdrawal of missiles from Cuba, ending the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1960, Khrushchev had launched plans to install medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles in Cuba that would put the eastern United States within range of nuclear attack. In the summer of 1962, U.S. spy planes flying over Cuba had photographed construction work on missile facilities. President John F. Kennedy announced a naval blockade to prevent the arrival of more missiles and demanded that the Soviets dismantle and remove the weapons already in Cuba. The situation was extremely tense and could have resulted in war between the United States and the Soviet Union, but at the last minute, Khrushchev turned the Soviet ships around that were to deliver more missiles to Cuba and agreed to dismantle and remove the weapons that were already there. Kennedy and his advisers had stared the Soviets down and the apparent capitulation of the Soviet Union in the standoff was instrumental in Khrushchev's being deposed in 1964.

## **OCTOBER 29**

### **1969 Bobby Seale gagged during his trial**

Judge orders "Chicago Eight" defendant Bobby Seale gagged and chained to his chair during his trial. Seale and his seven fellow defendants (David Dellinger, Rennie Davis, Thomas Hayden, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Lee Weiner, and John Froines) had been charged with conspiracy to cross state lines with intent to cause a riot during the violent anti-war demonstrations in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Judge Julius Hoffman gave the order to gag Seale after he repeatedly shouted accusations and insults at the judge and prosecution and disrupted the court proceedings. In November, Seale's conduct forced the judge to try him separately. Seale was sentenced to 48 months in prison for 16 acts of contempt. Seale was then charged with killing a Black Panther Party informant in New Haven, Connecticut; the contempt charges were eventually dismissed and the murder trial ended with a hung jury.

### **1971 U.S. troop strength reaches five-year low**

The total number of U.S. troops remaining in Vietnam drops to 196,700 - the lowest level since January 1966. This was a result of the Vietnamization program announced by President Richard Nixon at the June 1969 Midway Conference. U.S. troops were to be withdrawn as the South Vietnamese assumed more responsibility for the war. The first withdrawal included troops from the 9th Infantry Division, who departed in August 1969. The withdrawals continued steadily, and by January 1972 there

were less than 75,000 U.S. troops remaining in South Vietnam.

## OCTOBER 30

### **1965 Marines repel attack near Da Nang.**

Just miles from Da Nang, U.S. Marines repel an intense attack by successive waves of Viet Cong troops and kill 56 guerrillas. A search of the dead uncovered a sketch of Marine positions written on the body of a 13-year-old Vietnamese boy who had been selling drinks to the Marines the previous day. This incident was indicative of the nature of a war in which even the most seemingly innocent child could be the enemy. There were many other instances where South Vietnamese civilians that worked on or near U.S. bases provided information to and participated in attacks alongside the enemy.

Also on this day: Two U.S. planes accidentally bomb a friendly South Vietnamese village, killing 48 civilians and wounding 55 others. An American civic action team was immediately dispatched to the scene, and a later investigation disclosed that a map-reading error by South Vietnamese officers was responsible.

Also on this day: In New York City, military veterans lead a parade in support of government policy in Vietnam. Led by five recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor, 25,000 people march in support of America's action in Vietnam.

### **1970 Heavy monsoon rains hit Vietnam**

Fighting in the five northern-most provinces comes to a virtual halt as the worst monsoon rains in six years strikes the region. The resultant floods killed 293 people and left more than 200,000 homeless.

## OCTOBER 31

### **1968 President Johnson announces bombing halt**

In a televised address to the nation five days before the presidential election, President Lyndon Johnson announces that on the basis of developments in the Paris peace negotiations, he has ordered the complete cessation of "all air, naval, and artillery bombardment of North Vietnam." Accordingly, effective November 1, the U.S. Air Force called a halt to the air raids on North Vietnam known as Operation Rolling Thunder.

The President further disclosed that Hanoi had finally agreed to allow the South Vietnamese government to participate in the peace talks. Johnson said that the United States would consent to a role for the National Liberation Front, though he stated that the latter concession "in no way involves recognition of the National Liberation Front in any form." The National Liberation Front (or Viet Cong, as it was more popularly known) was the classic Communist front organization that included both Communists and non-Communists who had banded together in

opposition against the Saigon regime. Domestically, President Johnson's action drew widespread acclaim; both major presidential candidates expressed their full support. The reaction in Saigon, however, was much more subdued; President Thieu issued a communiqué declaring that the United States had acted unilaterally in its decision to halt the bombing.

### **1970 Thieu vows to never accept a coalition government**

South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu delivers a speech on the state of the nation before a joint session of the South Vietnamese National Assembly, asserting that 99.1 percent of the country had been "pacified." The pacification program that he alluded to had been a long-term multi-faceted effort to provide territorial security, destroy the enemy's underground government, reassert political control, involve the people in their own government, and provide for economic and social reforms. Citing success in this program, Thieu said that a military victory was close at hand and that "we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel." With regard to the ongoing peace talks in Paris, the South Vietnamese president declared that the Communists viewed negotiations merely as a way to gain time and "to achieve victory gradually." He said he would never accept a coalition government with the Communists, because "countless past experiences" had already shown that such an approach would not bring peace.