

Vietnam Day by Day November

NOVEMBER 1

1964 Military and political situation in South Vietnam deteriorates

One year after the overthrow and assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem, the situation in South Vietnam is deteriorating in both the military and political spheres.

Following two months of extreme political turmoil, the High National Council confirmed the appointment of Tran Van Huong as South Vietnam's premier. Though he promised to wage total war against the communists while separating religion and politics, he proved to be only the latest in a line of ineffectual leaders that attempted to fill the void left by Diem's death. The military situation was no better. On this date, Viet Cong raiders infiltrated the U.S. air base at Bien Hoa, 12 miles north of Saigon, and launched a heavy mortar attack that caught the U.S. and South Vietnamese off guard. Before the Viet Cong withdrew, they killed five U.S. servicemen and two South Vietnamese soldiers, wounded 76, destroyed two B-57 bombers, and damaged another 20 U.S. and South Vietnamese aircraft. A lengthy search of the area around Bien Hoa failed to locate any of the Viet Cong. Word of the attack reached Washington early in the morning, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff called for "a prompt and strong response" against North Vietnam. Ambassador Maxwell Taylor called for a more limited response, but also advocated bombing in retaliation. President Lyndon Johnson, concerned with the presidential election that was only 48 hours away, decided to do nothing except order the immediate replacement of destroyed and damaged planes.

1968 Two new programs initiated in South Vietnam

The U.S. mission in Saigon initiates two operations designed to bolster rural security and development efforts.

The Le Loi program was an intensified civic action campaign intended to repair the damage done by the enemy's offensives earlier in the year and to return control of the rural population to the Saigon government.

The other operation was the Phuong Hoang (Phoenix) program, a hamlet security initiative run by the Central Intelligence Agency that relied on centralized, computerized intelligence gathering to identify and eliminate the Viet Cong infrastructure--the upper echelon of the National Liberation Front political cadres and party members. This program became one of the most controversial operations undertaken by U.S. personnel in South Vietnam.

Critics charged that American-led South Vietnamese "hit teams" indiscriminately arrested and murdered many communist suspects on flimsy pretexts. Despite these charges, the

program was acknowledged by top-level U.S. government officials, as well as Viet Cong and North Vietnamese leaders after the war, to have been very effective in reducing the power of the local communist cadres in the South Vietnamese countryside.

According to available sources, from 1968 to 1972, the Phoenix program resulted in the capture of 34,000 Viet Cong political cadre, while an additional 26,000 were killed. The program also convinced 22,000 communists to change their loyalties and support the South Vietnamese government.

NOVEMBER 2

1963 Diem murdered during coup

President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu are murdered during a coup by dissident generals of the South Vietnamese army.

In the early afternoon hours of November 1, the dissidents seized key military installations and communications systems in Saigon, secured the surrender of Nhu's Special Forces, and demanded the resignation of Diem and Nhu. The president and his brother first believed the attack to be the opening of a counter coup engineered by Nhu and General To That Dinh, who controlled nearly all forces in and around Saigon, but Dinh had joined the insurgent generals.

Diem was unable to summon any support, so he and Nhu escaped the palace through an underground passage to a Catholic church in the Chinese sector of the city. From there, Diem began negotiating with the generals by phone. He agreed to surrender and was promised safe conduct, but shortly after midnight he and his brother were brutally murdered in back of the armored personnel carrier sent to pick them up and bring them back to the palace.

President Kennedy, who was aware that the generals were planning a coup and had sent word that the United States would not interfere, was nonetheless shocked at the murder of Diem and Nhu. Few in South Vietnam shared his surprise, though, as Diem had been very unpopular, particularly with the Buddhists. In fact, many in Saigon rejoiced at his death. The Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* expressed satisfaction at Diem's end while asserting that, "...new American puppets have come to power." U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge called the insurgent generals to his office to congratulate them and cabled Kennedy that the prospects for a shorter war had greatly improved with the demise of Diem and Nhu.

1967 Johnson meets with "the Wise Men"

President Johnson holds a secret meeting with some of the nation's most prestigious leaders, who were collectively called "the Wise Men." This group included former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, General of the Army Omar Bradley, Ambassador-at-Large Averell Harriman, and former

Ambassador to South Vietnam Henry Cabot Lodge. Johnson asked them for advice on how to unite the U.S. in the Vietnam War effort. They reached the conclusion that the administration needed to offer "ways of guiding the press to show the light at the end of the tunnel." In effect, they decided that the American people should be given more optimistic reports. When Johnson agreed, the administration, which included senior U.S. military commander in Saigon Gen. William Westmoreland, began to paint a more positive picture of the situation in South Vietnam. In early 1968, this decision came back to haunt Johnson and Westmoreland when the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese launched a major surprise attack on January 30, the start of the Tet New Year holiday. Stunned by the scope of the Communist attack after the administration had painted such an upbeat picture of Allied progress in the war, many Americans began to question the credibility of the president and antiwar sentiment increased significantly

NOVEMBER 3

1967 Battle of Dak To begins

In some of the heaviest fighting seen in the Central Highlands area, heavy casualties are sustained by both sides in bloody battles around Dak To, about 280 miles north of Saigon near the Cambodian border.

The 1,000 U.S. troops there were reinforced with 3,500 additional troops from the U.S. 4th Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade. They faced four communist regiments of about 6,000 troops. The climax of the operation came in a savage battle from November 19-22 for Hill 875, 12 miles southwest of Dak To. The 173rd was victorious, forcing the North Vietnamese to abandon their last defensive line on the ridge of Hill 875, but the victory was a costly one because the paratroopers suffered the loss of 135 men, 30 of whom died as a result of an accidental U.S. air strike on U.S. positions. In the 19 days of action, North Vietnam fatalities were estimated at 1,455. Total U.S. casualties included 285 killed, 985 wounded, and 18 missing.

During this battle, the North Vietnamese failed to achieve one of their main objectives, which was the destruction of an American unit. They came close, but the Americans, despite heavy losses, had achieved the true victory: they mauled three enemy regiments so badly that they were unavailable for the Tet Offensive that the Communists launched in late January 1968.

1969 Nixon calls on the "silent majority"

President Richard Nixon goes on television and radio to call for national solidarity on the Vietnam War effort and to gather support for his policies; his call for support is an attempt to blunt the renewed strength of the antiwar movement.

Pledging that the United States was "going to keep our commitment in Vietnam," he said U.S. forces would continue

fighting until the communists agreed to a fair and honorable peace, or until the South Vietnamese were able to defend themselves on their own. He said that he had already withdrawn 60,000 U.S. troops and would make additional reductions as the situation permitted. He also reported progress in the "Vietnamization" effort to increase the combat capability of South Vietnam's armed forces so that they could assume more responsibility for the war. Having provided this perspective on the situation, he then appealed to the American people, calling on the "great silent majority" for their support as he worked for "peace with honor" in Vietnam.

A Gallup Poll survey carried out in the wake of the president's speech indicated that 77 percent were in support of Nixon's policy in Vietnam. Congressional reaction to the president's speech was also overwhelmingly favorable. Although Senator J. William Fulbright (D-Arkansas) and other congressmen and senators who opposed the war questioned the president's sincerity, more than 300 congressmen and 40 senators cosponsored resolutions supporting the president's efforts to make peace and bring the war to an honorable end.

NOVEMBER 4

1970 U.S. hands over air base to the Vietnamese Air Force

The United States hands over an air base in the Mekong Delta to the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) as part of the Vietnamization program. President Richard Nixon initiated this program in 1969 to increase the fighting capability of South Vietnam so they could assume more responsibility for the war. It included the provision of new equipment and weapons and an intensified advisory effort. Secretary of the Air Force Robert Seamans and Gen. Creighton Abrams, commander of Military Assistance Command Vietnam, attended the ceremony. The air base became the home of two South Vietnamese helicopter squadrons, with the United States providing 62 aircraft, 31 of which were turned over along with the air base. By 1973, after additional equipment and aircraft transfers had been made to VNAF, the air base had a fleet of 1,700 aircraft, including more than 500 helicopters.

1969 South Vietnamese battle communists along the Cambodian border

In the biggest battle in four months, South Vietnamese infantry, supported by U.S. planes and artillery, clash with North Vietnamese troops for 10 hours near Duc Lop near the Cambodian border. Eighty communist troops were reported killed. South Vietnamese losses included 24 killed and 38 wounded.

NOVEMBER 5

1968 Nixon wins presidential election

Eight years after being defeated by John F. Kennedy in the 1960 election, Richard Nixon defeats Hubert H. Humphrey and is elected president.

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

For his running mate, he chose governor of Maryland Spiro T. Agnew. His Democratic opponent, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, was weakened by internal divisions within his own party, stemming in part from the growing dissatisfaction with the Johnson administration's handling of the Vietnam War. Alabama governor George C. Wallace--running on a third party ticket--further complicated the election. Although Nixon and Humphrey each gained about 43 percent of the popular vote, the distribution of Nixon's nearly 32 million votes gave him a clear majority in the electoral college.

1970 U.S. combat deaths down

U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam reports the lowest weekly death toll in five years. Twenty-four Americans died in combat during the last week of October, the fifth consecutive week that the U.S. death toll was under 50. Although the numbers of American dead were down, 431 were wounded during the reported period, mostly from mines, booby traps, and mortar and sniper fire.

The reduced number of U.S. casualties reflected the gradual transfer of the responsibility for the war to the South Vietnamese under President Nixon's Vietnamization program. While U.S. troops were still conducting combat operations, more and more of them were being withdrawn from Vietnam and the nature of their operations became more defensive.

NOVEMBER 6

1963 General Minh takes over leadership of South Vietnam

In the aftermath of the November 1 coup that resulted in the murder of President Ngo Dinh Diem, Gen. Duong Van Minh, leading the Revolutionary Military Committee of the dissident generals who had conducted the coup, takes over leadership of South Vietnam.

U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge cabled President Kennedy, "We could neither manage nor stop [the coup] once it

got started...It is equally certain that the ground in which the coup seed grew into a robust plant was prepared by us, and that the coup would not have happened [as] it did without our permission." Lodge's words were more than a little disingenuous since he had long been a proponent of removing Diem from power.

Following Diem's death, a Buddhist named Nguyen Ngoc Tho became premier, but the real power was held by the Revolutionary Military Committee headed by General Minh. The new government earned U.S. approval in part by pledging not to become a dictatorship and announcing, "The best weapon to fight communism is democracy and liberty." However, Minh was unable to form a viable government and he himself was overthrown in a bloodless coup led by Gen. Nguyen Khanh in January 1964.

1970 South Vietnamese forces attack into Cambodia

South Vietnamese forces launch a new offensive into Cambodia, advancing across a 100-mile-wide front in southeastern Cambodia. The new offensive was aimed at cleaning out border sanctuaries and blocking North Vietnamese forces from moving through Cambodia into South Vietnam. The 6,000-man South Vietnamese task force pulled out on November 11 after failing to find new Communist troop sanctuaries. Forty-one enemy soldiers were reportedly killed in the operation.

NOVEMBER 7

1972 Nixon re-elected president

Richard Nixon defeats Senator George McGovern (D-South Dakota) and is re-elected President of the United States. With only 55 percent of the electorate voting, the lowest turnout since 1948, Nixon carried all states but Massachusetts, taking 97 percent of the electoral votes. During the campaign, Nixon pledged to secure "peace with honor" in Vietnam. Aided by the potential for a peace agreement in the ongoing Paris negotiations and the upswing in the American economy, Nixon easily defeated McGovern, an outspoken peacenik whose party was divided over several issues, not the least of which was McGovern's extreme views on the war. McGovern had said during the campaign, "If I were President, it would take me twenty-four hours and the stroke of a pen to terminate all military operations in Southeast Asia." He said he would withdraw all American troops within 90 days of taking office, whether or not U.S. prisoners of war were released. To many Americans, including many Democrats, McGovern's position was tantamount to total capitulation in Southeast Asia. Given this radical alternative, Nixon seemed a better choice to most voters.

In other races, the Democrats widened their majority in Congress, picking up two Senate seats. Almost unnoticed

during the presidential campaign was the arrest of five men connected with Nixon's re-election committee who had broken into the Democratic Party's national headquarters in the Watergate apartment complex in Washington, D.C. The Watergate scandal ultimately proved to be Nixon's undoing, and he resigned the presidency as a result of it in August 1974.

1964 U.S. intelligence asserts numbers of North Vietnamese in South Vietnam growing

The latest U.S. intelligence analysis claims that Communist forces in South Vietnam now include about 30,000 professional full-time soldiers, many of whom are North Vietnamese. Before this, it was largely reported that the war was merely an internal insurgent movement in South Vietnam opposed to the government in Saigon. This information discredited that theory and indicated that the situation involves North and South Vietnam.

In Saigon, the South Vietnamese government banned the sale of the current issue of *Newsweek* because it carried a photograph showing a Viet Cong prisoner being tortured by South Vietnamese army personnel.

1966 McNamara shouted down at Harvard speech

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara faces a storm of student protest when he visits Harvard University to address a small group of students. As he left a dormitory, about 100 demonstrators shouted at him and demanded a debate. When McNamara tried to speak, supporters of the Students for a Democratic Society shouted him down. McNamara then attempted to leave, but 25 demonstrators crowded around his automobile so that it could not move. Police intervened and escorted McNamara from the campus.

NOVEMBER 8

1966 Lawrence Joel earns Medal of Honor.

For action this day in the Iron Triangle northwest of Saigon, Specialist Five Lawrence Joel, a medic with the 1st Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade earns the Medal of Honor, becoming the first living African American since the Spanish-American War to receive the nation's highest award for valor.

When his unit was outnumbered in an attack by an enemy force, Specialist Joel, who suffered a severe leg wound in the early stages of the battle, continued to administer aid to his wounded comrades. Wounded a second time--with a bullet lodged deep in his lungs--Joel continued to treat the wounded, completely disregarding the battle raging around him and his

own safety. Even after the 24-hour battle had subsided, Joel, a 38-year-old father of two, continued to treat and comfort the wounded until his own evacuation was ordered.

President Johnson presented the Medal of Honor to Specialist Joel on March 9, 1967, in ceremonies held on the South Lawn of the White House.

Also on this day: Edward W. Brooke (R-Massachusetts) becomes the first African American elected to Senate. In California, former movie actor Ronald Reagan was elected governor.

NOVEMBER 9

1967 Captain Lance Sijan shot down over North Vietnam

While on a mission over Laos, Capt. Lance P. Sijan ejects from his disabled McDonnell Douglas F-4C Phantom jet near Vinh, North Vietnam. Despite suffering a skull fracture, a mangled right hand, and a compound fracture of the left leg during his ejection, Sijan successfully evaded capture for more than six weeks.

Eventually Sijan's wounds and lack of sustenance overwhelmed him and he collapsed along a road, where he was found by North Vietnamese troops. After several days of captivity, Sijan gathered his strength and escaped. Still weakened and suffering from his injuries, Sijan was recaptured and tortured, and then transported to the infamous prison known as the Hanoi Hilton. While there, he contracted pneumonia and died. Throughout his ordeal, Captain Sijan never gave up his desire to escape and resisted his captors to the very end. When the American prisoners of war (POWs) were released in 1973, several of Sijan's fellow POWs immediately initiated a recommendation for Sijan to receive the Medal of Honor. On March 4, 1976, President Gerald Ford presented the medal to Captain Sijan's father in a ceremony at the White House.

1965 Antiwar protestor sets himself afire

In the second such antiwar incident within a week, Roger Allen LaPorte, a 22-year-old member of the Catholic Worker movement, immolates himself in front of the United Nations headquarters in New York. Before dying the next day, LaPorte declared, "I'm against wars, all wars. I did this as a religious act." LaPorte's act of protest followed that of Norman Morrison, a 32-year-old Quaker from Baltimore, who immolated himself in front of the Pentagon on November 2.

1970 Supreme Court refuses to rule on legality of Vietnam War

The Supreme Court refuses to hear a challenge by the state of

Massachusetts regarding the constitutionality of the Vietnam War. By a 6-3 vote, the justices rejected the effort of the state to bring a suit in federal court in defense of Massachusetts residents claiming protection under a state law that allowed them to refuse military service in an undeclared war.

NOVEMBER 10

1970 No U.S. combat fatalities reported

For the first time in five years, no U.S. combat fatalities in Southeast Asia are reported for the previous week. This was a direct result of President Richard Nixon's Vietnamization program, whereby the responsibility for the war was slowly shifted from U.S. combat forces to the South Vietnamese. This effort began in 1969 and was accompanied by U.S. troop withdrawals that began in the fall of that year. Although American casualties were down, U.S. forces were still involved in significant combat operations at this time.

1964 McNamara says that U.S. has no plans to send combat troops to Vietnam

At a news conference, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara says that the United States has no plans to send combat troops into Vietnam. When asked whether the United States intended to increase its activities in Vietnam, he replied, "Wait and see." By 1969, more than 500,000 American troops were in South Vietnam.

1971 Khmer Rouge forces attack Phnom Penh airport

Communist forces bombard the airport at the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, killing 25 persons and wounding 30. This attack was another chapter in the Communist Khmer Rouge war against the government troops of Prime Minister Lon Nol. Nine airplanes were damaged in the attack. At the same time, another Khmer Rouge unit attacked a government radio transmission facility nine miles to the northwest of the city, leaving 19 Cambodians dead. This assault left Phnom Penh without access to international communications networks for several hours.

NOVEMBER 11

1967 Viet Cong release U.S. prisoners of war

Three U.S. prisoners of war, two of them African American, are released by the Viet Cong in a ceremony in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The three men were turned over to Tom Hayden, a "new left" antiwar activist. U.S. officials in Saigon said that the released prisoners had been "brainwashed," but the State

Department denied it. The Viet Cong said that the release was a response to antiwar protests in the U.S. and a gesture towards the "courageous struggle" of blacks in the United States.

Also on this day: In Vietnam, the Americal (formerly Task Force Oregon) and 1st Cavalry Divisions combine to form Operation Wheeler/Wallowa in Quang Nam and Quang Tin Provinces, I Corps. The purpose of the operation was to relieve enemy pressure and to reinforce the III Marine Amphibious Force in the area, thus permitting Marines to be deployed further north. The operation lasted more than 12 months and resulted in 10,000 enemy casualties.

1968 Operation Commando Hunt commences

U.S. joint-service Operation Commando Hunt is launched. This operation was designed to interdict Communist routes of infiltration along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, through Laos into South Vietnam. The aerial campaign involved a series of intensive air operations by U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps aircraft and lasted until April 1972. During the course of the operation, nearly 3 million tons of bombs fell on Laos. While Communist infiltration was slowed by this campaign, it was not seriously disrupted. Commando Hunt was ultimately considered a failure.

1972 Long Binh base turned over to South Vietnam

The massive Long Binh military base, once the largest U.S. installation outside the continental United States, is handed over to the South Vietnamese. This logistical complex, which had been constructed on the outskirts of Bien Hoa near the outskirts of Saigon, included numerous ammunition depots, supply depots, and other logistics installations. It served as the headquarters for U.S. Army Vietnam, 1st Logistical Command, and several other related activities. The handing-over of the base effectively marked the end--after seven years--of direct U.S. participation in the war. After the Long Binh base was turned over, about 29,000 U.S. soldiers remained in South Vietnam, most them advisors with South Vietnamese units, or helicopter crewmen, and maintenance, supply, and office staff.

NOVEMBER 12

1969 Seymour Hersh breaks My Lai story

Seymour Hersh, an independent investigative journalist, in a cable filed through Dispatch News Service and picked up by more than 30 newspapers, reveals the extent of the U.S. Army's charges against 1st Lt. William L. Calley at My Lai. Hersh wrote: "The Army says he [Calley] deliberately murdered at least 109 Vietnamese civilians during a search-and-destroy mission in

March 1968, in a Viet Cong stronghold known as "Pinkville." The incident, which became known as the My Lai Massacre, took place in March 1968. Between 200 and 500 South Vietnamese civilians were murdered by U.S. soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade of the Americal Division. During a sweep of the cluster of hamlets known as My Lai 4, the U.S. soldiers--particularly those from Calley's first platoon--indiscriminately shot people as they ran from their huts, and then systematically rounded up the survivors, allegedly leading them to a ditch where Calley gave the order to "finish them off."

The original investigation--which had been conducted in April 1968 by members of the 11th Infantry Brigade, the unit involved in the affair--concluded that no massacre had occurred and that no further action was warranted. However, when the cover-up was discovered, the Army Criminal Investigation Division conducted a new investigation. Additionally, Army Chief of Staff William C. Westmoreland appointed Lt. Gen. William R. Peers to "explore the nature and scope" of the original investigation to determine the extent of the cover-up. He found that 30 persons either participated in the atrocity or knew of it and failed to do anything about it. In the end, only 14 were charged with crimes. All eventually had their charges dismissed or were acquitted, except Calley, who was found guilty of murdering 22 civilians and sentenced to life imprisonment. His sentence was reduced twice, first by the Court of Military Appeals and then by the Secretary of the Army. President Richard Nixon paroled him in November 1974.

Also on this day: In Washington, D.C., the federal government begins to assemble 9,000 troops to assist the police and National Guard with massive protests and demonstrations scheduled for November 14-15. The Defense Department announced that the troops were being made available at the request of the Justice Department and were to augment 1,200 National Guardsmen and a 3,700-man police force.

1971 Nixon sets new deadline for next troop withdrawal

President Richard Nixon sets February 1, 1972, as the deadline for the withdrawal of an additional 45,000 U.S. troops. U.S. troop withdrawals had begun in the fall of 1969. After the February withdrawals were complete, the total U.S. force strength in South Vietnam was 139,000. Nixon said that most offensive activities were now being undertaken entirely by the South Vietnamese and that U.S. ground forces were "now in defensive positions." He further stated that 80 percent of the forces that were in Vietnam when he took office had come home, and that American casualties had dropped to less than 10 a week.

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forces that were in Vietnam when he took office had come home, and that American casualties had dropped to less than 10 a week

NOVEMBER 13

1969 "March Against Death" commences in Washington, D.C.

In Washington, as a prelude to the second moratorium against the war scheduled for the following weekend, protesters stage a symbolic "March Against Death." The march began at 6 p.m. and drew over 45,000 participants, each with a placard bearing the name of a soldier who had died in Vietnam. The marchers began at Arlington National Cemetery and continued past the White House, where they called out the names of the dead. The march lasted for two days and nights. This demonstration and the moratorium that followed did not produce a change in official policy--although President Nixon was deeply angered by the protests, he publicly feigned indifference and they had no impact on his prosecution of the war.

1967 President receives optimistic reports

President Lyndon Johnson is briefed on the situation in Vietnam by Gen. William Westmoreland, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, and Robert W. Komer, the head of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program. They painted an optimistic picture that led Johnson to state on television on November 17 that, while much remained to be done, "We are inflicting greater losses than we're taking...We are making progress." Such pronouncements haunted President Johnson and his advisers only two months later, when the communists launched a massive offensive during the Tet New Year holiday in January 1968.

NOVEMBER 14

1965 Major battle erupts in the Ia Drang Valley

In the first major engagement of the war between regular U.S. and North Vietnamese forces, elements of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) fight a pitched battle with Communist main-force units in the Ia Drang Valley of the Central Highlands.

On this morning, Lt. Col. Harold G. Moore's 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry conducted a heliborne assault into Landing Zone X-Ray near the Chu Pong hills. Around noon, the North Vietnamese 33rd Regiment attacked the U.S. troopers. The fight continued all day and into the night. American soldiers received support from nearby artillery units and tactical air strikes. The next morning, the North Vietnamese 66th Regiment joined the attack against the U.S. unit. The fighting was bitter, but the tactical air strikes and artillery support took

their toll on the enemy and enabled the 1st Cavalry troopers to hold on against repeated assaults.

At around noon, two reinforcing companies arrived and Colonel Moore put them to good use to assist his beleaguered soldiers. By the third day of the battle, the Americans had gained the upper hand. The three-day battle resulted in 834 North Vietnamese soldiers confirmed killed, and another 1,000 communist casualties were assumed.

In a related action during the same battle, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, was ambushed by North Vietnamese forces as it moved overland to Landing Zone Albany. Of the 500 men in the original column, 150 were killed and only 84 were able to return to immediate duty; Company C suffered 93 percent casualties, half of them deaths.

Despite these numbers, senior American officials in Saigon declared the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley a great victory. The battle was extremely important because it was the first significant contact between U.S. troops and North Vietnamese forces. The action demonstrated that the North Vietnamese were prepared to stand and fight major battles even though they might take serious casualties. Senior American military leaders concluded that U.S. forces could wreak significant damage on the communists in such battles--this tactic led to a war of attrition as the U.S. forces tried to wear the communists down. The North Vietnamese also learned a valuable lesson during the battle: by keeping their combat troops physically close to U.S. positions, U.S. troops could not use artillery or air strikes without risking injury to American troops. This style of fighting became the North Vietnamese practice for the rest of the war.

1972 Nixon promises Thieu that U.S. will continue to support South Vietnam

One week after his re-election, President Richard Nixon extends to South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu his "absolute assurance" that the United States will "take swift and severe retaliatory action" if Hanoi violates the pending cease-fire once it is in place.

Thieu responded with a list of 69 amendments that he wanted added to the peace agreement being worked out in Paris. Nixon instructed Henry Kissinger to present Le Duc Tho, the senior North Vietnamese negotiator in Paris, with Thieu's amendments. Kissinger protested that the changes were "preposterous" and might destroy chances for the treaty. Despite Kissinger's concerns, the indication that the peace accords were near completion resulted in the Dow Jones closing above 1,000 for first time. In the end, however, Kissinger was correct and the peace talks became deadlocked and were not resumed until after Nixon ordered the December bombing of North Vietnam.

1967 Marine general killed in Vietnam

Maj. Gen. Bruno Hochmuth, commander of the 3rd Marine Division, is killed when the helicopter in which he is travelling is shot down. He was the most senior U.S. officer to be killed in action in the war to date.

NOVEMBER 15

1969 Second moratorium against the war held

Following a symbolic three-day "March Against Death," the second national "moratorium" opens with mass demonstrations in San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

Organized by the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam ("New Mobe"), an estimated 500,000 demonstrators rallied in Washington as part of the largest such rally to date. It began with a march down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Washington Monument, where a mass rally and speeches were held. Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie, Peter, Paul, and Mary, and four different touring casts of the musical "Hair" entertained the demonstrators.

Later, violence erupted when police used tear gas on radicals who had split off from the main rally to march on the Justice Department. The crowd of about 6,000, led by members of the Youth International Party ("Yippies"), threw rocks and bottles and burned U.S. flags. Almost 100 demonstrators were arrested.

The largest protest outside Washington was held in San Francisco, where an estimated 250,000 people demonstrated. Antiwar demonstrations were also held in a number of major European cities, including Frankfurt, Stuttgart, West Berlin, and London. The largest overseas demonstration occurred in Paris, where 2,651 people were arrested.

1966 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs heckled at university

Gen. Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, addresses a gathering at Brown University and approximately 60 students walk out to protest his defense of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Some of those who remained shouted and heckled Wheeler, while others attempted to storm the stage. Outside, over 100 students continued the protest.

NOVEMBER 16

1970 Ky defends South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia

South Vietnamese Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, speaking at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, says Cambodia would be overrun by communist forces "within 24 hours" if South Vietnamese troops currently operating there are withdrawn.

Ky described the Cambodian operation of the previous spring (the so-called "Cambodian Incursion," in which President Nixon had sent U.S. and South Vietnamese soldiers into Cambodia to destroy North Vietnamese base camps) as the "turning point" of the war. He said that as a result of that operation, the enemy had been forced to revert to low-level guerrilla warfare. Ky also reported that his government was concerned that the Nixon administration might be yielding to the "pressure of the antiwar groups" and pulling out the remaining U.S. troops too quickly.

1961 Kennedy decides to increase military aid to Saigon

President John F. Kennedy decides to increase military aid to South Vietnam without committing U.S. combat troops. Kennedy was concerned at the advances being made by the communist Viet Cong, but did not want to become involved in a land war in Vietnam. He hoped that the military aid would be sufficient to strengthen the Saigon government and its armed forces against the Viet Cong. Ultimately it was not, and Kennedy ended up sending additional support in the form of U.S. military advisors and American helicopter units. By the time of his assassination in 1963, there were 16,000 U.S. soldiers in South Vietnam.

1971 U.S. provides support to beleaguered Cambodians

As the fighting gets closer to Phnom Penh, the United States steps up its air activities in support of the Cambodian government. U.S. helicopter gunships struck at North Vietnamese emplacements at Tuol Leap, 10 miles north of Phnom Penh.

NOVEMBER 17

1965 1st Cavalry unit ambushed in the Ia Drang Valley

During part of what would become known as the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley, a battalion from the 1st Cavalry Division is ambushed by the 8th Battalion of the North Vietnamese 66th Regiment. The battle started several days earlier when the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry engaged a large North Vietnamese force at Landing Zone X-Ray at the base of the Cheu Pong hills (Central Highlands).

As that battle subsided, the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, was ordered to move cross-country to Landing Zone Albany, where it was to be picked up by helicopter and moved to a new location. The U.S. unit was moving through the jungle in a long column when the North Vietnamese sprang a massive ambush along the length of the column from all sides. Companies C and D took the brunt of the Communist attack--within minutes, most of the men from the two companies were hit.

The North Vietnamese forces had succeeded in engaging the U.S. forces in very tight quarters, where supporting U.S. firepower could not be used without endangering American lives. The cavalymen returned fire, but the Communists were fighting from prepared fighting positions and many of the American leaders had been felled in the initial stages of the ambush. As night fell, the cavalymen waited for the North Vietnamese to attack but illumination flares provided by air force aircraft made the enemy cautious. By morning, they had withdrawn.

Senior U.S. military leaders declared the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley an American victory. That had clearly been the case with the fight at Landing Zone X-Ray, where the three-day battle resulted in 834 North Vietnamese soldiers confirmed killed with another 1,000 communist casualties likely. However, the battle at Landing Zone Albany was another story. Although there were over 400 enemy soldiers lying on the battlefield after the fighting was over, the battle had been an extremely costly one for the 1st Cavalry troopers. Of the 500 men in the original column moving to Landing Zone Albany, 150 had been killed and only 84 were able to return to immediate duty. 93 percent of Company C sustained some sort of wound or injury--half of them died.

The Battle of the Ia Drang Valley was important because it was the first significant contact between U.S. troops and North Vietnamese forces. The action demonstrated that the North Vietnamese were prepared to stand and fight major battles, and senior American leaders concluded that U.S. forces could wreak significant damage on the communists in such battles. The North Vietnamese also learned a valuable lesson during the battle: they saw that they could negate the effects of superior American firepower by engaging American troops in physically close combat, so that U.S. artillery and air fire could not be used without endangering American lives. This became standard North Vietnamese practice for the rest of the war.

1970 My Lai trial begins

The court-martial of 1st Lt. William Calley begins. 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 on March 16, 1968. My Lai 4 was one of a cluster of hamlets that made up Son My village in the northern area of South Vietnam.

The company had been conducting a search-and-destroy mission as part of the yearlong Operation Wheeler/Wallowa (November 1967-November 1968). In search of the 48th Viet Cong Local Force Battalion, the unit entered the 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 innocent people as they ran from their huts. They then

systematically rounded up the survivors, allegedly leading them to nearby ditch and killing them.

Calley was charged with six specifications of premeditated murder. During the trial, Chief Army Prosecutor Capt. Aubrey Daniel charged that Calley ordered Sgt. Daniel Mitchell to "finish off the rest" of the rounded-up villagers. The prosecution stressed that all the killings were committed despite the fact that Calley's platoon had met no resistance and that no one had fired on the men.

The My Lai massacre was initially covered up, but 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, Capt. 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 innocent people.

Calley 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 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.

NOVEMBER 18

1970 Nixon appeals to Congress for funds for Cambodia

President Nixon asks Congress for supplemental appropriations for the Cambodian government of Premier Lon Nol. Nixon requested \$155 million in new funds for Cambodia - \$85 million of which would be for military assistance, mainly in the form of ammunition. He also asked for an additional \$100 million to restore funds taken from other foreign appropriations during the year by "presidential determination" and given to Cambodia. Nixon wanted the funds to provide aid and assistance to Lon Nol to preclude the fall of Cambodia to the communist Khmer Rouge and their North Vietnamese allies. Lon Nol was a Cambodian general who had overthrown the government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in March 1970. He and his army, the Forces Armees Nationales Khmer (FANK), were engaged in a desperate struggle with the communists for control of the Cambodian countryside. The Nixon administration had initiated a program of aid to Lon Nol in April 1970 with \$7.5 million in arms and supplies. This aid did not have an immediate impact as the government forces reeled under heavy communist attacks. Besides trying to get additional funds for more military aid for Cambodia, Nixon also committed U.S. aircraft in direct support of Cambodian government troops and initiated a program whereby U.S. Army Special Forces would train Lon Nol's troops.

With this U.S. support, Lon Nol was able to successfully withdraw most of his forces (which numbered over 200,000 troops) from the rural areas to the larger urban centers, where they were able to hold out against the communist attacks. The

fighting continued, but generally a stalemate prevailed so that neither side gained the upper hand. This situation changed in 1973 after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords. Under the provisions of that agreement, the United States withdrew its forces from South Vietnam and 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. During the five years of bitter fighting, approximately 10 percent of Cambodia's 7 million people died, but the suffering of the Cambodian people did not end with the communist takeover. The victorious Khmer Rouge evacuated Phnom Penh and set about to reorder Cambodian society, which resulted in a killing spree and the notorious "killing fields." During this period, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians died from murder, exhaustion, hunger, and disease.

1969 South Vietnamese fight first major battle after U.S. troops are withdrawn

Sixty South Vietnamese men are killed or wounded when their troops clash with communist forces in the Mekong Delta. The North Vietnamese lost only 14 men. A South Vietnamese spokesman said that the high South Vietnamese casualties were "due to bad fighting on our part." The battle was the first major action in the northern delta since the U.S. 9th Division was withdrawn and the South Vietnamese assumed responsibility for the area.

1964 South Vietnamese conduct largest air assault to date

In the largest air assault of the war thus far, 116 U.S. and South Vietnamese aircraft fly 1,100 South Vietnamese troops into Binh Duong and Tay Ninh Provinces to attack what is believed to be a major communist stronghold. General Nguyen Khanh personally directed the operation, but the troops made only light contact with the Viet Cong.

NOVEMBER 19

1967 Chaplain Charles Watters receives Medal of Honor

For action this date, Chaplain (Major) Charles Watters of the 173rd Airborne Brigade is awarded the Medal of Honor. Chaplain Watters was serving with the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry when it conducted an attack against North Vietnamese forces entrenched on Hill 875 during the Battle of Dak To. The Catholic priest from New Jersey moved among the paratroopers during the intense fighting, giving encouragement and first aid to the wounded. At least six times he left the defensive perimeter with total disregard regard for his own personal safety to

retrieve casualties and take them for medical attention. Once he was satisfied that all of the wounded were inside the perimeter, he busied himself helping the medics, applying bandages, and providing spiritual strength and support. According to reports filed by survivors of the battle, Father Watters was on his knees giving last rites to a dying soldier when an American bomber accidentally dropped a 500-pound bomb onto the group of paratroopers. Father Watters was killed instantly. He was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor on November 4, 1969, in a ceremony at the White House.

Also on this date: The Senate Foreign Relations Committee unanimously passes a resolution to curb the commitment of U.S. armed forces and a resolution urging the President Johnson to take the initiative to have the Vietnamese conflict brought before the United Nations Security Council.

1971 Cambodians appeal for help

Cambodians appeal to Saigon for help as communist forces move closer to Phnom Penh. Saigon officials revealed that in the previous week, an eight-person Cambodian delegation flew to the South Vietnamese capital to officially request South Vietnamese artillery and engineer support for beleaguered Cambodian government troops. Cambodian Premier Lon Nol and his troops were involved in a life or death struggle with the communist Khmer Rouge force and their North Vietnamese allies for control of the country.

NOVEMBER 20

1969 Seymour Hersh files follow-up to My Lai story

In the United States, Seymour Hersh, an independent investigative journalist, files a second My Lai story based on interviews with Michael Terry and Michael Bernhardt, who served under 1st Lt. William Calley during the action that was later dubbed the My Lai massacre.

Also on this day, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* published explicit photos of the dead at My Lai. The American public was stunned. Hersh broke the story earlier in the month, describing how soldiers from the Americal Division conducting a sweep of My Lai indiscriminately shot people as they ran from their huts, and then systematically rounded up the survivors, allegedly leading them to a ditch where they were executed per Calley's orders.

Despite the fact that an Army board of inquiry found that 30 persons either participated in the atrocity or knew of it and failed to do anything, only 14 were charged with crimes. All eventually had their charges dismissed or were acquitted, except Calley, who was found guilty of murdering 22 civilians and was sentenced to life imprisonment. His sentence was reduced twice and William Calley gained parole in November 1974.

1967 Students Demonstrate Against Dow Chemical Company

On this day in the United States, San Jose State College students demonstrate against the Dow Chemical Company, the maker of napalm. Police were sent in, but the students refused to disperse and several protest leaders were arrested. The next day the students defied California governor Ronald Reagan's warning against further demonstrations and again staged an anti-Dow demonstration.

NOVEMBER 21

1970 U.S. force raids Son Tay prison camp

A combined Air Force and Army team of 40 Americans--led by Army Colonel "Bull" Simons--conducts a raid on the Son Tay prison camp, 23 miles west of Hanoi, in an attempt to free between 70 and 100 Americans suspected of being held there. Planning for the mission--code-named Operation Ivory Coast--began in June 1970. The plan called for Army Rangers to be flown to Son Tay by helicopter and crash-land inside the compound. The plan was for Rangers to pour out of the helicopter and neutralize any opposition while Rangers in other helicopters, landing outside the walls, would break in and complete the rescue operation.

At 11:30 p.m. on November 20, the raiding force departed Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base in Thailand. As the force approached the camp, U.S. Air Force and Navy warplanes struck North Vietnamese troop installations and antiaircraft sites in the area. Part of the force initially landed at the wrong compound, but otherwise the mission came off without a hitch. Unfortunately, the Rangers could not locate any prisoners in the huts. After a sharp firefight with the North Vietnamese troops in the area, the order was given to withdraw--27 minutes after the raid began, the force was in the air headed back to Thailand. The raid was accomplished in a superb manner and all Americans returned safely, but it was learned later that the prisoners had been moved elsewhere in July. Despite that disappointment, the raid was a tactical success and sent a message to the North Vietnamese that the United States was capable of inserting a combat force undetected only miles from their capital. Stunned by the raid, high Hanoi officials ordered all U.S. POWs moved to several central prison complexes. This was actually a welcome change--the move afforded the prisoners more contact with each other and boosted their morale.

1967 Westmoreland tells media the communists are losing

Gen. William Westmoreland, commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, tells U.S. news reporters: "I am

absolutely certain that whereas in 1965 the enemy was winning, today he is certainly losing."

Having been reassured by the general, most Americans were stunned when the communists launched a massive offensive during the Vietnamese Tet New Year holiday on January 30, 1968. During this offensive, communist forces struck 36 of 44 provincial capitals, 5 of 6 autonomous cities, 64 of 242 district capitals and about 50 hamlets. At one point during the initial attack on Saigon, communists troops actually penetrated the ground floor of the U.S. Embassy.

The fighting raged all over South Vietnam and lasted almost until the end of February. Overcoming the initial surprise of the attack, the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces recovered and ultimately inflicted a major military defeat on the communists. Nevertheless, Hanoi won a great psychological victory by launching such a widespread attack after Westmoreland assured the American people that the corner had been turned in South Vietnam. As a result of the unexpected Tet Offensive, many Americans came out forcefully against the war. Even CBS television anchorman Walter Cronkite, widely regarded as the most trusted man in American, publicly questioned U.S. policy in Vietnam.

NOVEMBER 22

1963 JFK assassinated in Dallas

On this day, President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas.

Kennedy took office on January 20, 1961. From the start of his term, he was faced with a deteriorating situation in Southeast Asia, in which both Laos and South Vietnam were threatened by communist insurgencies. In July 1962, Kennedy's roving ambassador, W. Averell Harriman, negotiated an international agreement that arranged for a neutral coalition government in Laos. Kennedy was less successful in South Vietnam, where U.S. military advisers had been training the South Vietnamese Army since 1954. The government of South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem was threatened by a communist-dominated guerrilla movement called the National Liberation Front. In 1961, Kennedy demonstrated America's commitment to Diem's government by increasing the number of military advisers from 500 to 15,000 and ordering them into combat. By late 1963, Kennedy realized that Diem was more interested in maintaining his own power than in defeating the communists, so Kennedy did nothing to stop dissident South Vietnamese generals from planning a coup against Diem. The coup began on November 1 and was successful; Diem was killed in the process. President Kennedy himself was assassinated only three weeks later.

There has been much conjecture about what Kennedy ultimately would have done about the worsening situation in Vietnam--many have asserted that he would not have escalated the war as did his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson. There were more than 16,000 advisers and other U.S. military

personnel in South Vietnam when Kennedy was assassinated. Under Johnson, who said he was continuing Kennedy's policies on Southeast Asia, that number grew to over 500,000 by 1969.

1967 Westmoreland claims U.S. victory at Dak To

General William Westmoreland, commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, briefs officials at the Pentagon and says that the battle around Dak To was "the beginning of a great defeat for the enemy."

The battle for Dak To began on November 3 when 4,500 U.S. troops from the U.S. 4th Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade engaged four communist regiments of about 6,000 troops in the Central Highlands. The climax of the operation came in a savage battle that began on November 19 on Hill 875, 12 miles southwest of Dak To. The 173rd defeated the North Vietnamese, causing them to abandon their last defensive line on the ridge of Hill 875. However, it was a costly victory for the Americans, who suffered the loss of 135 men. In the 19 days of the battle in and around Dak To, North Vietnamese fatalities were estimated at 1,455. Total U.S. casualties included 285 killed, 985 wounded, and 18 missing. In his briefing at the Pentagon, Westmoreland stressed the positive outcome of the battle. He revealed that a document removed from the body of a dead North Vietnamese soldier on November 6 stated that the Dak To battle was to be the beginning of a winter/spring offensive by the Communist B-3 Front. This document also revealed that the main objective of the action at Dak To was the destruction of a major American unit. The communists came close but ultimately failed in this objective. The Americans, despite heavy losses, defeated the North Vietnamese, mauling three enemy regiments so badly that they had to be withdrawn from South Vietnam to Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries for refitting.

Westmoreland was reportedly brought home from Vietnam by President Johnson to fulfill a public relations task and revive flagging morale throughout the country. His message on U.S. military prospects in Vietnam was continually optimistic, as he emphasized that progress was being made in the fight against the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. These public statements came back to haunt him when the communists launch a massive offensive during the Tet New Year holiday on January 30, 1968.

1972 First B-52 shot down over North Vietnam

The United States loses its first B-52 of the war. The eight-engine bomber was brought down by a North Vietnamese surface-to-air missile near Vinh on the day when B-52s flew their heaviest raids of the war over North Vietnam. The

Communists claimed 19 B-52s shot down to date.

NOVEMBER 23

1970 Laird discloses the details of the Son Tay Raid

Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird discloses the November 21 U.S. raid on the North Vietnamese prison camp at Son Tay. On November 21, a combined Air Force and Army team of 40 Americans--led by Army Colonel "Bull" Simons--conducted a raid on the Son Tay prison camp, 23 miles west of Hanoi, in an attempt to free between 70 and 100 American suspected of being held there. The raid was conducted almost flawlessly, but no prisoners of war were found in the camp. They had been moved earlier to other locations.

Laird revealed that approximately one hour after the raid took place, U.S. aircraft (200 fighter bombers and 100 support aircraft) inflicted the most severe bombing raids in two years on North Vietnam as retaliation for the shooting down of U.S. reconnaissance aircraft. Hanoi Radio reported that "wave after wave" of U.S. bombers attacked North Vietnam and said that the planes struck at targets ranging from Haiphong to Hoa Binh province, southeast of Hanoi.

1972 Paris peace talks deadlocked

Secret peace talks resume in Paris between Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, the North Vietnamese representative, but almost immediately reach an impasse.

The sticking points were the implementation of the international supervisory force and Saigon's insistence on the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam. When the talks became hopelessly deadlocked, President Nixon ordered what became known as the "Christmas bombing" to force the North Vietnamese back to the negotiating table.

Nixon halted the bombing when the communists agreed to return to Paris; a peace agreement was signed in January 1973. Because the United States was in such a hurry to end American participation in the war, the insistence on the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam ceased to be an issue. More than 100,000 communist troops were left in the south when the cease-fire went into effect. This played a major role in the fall of South Vietnam to the communists in April 1975.

NOVEMBER 24

1969 U.S. Army announces Calley will be tried

U.S. Army officials announce 1st Lt. William Calley will be court-martialed for the premeditated murder of 109 Vietnamese civilians at My Lai.

In Washington, Army Secretary Stanley Resor and Army Chief of Staff William C. Westmoreland announced the appointment of Lt. Gen. William R. Peers to "explore the nature and scope"

of the original investigation of the My Lai slayings in April 1968. The initial probe, conducted by the unit involved in the affair, concluded that no massacre occurred and that no further action was warranted.

The My Lai Massacre took place in March 1968, when between 200 and 500 South Vietnamese civilians were murdered by U.S. soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade of the Americal Division. During a sweep of a cluster of hamlets, the U.S. soldiers, particularly those from Calley's first platoon, indiscriminately shot people as they ran from their huts. They then systematically rounded up the survivors, allegedly leading them to a ditch where Calley gave the order to "finish them off."

After an investigation by the Army Criminal Investigation Division, 14 were charged with crimes. All eventually had their charges dismissed or were acquitted, except Calley, who was found guilty of murdering 22 civilians and sentenced to life imprisonment. His sentence was reduced twice and President Richard Nixon paroled him in November 1974.

1963 LBJ to continue Kennedy policy in Vietnam

Two days after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, President Lyndon B. Johnson confirms the U.S. intention to continue military and economic support to South Vietnam. He instructed Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, in Washington for consultations following South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem's assassination, to communicate his intention to the new South Vietnamese leadership. Johnson's first decision about Vietnam was effectively to continue Kennedy's policy. Also on this day: Jack Ruby murders accused Kennedy assassin Lee Harvey Oswald at the Dallas jail where Oswald is being held.

1965 U.S. casualty rates hit new high

U.S. casualty statistics reflect the intensified fighting in the Ia Drang Valley and other parts of the Central Highlands. In their first significant contacts, U.S. forces and North Vietnamese regulars fought a series of major battles in the Highlands that led to high casualties for both sides. A record 240 American soldiers were killed and another 470 were wounded during the previous week. These figures were a portent of things to come--U.S. and North Vietnamese forces began to engage each other on a regular basis shortly thereafter.

NOVEMBER 25

1967 Catholic official reports support provided to North Vietnam

In the weekly magazine *Ave Maria*, which hit newstands on this day, the Very Reverend Edward Swanstrom, auxiliary Roman Catholic Bishop of New York and head of Catholic Relief Services, wrote that the overseas relief agency of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States provided funds for sending medical supplies and hospital equipment to North Vietnam.

1969 Communist activity increases along Cambodian border

Communist forces step up attacks against U.S. troops shielding Allied installations near the Cambodian border. Ten Americans were killed and 70 wounded. U.S. troops reported killing 115 enemy soldiers. North Vietnamese troops destroyed more than a dozen tanks and tons of ammunition near the Cambodian border.

NOVEMBER 26

1968 Air Force helicopter pilot rescues Special Forces team

While returning to base from another mission, Air Force 1st Lt. James P. Fleming and four other Bell UH-1F helicopter pilots get an urgent message from an Army Special Forces team pinned down by enemy fire.

Although several of the other helicopters had to leave the area because of low fuel, Lieutenant Fleming and another pilot pressed on with the rescue effort. The first attempt failed because of intense ground fire, but refusing to abandon the Army green berets, Fleming managed to land and pick up the team. When he safely arrived at his base near Duc Co, it was discovered that his aircraft was nearly out of fuel. Lieutenant Fleming was later awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions.

NOVEMBER 27

1965 Pentagon calls for troop increase

The Pentagon informs President Johnson that if General Westmoreland is to conduct the major sweep operations necessary to destroy enemy forces during the coming year, U.S. troop strength should be increased from 120,000 to 400,000 men.

Also on this day: The Viet Cong release two U.S. special forces soldiers captured two years earlier during a battle of Hiep Hoa, 40 miles southwest of Saigon. At a news conference in Phnom Penh three days later, the two Americans, Sgt. George Smith and Specialist 5th Class Claude McClure, declared that they opposed U.S. actions in Vietnam and would campaign for the withdrawal of American troops. Although Smith later denied making the statement, U.S. authorities announced that the two men would face trial for cooperating with the enemy.

Also on this day: In Washington, nearly 35,000 war protestors

circle the White House for two hours before moving on to the Washington Monument. Dr. Benjamin Spock, Coretta Scott King, and activist Norman Thomas were among those who gave speeches.

1970 South Vietnamese forces attacked near Cambodian border

A South Vietnamese task force, operating in southeastern Cambodia, comes under North Vietnamese attack near the town of Krek. The South Vietnamese command reported repelling the assault and killing enemy soldiers. The South Vietnamese command also reported killing 33 Viet Cong in the Rung Sat special zone, 23 miles southeast of Saigon.

NOVEMBER 28

1964 Johnson advised to bomb North Vietnam

President Lyndon Johnson's top advisers--Maxwell Taylor, Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara, and other members of the National Security Council--agree to recommend that the president adopt a plan for a two-stage escalation of the bombing of North Vietnam.

The purpose of this bombing was three-fold: to boost South Vietnamese morale, to cut down infiltration of Communist troops from the north, and to force Hanoi to stop its support of the insurgency in South Vietnam. While his advisors agreed that bombing was necessary, there was a difference of opinion about the best way to go about it. Johnson's senior military advisers pressed for a "fast and full squeeze," massive attacks against major industries and military targets in the north. His civilian advisers advocated a "slow squeeze," a graduated series of attacks beginning with the infiltration routes in Laos and slowly extending to the targets in North Vietnam. Ultimately, the civilian advisers convinced Johnson to use the graduated approach. The bombing campaign, code-named Rolling Thunder, began in March 1965 and lasted through October 1968.

1965 The Philippines agrees to send troops to South Vietnam

President Elect Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines states that he will send troops to South Vietnam, in response to President Lyndon Johnson's call for "more flags" in Vietnam. Johnson hoped to enlist other nations to send military aid and troops to support the American cause in South Vietnam. The level of support was not the primary issue; Johnson wanted to portray international solidarity and consensus for U.S. policies in Southeast Asia. The Philippines sent a 1,500-man civic action force in 1966; the United States paid for the group's operating

costs and also provided additional military and economic aid to Marcos in return for sending his troops.

Several other countries--including Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Thailand--responded to Johnson's call and sent troops to South Vietnam. Collectively, these troops were known as the Free World Military Forces, and they fought alongside American and South Vietnamese troops.

NOVEMBER 29

1967 McNamara resigns as Secretary of Defense

Robert S. McNamara announces that he will resign as Secretary of Defense and will become president of the World Bank.

Formerly the president of Ford Motor Company, McNamara had served as Secretary of Defense under two presidents, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, from 1961 until 1968. He initially supported U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War and encouraged President Johnson to escalate in 1964, but he later began privately to question U.S. policy and eventually advocated a negotiated settlement to the war. In the summer of 1967, he helped draft the San Antonio formula, a peace proposal offering to end the U.S. bombing of the north and asking North Vietnam to join in productive discussions. The North Vietnamese rejected the proposal in October. Early in November, McNamara submitted a memorandum to Johnson recommending that the United States freeze its troop levels, cease the bombing of the north, and turn over responsibility for fighting the ground war to the South Vietnamese. Johnson rejected these recommendations outright. McNamara subsequently resigned; Johnson adviser Clark Clifford succeeded him.

1968 Communists vow to smash Phoenix program

The Viet Cong High Command orders an all-out attempt to smash the Phoenix program. Hanoi Radio broadcasted a National Liberation Front directive calling for a new offensive to "utterly destroy" Allied forces. The broadcast added that the new operation was particularly concerned with eliminating the "Phoenix Organization." The Phoenix program (or "Phuong Hoang" as it was called in Vietnamese) was a hamlet security initiative run by the Central Intelligence Agency that relied on centralized, computerized intelligence gathering aimed at identifying and eliminating the Viet Cong infrastructure--the upper echelon of the National Liberation Front political cadres and party members.

The program became one of the most controversial operations undertaken by U.S. personnel in South Vietnam. Critics charged that American-led South Vietnamese "hit teams" indiscriminately arrested and murdered many communist suspects on flimsy pretexts. Despite the criticism and media attention, the program was acknowledged by top-level U.S.

government officials, as well as Viet Cong and North Vietnamese leaders after the war, to have been very effective in reducing the power of the local communist cadres in the South Vietnamese countryside.

1971 Americal Division stands down and departs

The U.S. 23rd Division (Americal) ceases combat operations and begins its withdrawal from South Vietnam. The division had been activated in Vietnam on September 25, 1967, after which it assumed control of the 11th, 198th, and 199th Infantry Brigades (and associated support troops). Its headquarters was at Chu Lai in I Corps Tactical Zone and division troops conducted operations in Quang Nam, Quang Tri, and Quang Ngai Provinces.

In 1970, the division continued to fight in the Duc Pho, Chu Lai, and Tam Ky areas along the coast. When the division headquarters departed South Vietnam, the division colors were returned to Fort Lewis, Washington, where the Americal Division was officially inactivated. The only unit that remained in South Vietnam was the 199th Infantry Brigade, which continued to conduct operations as a separate brigade.

NOVEMBER 30

1965 McNamara warns Johnson that communists are gaining strength in South Vietnam

Following a visit to South Vietnam, Defense Secretary McNamara reports in a memorandum to President Lyndon B. Johnson that the South Vietnamese government of Nguyen Cao Ky "is surviving, but not acquiring wide support or generating actions."

He said that Viet Cong recruiting successes coupled with a continuing heavy infiltration of North Vietnamese forces indicated that "the enemy can be expected to enlarge his present strength of 110 battalion equivalents to more than 150 battalion equivalents by the end of 1966." McNamara said that U.S. policymakers faced two options: to seek a compromise settlement and keep further military commitments to a minimum, or to continue to press for a military solution, which would require substantial bombing of North Vietnam.

In conclusion, McNamara warned that there was no guarantee of U.S. military success and that there was a real possibility of a strategic stalemate, saying that "U.S. killed in action can be expected to reach 1,000 a month." In essence, McNamara cautioned Johnson that sending additional troops was not likely to prevent the stalemate. In the end, however, Johnson chose to seek a military solution. By 1969, there were more than 500,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam.

1966 South Vietnamese draft articles for new constitution

In Saigon, the South Vietnamese Constituent Assembly begins drawing up draft articles for a new constitution. On December 15, the Assembly approved the proposal for the future civil regime to be headed by a popularly elected president, and a proposal empowering the president, rather than the legislature, to appoint a premier. On December 21, the assembly approved the establishment of a legislature made up of a senate and a house of representatives.

1967 McCarthy to enter Democratic presidential primary

Liberal Democratic Senator Eugene J. McCarthy from Minnesota, an advocate of a negotiated end to the war in Vietnam, declares that he intends to enter several Democratic Presidential primaries in 1968.

McCarthy believed that the majority of Americans were unhappy with President Lyndon B. Johnson's handling of the war, and he planned to challenge the president for the Democratic nomination. McCarthy conducted his campaign outside normal Democratic Party channels, relying on volunteers who conducted a grassroots campaign that emphasized the moral indefensibility of U.S. action in Vietnam and the need for a negotiated settlement of the war. McCarthy shocked the political establishment when he almost defeated Johnson in the New Hampshire primary. When Johnson announced that he would not run for re-election, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey defeated McCarthy for the presidential nomination at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Ultimately, Humphrey was defeated in the national election by Republican Richard M. Nixon.

1972 White House announces no full withdrawal until final truce agreement signed

White House Press Secretary Ron Zeigler announces to the press that the administration will make no more public statements concerning U.S. troop withdrawals from Vietnam since the level of U.S. presence had fallen to 27,000 men. Defense Department sources said that there would not be a full withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam until a final truce agreement was signed, and that such an agreement would not affect the 54,000 U.S. servicemen in Thailand or the 60,000 aboard 7th Fleet ships off the Vietnamese coast. All U.S. forces were withdrawn from South Vietnam in March 1973 as part of the terms of the Paris Peace Accords, which were signed in January of that year.