

# Vietnam by Day August

## AUGUST 1

### **1964 North Vietnamese accuse South Vietnam and the United States of attack**

The North Vietnamese government accuses South Vietnam and the United States of having authorized attacks on Hon Me and Hon Ngu, two of their islands in the Tonkin Gulf.

The North Vietnamese were partly correct; the attacks, conducted just after midnight on July 30, were part of a covert operation called Oplan 34A, which involved raids by South Vietnamese commandos operating under American orders against North Vietnamese coastal and island installations. Although American forces were not directly involved in the actual raids, U.S. Navy ships were on station to conduct electronic surveillance and monitor North Vietnamese defense responses under another program called Operation De Soto. The Oplan 34A attacks played a major role in events that led to what became known as the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. On August 2, North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked the destroyer USS *Maddox* which was conducting a De Soto mission in the area. Two days after the first attack, there was another incident that still remains unclear. The *Maddox*, joined by destroyer USS *C. Turner Joy*, engaged what were thought at the time to be more attacking North Vietnamese patrol boats. Although it was questionable whether the second attack actually happened or not, 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.

On this same day, in 1969, the U.S. command in Saigon announces that 27 American aircraft were lost in the previous week, bringing the total losses of aircraft in the conflict to date to 5,690.

## AUGUST 2

### **1964 North Vietnamese torpedo boats attack U.S. destroyer**

North Vietnamese torpedo boats attack the destroyer USS *Maddox* (DD-731).

The American ship had been cruising around the Tonkin Gulf monitoring radio and radar signals following an attack by South Vietnamese PT boats on North Vietnamese facilities on Hon Me and Hon Nhieu Islands (off the North Vietnamese coast) under Oplan 34A. U.S. crews interpreted one North Vietnamese message as indicating that they were preparing "military operations," which the *Maddox's* Captain John Herrick assumed meant some sort of retaliatory attack. His superiors ordered him to remain in the area. Early that afternoon, three North Vietnamese patrol boats began to chase the *Maddox*. About 3 p.m., Captain Herrick ordered his crew to commence firing as the North Vietnamese boats came within 10,000 yards of his

ship; at the same time he radioed the aircraft carrier USS *Ticonderoga* for air support. The North Vietnamese boats each fired one torpedo at the *Maddox*, but two missed and the third failed to explode. U.S. gunfire hit one of the North Vietnamese boats, and then three U.S. Crusader jets proceeded to strafe them. Within 20 minutes, *Maddox* gunners sunk one of the boats and two were crippled; only one bullet hit the *Maddox* and there were no U.S. casualties. The *Maddox* was ordered to withdraw and await further instructions.

In Washington, President Lyndon B. Johnson, alarmed by this situation, at first rejected any reprisals against North Vietnam. In his first use of the "hot line" to Russia, Johnson informed Khrushchev that he had no desire to extend the conflict. In the first U.S. diplomatic note ever sent to Hanoi, Johnson warned that "grave consequences would inevitably result from any further unprovoked offensive military action" against U.S. ships "on the high seas." Meanwhile, the U.S. military command took several critical actions. U.S. combat troops were placed on alert and additional fighter-bombers were sent to South Vietnam and Thailand. The carrier USS *Constellation* was ordered to the South China Sea to join the USS *Ticonderoga*. Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, commander of the Pacific Fleet, ordered a second destroyer, the USS *C. Turner Joy*, to join the *Maddox* on station and to make daylight approaches to within eight miles of North Vietnam's coast and four miles of its islands to "assert the right of freedom of the seas."

### **1971 Nixon administration acknowledges secret army in Laos**

The Nixon administration officially acknowledges that the CIA is maintaining a force of 30,000 'irregulars' fighting the Communist Pathet Lao in Laos. The CIA trained and equipped this force of mountain tribesman, mostly from the Hmong tribe, to fight a secret war against the Communists and to sever the Ho Chi Minh Trail into South Vietnam. According to a once top-secret report released this date by the U.S. Defense and State Departments, U.S. financial involvement in Laos had totaled \$284,200,000 in 1970.

## **AUGUST 3**

### **1965 TV news shows Marines burning village**

CBS-TV news shows pictures of men from the First Battalion, Ninth Marines setting fire to huts in the village of Cam Na, six miles west of Da Nang, despite reports that the Viet Cong had already fled the area. The film report sparked indignation and condemnation of the U.S. policy in Vietnam both at home and overseas. At the same time, the Department of Defense announced that it was increasing the monthly draft call from 17,000 in August to 27,400 in September and 36,000 in October. It also announced that the Navy would require 4,600

draftees, the first such action since 1956.

### **1966 Marines launch Operation Prairie**

U.S. Marine units commence Operation Prairie, a sequel to an earlier operation in the area (Operation Hastings), which involves a sweep just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) against three battalions of the North Vietnamese 324B Division. An additional 1,500 Marines from Seventh Fleet ships off Quang Tri Province conducted amphibious landings on September 15 to assist in the operation, which lasted until September 19 and resulted in a reported 1,397 communist casualties.

## **AUGUST 4**

### **1964 Reported North Vietnamese PT boat attacks result in retaliation strikes**

At 8 p.m., the destroyers USS *Maddox* and USS *C. Turner Joy*, operating in the Gulf of Tonkin, intercept radio messages from the North Vietnamese that give Captain John Herrick of the *Maddox* the "impression" that Communist patrol boats are planning an attack against the American ships, prompting him to call for air support from the carrier USS *Ticonderoga*. Eight Crusader jets soon appeared overhead, but in the darkness, neither the pilots nor the ship crews saw any enemy craft. However, about 10 p.m. sonar operators reported torpedoes approaching. The U.S. destroyers maneuvered to avoid the torpedoes and began to fire at the North Vietnamese patrol boats. When the action ended about two hours later, U.S. officers reported sinking two, or possibly three of the North Vietnamese boats, but no American was sure of ever having seen any enemy boats nor any enemy gunfire. Captain Herrick immediately communicated his doubts to his superiors and urged a "thorough reconnaissance in daylight." Shortly thereafter, he informed Admiral U. S. Grant Sharp, commander of the Pacific Fleet, that the blips on the radar scope were apparently "freak weather effects" while the report of torpedoes in the water were probably due to "overeager" radar operators.

Because of the time difference, it was only 9:20 a.m. in Washington when the Pentagon received the initial report of a potential attack on the U.S. destroyers. When a more detailed report was received at 11 a.m. there was still a lot of uncertainty as to just what had transpired. President Johnson, convinced that the second attack had taken place, ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to select targets for possible retaliatory air strikes. At a National Security Council meeting, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, recommended to the president that the reprisal strikes be ordered. Johnson was cautious at first, but in a follow-up meeting in the afternoon, he gave the order to execute the reprisal, code-named Pierce Arrow. The

President then met with 16 Congressional leaders to inform them of the second unprovoked attack and that he had ordered reprisal attacks. He also told them he planned to ask for a Congressional resolution to support his actions. At 11:20 p.m., McNamara was informed by Admiral Sharp that the aircraft were on their way to the targets and at 11:26, President Johnson appeared on national television and announced that the reprisal raids were underway in response to unprovoked attacks on U.S. warships. He assured the viewing audience that, "We still seek no wider war." However, these incidents proved to be only the opening moves in an escalation that would eventually see more than 500,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam.

### **1967 Court upholds court-martial conviction of officer who participated in demonstration**

The U.S. Court of Military Appeals in Washington upholds the 1965 court-martial of Second Lieutenant Henry H. Howe, who had been sentenced to dismissal from the service and a year at hard labor for participating in an antiwar demonstration.

### **1969 Secret negotiations are initiated in Paris**

The first secret negotiating session takes place between Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese representative Xuan Thuy, at the apartment of French intermediary Jean Sainteny in Paris. Kissinger reiterated an earlier proposal put forth on May 14 for a mutual withdrawal of North Vietnamese and U.S. troops and also warned that if no progress was made by November 1 toward ending the war, the United States would consider measures of "grave consequences." Xuan Thuy responded with the standard North Vietnamese line that the United States would have to withdraw all its troops and abandon the Thieu government before there would be any "logical and realistic basis for settling the war." The negotiations ended with only an agreement to keep open the new secret channel of communications. These secret talks would continue, but would not bear fruit until late 1972, after the North Vietnamese Nguyen Hue Offensive had failed and President Nixon had launched Operation Linebacker II, the "Christmas bombing" of North Vietnam.

## **AUGUST 5**

### **1964 Navy flies retaliatory strikes against North Vietnam**

F-8 Crusaders, A-1 Skyraiders, and A-4 Skyhawks, from the carriers USS *Ticonderoga* and USS *Constellation* stationed in the South China Sea, fly 64 sorties against North Vietnamese coastal targets as part of Operation Pierce Arrow in retaliation for the Tonkin Gulf incidents of August 2 and 4. The U.S.

warplanes destroyed or damaged 25 North Vietnamese PT boats (claimed by U.S. officials to be about one-half of the North Vietnamese Navy) at bases at Hon Gai, Loc Ghao, Phuc Loi, and Quang Khe; destroyed seven anti-aircraft installations at Vinh; and severely damaged an oil storage depot at Phuc Loi. Two U.S. planes were shot down. One pilot, Lieutenant j.g. (or "junior grade") Everett Alvarez, parachuted to safety, but broke his back in the process and was taken prisoner by the North Vietnamese. He was the first of some 600 U.S. airmen who would be captured during the war and not released until the cease-fire agreement was signed in 1973.

### **1974 Congress cuts military aid to South Vietnam**

Congress places a \$1 billion ceiling on military aid to South Vietnam for fiscal year 1974. This figure was trimmed further to \$700 million by August 11. Military aid to South Vietnam in fiscal year 1973 was \$2.8 billion; in 1975 it would be cut to \$300 million. Once aid was cut, it took the North Vietnamese only 55 days to defeat the South Vietnamese forces when they launched their final offensive in 1975

## **AUGUST 6**

### **1964 Johnson Administration officials argue for resolution**

Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk appear before a joint Congressional committee on foreign affairs to present the Johnson administration's arguments for a resolution authorizing the president "to take all necessary measures." The New York Stock Exchange, reacting to the news of the crisis in Vietnam, experienced its sharpest decline since the death of President Kennedy. There were various rallies and peace vigils held across the United States protesting the bombing raids. Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater said he supported President Johnson's ordering of the retaliatory raids, but that he intended to make the whole question of Vietnam a campaign issue.

### **1969 Green Berets are charged with murder**

The U.S. Army announces that Colonel Robert B. Rheault, Commander of the Fifth Special Forces Group in Vietnam, and seven other Green Berets have been charged with premeditated murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the summary execution of a Vietnamese national, Thai Khac Chuyen, who had served as an agent for Detachment B-57. Chuyen was reportedly summarily executed for being a double agent who had compromised a secret mission. The case against the Green Berets was ultimately dismissed for reasons

of national security when the Central Intelligence Agency refused to release highly classified information about the operations in which Detachment B-57 had been involved. Colonel Rheault subsequently retired from the Army.

### **1971 First U.S. Army troops deployed to Vietnam stand-down for withdrawal**

The last remaining troops of the Fourth Battalion, 503rd Infantry of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, (the first U.S. Army ground combat unit to arrive in Vietnam in May 1965), cease combat operations and begin preparations to leave Vietnam. The first U.S. ground combat unit of any branch to reach Vietnam was the Third Marine Regiment, Third Marine Division, which began arriving on March 8, 1965. The initial U.S. combat forces were followed by a vast array of combat, combat support, and logistics units that together with U.S. Navy and Air Force personnel in-country reached a peak of 543,400 in April 1969. In June 1969, President Richard Nixon gave the order, as part of his "Vietnamization" policy, which began the process of reducing American troop strength; the troop withdrawals began the following fall and continued until the Paris Peace Accords were signed in January 1973.

## **AUGUST 7**

### **1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution is passed**

The U.S. Congress passes Public Law 88-408, which becomes known as the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, giving President Johnson the power to take whatever actions he deems necessary to defend Southeast Asia including "the use of armed force." The resolution passed 82-2 in the Senate, where Wayne K. Morse (D-Oregon) and Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska) were the only dissenting votes; the bill passed 416-0 in the House of Representatives. President Johnson signed it into law on August 10. It became the legal basis for every presidential action taken by the Johnson administration during its conduct of the war. Despite the initial support for the resolution, it became increasingly controversial as Johnson used it to increase U.S. commitment to the war in Vietnam. It would be repealed in May 1970.

### **1967 North Vietnam and People's Republic of China sign aid agreement**

The North Vietnamese newspaper *Nhan Dan* reports that the People's Republic of China (PRC) has signed a new agreement to give Hanoi an undisclosed amount of aid in the form of an outright grant. Chinese support to the Communists in Vietnam had begun with their backing of the Vietminh in their war against the French.

After the French were defeated, the PRC continued its support of the Hanoi regime. In April 1965, the PRC signed a formal agreement with Hanoi providing for the introduction of Chinese air defense, engineering, and railroad troops into North Vietnam to help maintain and expand lines of communication within North Vietnam. China later claimed that 320,000 of its troops served in North Vietnam during the period 1965 to 1971 and that 1,000 died there. It is estimated that the PRC provided over three-quarters of the total military aid given to North Vietnam during the war.

## **AUGUST 8**

### **1974 Nixon announces that he will resign the Presidency**

Richard Nixon announces that he will resign the office of the President at noon the next day, August 9. He had been engulfed by a major political scandal that began with the bungled burglary and wiretapping of the Democratic Party's campaign headquarters in the Watergate apartment complex in Washington, D.C., on June 17, 1972. Senate investigations eventually revealed that the President had been personally involved in the subsequent cover-up of the break-in; additional investigation uncovered a related group of illegal activities that included political espionage and falsification of official documents, all sanctioned by the White House. On July 29 and 30, 1974, the House Judiciary Committee approved three articles of impeachment, charging that Nixon had misused his powers to violate the constitutional rights of U.S. citizens, obstructed justice, and defied Judiciary Committee subpoenas. To avoid almost certain impeachment, Nixon announced that he would resign from office.

The Watergate affair had far-ranging impact, both at home and abroad. In the United States, the scandal shook the faith of the American people in the presidency, but, in the final analysis, the nation survived the constitutional crisis, thus reinforcing the system of checks and balances and proving that no one is above the law, not even the president. In Vietnam, Nixon's resignation removed one of Saigon's staunchest supporters- Nixon had always promised that he would come to the aid of South Vietnam if Hanoi violated the terms of the Paris Peace Accords. With Nixon gone, there was no one left to make good on those promises. When the North Vietnamese began their final offensive in 1975, the promised U.S. support was not provided and the South Vietnamese were defeated in less than 55 days.

### **1968 Nixon and Agnew receive the Republican Party nomination**

At the Republican National Convention in Miami, Richard M. Nixon and Spiro T. Agnew are chosen as the presidential and vice-presidential nominees for the upcoming election. In his speech accepting the nomination, Nixon promised to "bring an



honorable end to the war in Vietnam" and to inaugurate "an era of negotiations" with leading Communist powers, while restoring "the strength of America so that we shall always negotiate from strength and never from weakness." The party subsequently adopted a platform on the war that called for "progressive de-Americanization" of the war. Nixon was successful in his campaign bid and once in office, he instituted a program of "Vietnamization" (the turning over of the war to the South Vietnamese) and U.S. troop withdrawals.

### **1973 Vice President Agnew under attack**

Vice President Agnew branded reports that he took kickbacks from government contracts in Maryland as "damned lies." Agnew had taken a lot of heat in the media when he assumed a lead position as Nixon's point man on Vietnam. He frequently attacked the student protest movement, blaming the intellectual community, which he referred to as "impudent snobs," for campus unrest. Despite the charges of bribery and income tax evasion, Agnew vowed that he would never resign and blamed his troubles on the press, who, he said, were out to get him for his controversial stand on the war. Ultimately, however, he resigned from office on October 10, 1973.

## **AUGUST 9**

### **1974 Nixon resigns**

Richard M. Nixon resigns as President of the United States and is succeeded by Vice President Gerald R. Ford. Nixon had resigned rather than face almost certain impeachment because of the Watergate scandal, in which he was charged with misuse of presidential powers to violate the constitutional rights of U.S. citizens, obstruction of justice, and failure to respond to House Judiciary Committee subpoenas. The departure of Nixon would prove to be a fatal blow to the South Vietnamese, who always believed that the American president would be there to make good his promises to support them in their continuing post-ceasefire war against the North Vietnamese.

### **1967 Marines launch Operation Cochise**

First Marine Division launches Operation Cochise in the Que Son valley. Meanwhile, the First Cavalry Division continued with Operation Pershing, a major clearing operation in the Binh Dinh province designed to improve the security situation in support of the ongoing pacification effort.

### **1968 Lowest U.S. death toll in almost a year**



Ninety-six Americans are reported killed for the previous week. This was the lowest weekly U.S. death toll since August 12, 1967.

## **AUGUST 10**

### **1972 North Vietnamese forces attempt to cut off Saigon**

North Vietnamese forces block Routes 1, 4, and 13, all major South Vietnamese ground supply routes to Saigon. For the next two months, Communist forces repeatedly interdicted these and other key supply routes critical to Saigon's survival in an attempt to strangle the city. This was all part of the Nguyen Hue Offensive, which had been launched in late March.

In an invasion by more than 120,000 communist troops, the North Vietnamese had taken Quang Tri and lay siege to An Loc and Kontum. Despite desperate fighting on a level heretofore unseen in the war, the South Vietnamese forces, with American advisors and U.S. tactical air support, had withstood the invasion and were preparing to retake Quang Tri. At one point, the North Vietnamese forces had been less than 60 miles from Saigon, but were stopped by the South Vietnamese forces at An Loc, on Highway 13 north of the city.

### **1955 Diem refuses to negotiate with Communists**

Declaring that South Vietnam is "the only legal state," Ngo Dinh Diem, Premier of the State of Vietnam, announces that he will not enter into negotiations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) on elections as long as the Communist government remains in power in Hanoi. The elections had been scheduled for 1956 under the provisions of the Geneva Peace Accords of 1954 that brought an end to the First Indochina War. Diem reaffirmed the position laid down in his broadcast of July 6 in which he stated that South Vietnam was not bound by the Geneva Accords.

### **1966 Marines fight bitter battle in Quang Tin Province**

Troops of the First Battalion, Fifth Marines fight a bitter battle against NVA forces in Quang Tin province, 60 miles west of Tam Ky. In Thailand, a U.S.-built air base is opened in Sattahib. Ultimately, there would be five major airbases and over 49,000 U.S. military personnel in Thailand. The bases would be turned over to the Thais and the U.S. troops withdrawn in 1973

## **AUGUST 11**

### **1967 U.S. pilots cleared to bomb Hanoi-Haiphong area**

For the first time, U.S. pilots are authorized to bomb road and rail links in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, formerly on the prohibited target list. This permitted U.S. aircraft to bomb targets within 25 miles of the Chinese border and to engage other targets with rockets and cannon within 10 miles of the border. The original restrictions had been imposed because of Johnson's fear of a confrontation with China and a possible expansion of the war.

### **1970 South Vietnamese troops assume responsibility for guarding border**

As part of the Vietnamization effort, South Vietnamese troops relieve U.S. units of their responsibility for guarding the Cambodian and Laotian borders along almost the entire South Vietnamese frontier. Nixon's strategy in Vietnam was to improve the fighting capability of the South Vietnamese forces so that they could assume the responsibility for the war and, allowing for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. The assumption of the responsibility for the border areas was significant because those areas had previously required the presence of large U.S. combat formations.

### **1972 Last U.S. ground combat unit departs South Vietnam**

The last U.S. ground combat unit in South Vietnam, the Third Battalion, Twenty-First Infantry, departs for the United States. The unit had been guarding the U.S. air base at Da Nang. This left only 43,500 advisors, airmen, and support troops left in-country. This number did not include the sailors of the Seventh Fleet on station in the South China Sea or the air force personnel in Thailand and Guam.

## **AUGUST 12**

### **1965 Henry Cabot Lodge sworn in as Ambassador to Vietnam**

At the swearing-in ceremony for the new Ambassador to Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, President Johnson proclaims that the United States would not continue to fight in Vietnam "if its help were not wanted and requested." The appointing of Lodge and the recall of former Ambassador Frederick Nolting, Jr., signaled a change in U.S. policy in South Vietnam. Lodge was a firm believer in the domino theory and when he became convinced that the United States could not win in Vietnam with President Ngo Dinh Diem, he became very critical of Diem's regime in his dispatches back to Washington. Diem was ultimately removed from office and assassinated during a coup by opposition South Vietnamese generals that began on

November 1, 1963. Diem and his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, were assassinated some time after midnight on November 2.

### **1969 VC launch new offensive**

Viet Cong forces launch a new offensive with attacks on 150 cities, towns, and bases, including Da Nang and Hue. The heaviest attacks were aimed at the area adjacent to the Cambodian border northwest of Saigon; an estimated 2,000 Communists attacked Tay Ninh, Quan Loi, Loc Ninh, and An Loc. Further north, North Vietnamese commandos fought their way into the U.S. First Marine Division headquarters in Da Nang. They were eventually driven out by the Marines, who killed 40 Communist soldiers, sustaining five killed and 23 wounded in the process.

## **AUGUST 13**

### **1966 Prince Sihanouk criticizes the United States**

Prince Norodom Sihanouk, ruler of neutral Cambodia, criticizes the United States about the attack on Thlock Track, a Cambodian village close to the South Vietnamese border. Sihanouk routinely challenged the United States and its South Vietnamese allies for border violations, but tacitly permitted communist forces to use his territory for transit, supply dumps and base areas. In the United States, General William C. Westmoreland, Commander of Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) met with President Johnson at his ranch in Texas to provide the general's personal assessment of allied progress in the war, reporting that advances were being made against the communist insurgents.

### **1972 Sappers raid Long Binh ammo dump**

Communist sappers (demolitions specialists) attack the ammo dump at Long Binh, destroying thousands of tons of ammunition. Some observers said that the Communists might have been reverting to guerrilla tactics due to the overall failure of the Nguyen Hue Offensive that had been launched in March. Also on this day in 1972, ex-U.S. Army Captain J. E. Engstrom says that a military report he helped prepare in 1971, estimating that 25 percent of the lower-ranking enlisted men in Vietnam were addicted to heroin, was suppressed and replaced by a "watered-down" version considered more acceptable to the U.S. command.

## **AUGUST 14**

### **1964 Hanoi prepares for more air attacks**

Hanoi is reported to be holding air-raid drills for fear of more

U.S. attacks in the wake of the Pierce Arrow retaliatory raids that had been flown in response to the Gulf of Tonkin incident. The North Vietnamese government urged all civilians with nonessential posts to leave the city. In ground action, ARVN troops ambushed a Viet Cong unit south of Saigon. Meanwhile, Viet Cong guerrillas attacked three hamlets in the Vinh Binh Province along the coast in the Mekong Delta. A U.S. helicopter crashed 50 miles northwest of Saigon, killing three U.S. airmen.

### **1965 Seventh Marines land at Chu Lai**

The advance units of the Seventh Marines land at Chu Lai, bringing U.S. Marine strength in South Vietnam to four regiments and four air groups. The Marines were given the responsibility of conducting operations in southern I Corps and northern II Corps, just south of the Demilitarized Zone. Hanoi Radio broadcasted an appeal to American troops, particularly African Americans, to "get out." This was purportedly a message from an American defector from the Korean War living in Peking. In South Korea, the National Assembly approved sending troops to fight in South Vietnam; in exchange for sending one combat division to Vietnam, the United States agreed to equip five South Korean divisions.

### **1972 Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark reports on his tour of North Vietnam**

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark reports after his tour of North Vietnam with the International Commission of Inquiry into U.S. War Crimes in Indochina, that if Democratic candidate George McGovern were elected president in November, all U.S. POWs would be freed by North Vietnam within three months. He further reported that the POWs he interviewed during his trip were "unquestionably...well treated" and that he saw damage to North Vietnam's dikes in at least six places, and other extensive destruction in nonmilitary areas.

### **1973 U.S. bombing of Cambodia ceases**

After several days of intense bombing in support of Lon Nol's forces fighting the communist Khmer Rouge in the area around Phnom Penh, Operations Arc Light and Freedom Deal end as the United States ceases bombing Cambodia at midnight. This was in accordance with June Congressional legislation passed in June and ended 12 years of combat activity in Indochina. President Nixon denounced Congress for cutting off the funding for further bombing operations, saying

that it had undermined the "prospects for world peace." The United States continued unarmed reconnaissance flights and military aid to Cambodia, but ultimately the Khmer Rouge prevailed in 1975.

## **AUGUST 15**

### **1969 Woodstock begins in upstate New York**

The Woodstock Music and Art Fair, "An Aquarian Exposition," opens at Max Yasgur's dairy farm in upstate New York. Promoters expected the music festival, modeled after the famous Monterey Pop Festival, to attract up to 200,000 for the weekend, but nearly a half a million people converged on the concert site. Promoters soon realized that they could not control access to the site and opened it up to all comers free of charge. Because of the unexpected size of the audience, volunteers were needed to help alleviate many of the logistics problems, while helicopters were used to fly in food, doctors, and medical supplies, as well as many of the musical acts that performed during the three-day festival. Despite rain and mud, the audience enjoyed non-stop performances by singers like Richie Havens, Janis Joplin, Arlo Guthrie, Joe Cocker, and Joan Baez, as well as the bands Creedence Clearwater Revival; The Grateful Dead; The Jefferson Airplane; Sly and the Family Stone; and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. Although many different types of people attended the festival, many were members of the counterculture, often referred to as "hippies," who rejected materialism and authority, experimented with illicit drugs, and actively protested against the Vietnam War. Much of the music had a decided anti-war flavor. Representative of this genre was the "Fixin' to Die Rag" by Country Joe and the Fish. This song and its chorus ("And it's one, two, three, what are we fighting for...Don't ask me, I don't give a damn, next stop is Vietnam....And it's five, six, seven, open up the pearly gates...There ain't no time to wonder why...Whoopie, we're all gonna die!") became an anti-war classic. Jimi Hendrix closed the concert with a freeform solo guitar performance of "The Star Spangled Banner." Woodstock became a symbol of the 1960s American counterculture and a milestone in the history of rock music.

### **1968 Heavy fighting erupts in and around the DMZ**

Heavy fighting intensifies in and around the DMZ, as South Vietnamese and U.S. troops engage a North Vietnamese battalion. In a seven and a half hour battle, 165 enemy troops were killed. At the same time, U.S. Marines attacked three strategic positions just south of the DMZ, killing 56 North Vietnamese soldiers.

### **1970 Regional Forces victorious**

South Vietnamese officials report that regional forces killed 308 Communist troops in four days of heavy fighting along a coastal strip south of the DMZ. This was one of the biggest victories of the war for the regional forces in the war and was extremely significant since one of the prime objectives of Nixon's Vietnamization policy was the strengthening of the regional/popular forces so that they could help secure the countryside.

### **1971 North Vietnamese capture Vietnamese marine base**

In South Vietnam, North Vietnamese troops increase operations along the DMZ. This activity had begun on August 12 and continued until the 15th. The North Vietnamese captured the South Vietnamese marine base at Ba Ho, two miles south of the DMZ; most of the defenders were killed or wounded, but the Communists suffered 200 dead in taking the base.

## **AUGUST 16**

### **1964 General Khanh ousts General Minh as chief of state**

General Nguyen Khanh, elected president by the Military Council, ousts Duong Van Minh as South Vietnamese chief of state and installs a new constitution, which the U.S. Embassy had helped to draft.

Khanh said that he was not becoming a military dictator, but it was clear that he was now the chief power in the Saigon government. Within the week, student demonstrations against Khanh and the military government quickly turned into riots. Meanwhile, Henry Cabot Lodge, former ambassador to South Vietnam, went to Western Europe as a personal emissary of President Johnson to explain U.S. policy in Vietnam and to obtain more support from allies. Lodge returned with pledges from West Germany, Holland, Belgium, Great Britain, and Spain to provide nonmilitary technical aid to South Vietnam, but none agreed to provide military support.

### **1966 Congress investigates antiwar demonstrators**

The House Un-American Activities Committee investigates Americans who have given aid to the Viet Cong with a view toward introducing legislation to make such activities illegal. Demonstrators disrupted the hearings and before it was over, more than 50 people were arrested for disorderly conduct. The Chairman of the subcommittee, Representative J. R. Pool (D-Texas) announced that the hearings had revealed that key leadership of groups supporting the Viet Cong were comprised

of revolutionary, hard-core Communists.

### **1967 Tonkin Gulf Resolution challenged**

President Johnson's broad interpretation of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution is attacked in the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee by the Chairman, Senator William Fulbright of Arkansas, who feels that Johnson has no mandate to conduct the war on the present scale.

### **1972 Heavy air attacks on North Vietnam**

U.S. fighter-bombers fly 370 air strikes against North Vietnam, the highest daily total of the year; additionally, there are eight B-52 strikes in the North. Meanwhile, U.S. warplanes flew 321 missions (including 27 B-52 strikes) in South Vietnam, mostly in Quang Tri province. Despite this heavy air activity, hopes for an agreement to end the war rise as Henry Kissinger leaves Paris to confer with President Thieu and his advisers.

## **AUGUST 17**

### **1973 U.S. troops to withdraw from Thailand**

The United States and Thailand agree to begin negotiations on the reduction of the 49,000-man American presence in Thailand.

Thailand had been a close ally of the United States and had provided both military bases and combat troops to assist the United States and South Vietnam in the war against the Communists. Responding to President Lyndon Johnson's call for "Free World Military Forces" to come to the aid of South Vietnam, Thailand sent combat troops, which by 1969 totaled nearly 12,000. The last Thai troops were withdrawn from Vietnam in April 1972. In addition to providing troops, Thailand also provided bases for the U.S. Air Force, which included four tactical fighter wings. In addition, strategic bombing missions by B-52s over both North and South Vietnam were flown from U.S. bases in Thailand. With the signing of the Paris Peace Accords and the Congressional restrictions against further bombing, these bases were no longer needed.

### **1968 117,000 combat missions flown over North Vietnam in three years**

Defense Department figures put the number of combat missions flown over North Vietnam since February 1965 to 117,000, dropping over 2.5 million tons of bombs and rockets.

### **1965 Marines launch Operation Starlite**

After a deserter from the First Vietcong Regiment had revealed that an attack was imminent against the U.S. base at Chu Lai, the Marines launch Operation Starlite in the Van Tuong peninsula in Quang Ngai Province.

In this, the first major U.S. ground battle of the Vietnam War, 5,500 Marines destroyed a Viet Cong stronghold, scoring a resounding victory. During the operation, which lasted six days, ground forces, artillery from Chu Lai, close air support, and naval gunfire combined to kill nearly



700 Vietcong soldiers. U.S. losses included 45 Marines dead and more than 200 wounded.

### **1966 Australians defeat VC at Long Tan**

The First Australian Task Force (ATF) inflicts a major defeat on Viet Cong forces in Phuoc Tuy Province. Australia had first sent troops to Vietnam in 1962 and eventually expanded its commitment in response to President Lyndon Johnson's call for "Free World Military Forces" to form an alliance of "Many Flags" in South Vietnam. By 1966, the First Australian Task Force included two infantry battalions and associated logistical support elements; it had also been joined by a New Zealand unit made up of two infantry companies and a Special Air Service troops. In the Battle of Long Tan, the ATF acquitted itself very well, inflicting a major defeat on the communist forces, killing 245 while sustaining 17 dead.

### **1968 Communists launch new offensive**

The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong launch a limited offensive in the south with 19 separate attacks throughout South Vietnam. In the heaviest fighting in three months, Communist troops attacked key positions along the Cambodian border in Tay Ninh and Binh Long provinces, northwest of Saigon. In Tay Ninh, 600 Viet Cong, supported by elements of two North Vietnamese divisions, attacked the provincial capital, capturing several government installations. U.S. reinforcements from the Twenty-fifth Infantry Division were rushed to the scene and after a day of house-to-house fighting expelled the communists from the city.

### **1971 Australia and New Zealand decide to withdraw troops from Vietnam**

Australia and New Zealand announce the end of the year as the deadline for withdrawal of their respective contingents from Vietnam. The Australians had 6,000 men in South Vietnam and the New Zealanders numbered 264. Both nations agreed to leave behind small training contingents. Australian Prime Minister William McMahon proclaimed that the South Vietnamese forces were now able to assume Australia's role in Phuoc Tuy province, southeast of Saigon and that Australia would give South Vietnam \$28 million over the next three years for civilian projects. Total Australian losses for the period of their commitment in Vietnam were 473 dead and 2,202 wounded; the monetary cost of the war was \$182 million for military expenses and \$16 million in civilian assistance to South Vietnam.

## **AUGUST 19**

### **1972 Democratic candidate McGovern attacks Nixon policy in Vietnam**

Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern attacks U.S. pacification techniques of applying "massive firepower and free-fire zones and [clearing] 6 million people out of their homes." McGovern, a senator from South Dakota, had long been an outspoken opponent of the war in Southeast Asia and had begun calling for withdrawal of U.S. troops in early 1965. In 1972, he campaigned on a liberal reform platform, calling for an immediate end to U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. He also advocated making the Democratic party more responsive to youth, women, and minorities. Despite

McGovern's attempt to appear more "mainstream," his opponent, incumbent President Richard Nixon, effectively portrayed McGovern as a radical and was able to draw moderate Democrats to the Republican camp. In addition, many of McGovern's domestic reform ideas alienated many old-line Democrats who also switched their support to Nixon. McGovern's campaign was further damaged when his first choice for running mate, Thomas Eagleton, admitted that he had been treated for mental illness. His second choice, Sargent Shriver, added very little to the ticket. Badly split, the Democrats suffered one of the worst defeats in U.S. political history when Nixon and Spiro T. Agnew won in a landslide. Also on this day: In South Vietnam, the Nguyen Hue Offensive continues with major fighting near the northern district capital Que Son and neighboring Fire Base Ross. After a heavy bombardment, the North Vietnamese captured both the town and the base, giving the Communist control of most of Quang Nam province.

### **1968 Many Americans against a bombing halt**

A Harris survey indicates that 61 percent of those polled are against calling a halt to the bombing in Vietnam. President Johnson, in a major speech at the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Detroit, challenged Hanoi to respond to the limitations of the bombing campaign that he had announced in March. But he refused to curtail other military activities in Southeast Asia, saying that, "there are some among us who appear to be searching for a formula which would get us out of Vietnam and Asia on any terms, leaving the people of South Vietnam and Laos and Thailand...to an uncertain fate."

### **1970 Cambodia and U.S. sign military aid pact**

Cambodia and the U.S. sign a military aid agreement worth \$40 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1971. The equipment included small arms, ammunition, communications equipment, spare parts and training funds.

## **AUGUST 20**

### **1954 United States decides to support Diem**

President Eisenhower approves a National Security Council paper titled "Review of U.S. Policy in the Far East." This paper supported Secretary of State Dulles' view that the United States should support Diem, while encouraging him to broaden his government and establish more democratic institutions. Ultimately, however, Diem would refuse to make any meaningful concessions or institute any significant new reforms and U.S. support was withdrawn. Diem was subsequently assassinated during a coup by opposition

generals on November 2, 1963.

### **1971 Minh and Ky withdraw from presidential race**

General Duong Van Minh and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, fellow candidates for the October presidential election, accuse incumbent President Nguyen Van Thieu of rigging the election and withdraw from the race.

In the United States, the FBI began investigating journalist Daniel Schorr, who was targeted by the Nixon administration because of his critical reporting of the president's handling of the situation in Vietnam.

### **1974 Military aid to Saigon slashed**

In the wake of Nixon's resignation, Congress reduces military aid to South Vietnam from \$1 billion to \$700 million. This was one of several actions that signaled the North Vietnamese that the United States was backing away from its commitment to South Vietnam.

## **AUGUST 21**

### **1963 Nhu's Special Forces attack the Buddhists**

South Vietnamese Special Forces loyal to President Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, attack Buddhists pagodas, damaging many and arresting 1,400 Buddhists. Diem's government represented a minority of Vietnamese who were mostly businessmen, land owners, and Roman Catholics. A large part of the rest of the South Vietnam's population, overwhelmingly Buddhist, deeply resented Diem's rule because of what they perceived as severe discrimination against non-Catholics. In May 1963, the Buddhists began a series of demonstrations against the Diem government, in which seven Buddhist monks set themselves on fire in protest. The U.S. government tried to convince Diem to be more lenient with the Buddhists, but he only became more repressive.

This continuing confrontation with the Buddhists and Diem's failure to press for meaningful reforms led to a withdrawal of U.S. support for the South Vietnamese leader and effectively gave a green light for a coup conducted by opposition generals, who were told that the United States would support whichever government was in power. During the course of the coup, Diem and his brother were assassinated by South Vietnamese officers. The removal of Diem, which U.S. government officials had hoped would stabilize the political situation in South Vietnam, resulted in anything but stability--there would be ten successive governments in Saigon within 18 months.

### **1965 U.S. pilots given green light to go after anti-aircraft missiles in the North**

It is revealed by MACV headquarters (Headquarters Military Assistance Command Vietnam) in Saigon that U.S. pilots have received approval to destroy any Soviet-made missiles they see while raiding North Vietnam. This was a major change from previous orders that restricted them to bombing only previously approved targets.

### **1969 Nixon meets with South Korean President**

President Nixon and South Korean President Park Chung Hee meet in San Francisco. In his welcoming address, Nixon notes that South Korea had "more fighting men in South Vietnam than any other nation" except the United States and South Vietnam. The United States would spend \$250 million in 1969 to maintain South Korea's 50,000-man Tiger Division in South Vietnam, which they had previously agreed to outfit.

### **1971 Antiwar protestors raid draft offices**

Antiwar protestors associated with the Catholic Left raid draft offices in Buffalo, New York, and Camden, New Jersey, to confiscate and destroy draft records. The FBI and local police arrested 25 protestors.

## **AUGUST 22**

### **1962 Kennedy reports stalemate in Vietnam**

Kennedy administration officials quoted in *The New York Times* estimate that there are 20,000 guerrilla troops in South Vietnam. Despite hundreds of engagements during the preceding two months and encouraging victories for South Vietnamese forces, the Viet Cong had grown in numbers, and U.S. officials felt that the war had reached a point of stalemate.

### **1967 Graduated bombing policy condemned**

Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General John P. McConnell, states before a Senate Subcommittee that adopting a graduated bombing policy in North Vietnam was a mistake. Three days later, Secretary of Defense McNamara admitted that the bombing of North Vietnam had not materially affected Hanoi's "warmaking capability."

### **1968 VC repudiates Johnson's peace overture**

For the first time in two months, Viet Cong forces launch a rocket attack on Saigon, killing 18 and wounding 59. Administration officials denounced the attack as a direct repudiation of President Johnson's speech of August 19, in which he appealed to the North Vietnamese to respond favorably to his limitation of the air campaign north of the DMZ.

### **1972 Demonstrators disrupt Republican National Convention in Miami Beach**

Delegates entering the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach are harassed by 3,000 antiwar demonstrators, many painted with death masks. The rest of the convention is marked by demonstrations outside the meeting hall; hundreds of protestors are arrested and many are injured when police use riot-control agents.

## **AUGUST 23**

### **1968 Communist forces renew offensive**

Communist forces launch rocket and mortar attacks on numerous cities, provincial capitals, and military installations. The heaviest shelling was on the U.S. airfield at Da Nang, the cities of Hue and Quang Tri. North Vietnamese forces numbering between 1200 and 1500 troops attacked the U.S. Special Forces camp at Duc Lap, 130 miles northeast of Saigon near the Cambodian border. The camp fell but was retaken by an allied relief column led by U.S. Special Forces on August 25. A reported 643 North Vietnamese troops were killed in the battle.

### **1966 U.S. cargo ship strikes a mine near Saigon**

*The American cargo ship *Baton Rouge Victory* strikes a mine laid by the Viet Cong in the Long Tao River, 22 miles south of Saigon. The half-submerged ship blocked the route from the South Vietnamese capital to the sea. Seven crewmen were killed.*

## **AUGUST 24**

### **1969 U.S. unit refuses commander's order**

Company A of the Third Battalion, 196th Light Infantry Brigade refuses the order of its commander, Lieutenant Eugene Schurtz, Jr., to continue an attack that had been launched to reach a downed helicopter shot down in the Que Son valley, 30 miles south of Da Nang. The unit had been in fierce combat

for five days against entrenched North Vietnamese forces and had taken heavy casualties. Schurtz called his battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. Bacon, and informed him that his men had refused to follow his order to move out because they had "simply had enough" and that they were "broken." The unit eventually moved out when Bacon sent his executive officer and a sergeant to give Schurtz's troops "a pep talk," but when they reached the downed helicopter on August 25, they found all eight men aboard dead. Schurtz was relieved of his command and transferred to another assignment in the division. Neither he nor his men were disciplined. This case of "combat refusal," as the Army described it, was reported widely in U.S. newspapers.

### **1963 Washington changes policy on support for President Diem**

Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge receives a State Department cable stating that the United States can no longer tolerate Ngo Dinh Nhu's influence in President Ngo Dinh Diem's regime. This message was in response to the raids on the Buddhist pagodas; it also directed Lodge to tell the South Vietnamese generals that Washington was prepared to discontinue economic and military aid to Diem. This was no doubt a major factor in convincing the opposition generals to launch the coup that resulted in Diem's death in the early morning hours of November 2, 1963.

### **1970 B-52s conduct heavy raids along the DMZ**

U.S. B-52s carry out heavy bombing raids along the DMZ. In the United States, a radical protest group calling themselves the New Year's Gang blew up in the Army Mathematics Research Center at the University of Wisconsin Army Mathematics Research Center in Madison. A graduate student who was working late was killed in the blast. The center, which reportedly was involved in war research, had been a focus for protest in the past, but previously protests had all been nonviolent.

## **AUGUST 25**

### **1967 McNamara concedes that bombing is less than effective**

Defense Secretary McNamara concedes that the U.S. bombing campaign has had little effect on the North's "war-making capability." At the same time, McNamara refuses a request from military commanders to bomb all MIG bases in North Vietnam. In Hanoi, North Vietnam's Administrative Committee orders all workers in light industry and all craftsmen and their families to leave the city; only persons vital to the city's defense and

production were to remain.

### **1971 173rd Airborne Brigade departs Vietnam**

U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade, among the first U.S. ground units sent to Vietnam, ceases combat operations and prepares to redeploy to the United States as part of Nixon's troop withdrawal plan.

As the redeployment commenced, the communists launched a new offensive to disrupt the upcoming General Assembly elections in South Vietnam. The height of the new offensive occurred from August 28 to August 30, when the Communists executed 96 attacks in the northern part of South Vietnam. U.S. bases also came under attack at Lai Khe, Cam Ranh Bay, and other areas. Nixon's troop reduction plans were supposedly tied to the level of enemy activity on the battlefield, but once they began, very little attention was paid to what the enemy was doing and the withdrawals continued unabated.

## **AUGUST 26**

### **1968 Democratic National Convention opens in Chicago**

The Democratic National Convention opens in Chicago and, immediately, a conflict erupts over the party's Vietnam platform. An antiwar faction led by Senators Eugene McCarthy (D-Minnesota) and George McGovern (D-South Dakota) advocated unconditionally halting the bombing of North Vietnam; negotiating a mutual withdrawal of U.S. and North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam; encouraging the Saigon regime to open negotiations with the National Liberation Front; the acceptance of a coalition government; and the reduction of U.S. combat operations in the South. The other faction endorsed the Johnson administration's handling of the war, applauding the president's efforts to scale down U.S. commitment and begin peace talks.

### **1964 Johnson receives Democratic nomination for president**

Lyndon B. Johnson is nominated to run for the presidency at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. His running mate would be Hubert H. Humphrey. Former Vice President Johnson had assumed the reigns of government in November 1963 when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Upon assuming office, he inherited a commitment to Vietnam where Kennedy had sent military advisors to support the South Vietnamese government in Saigon. Following the Tonkin Gulf incident earlier in August when North Vietnamese torpedo boats reportedly attacked U.S. destroyers, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution empowering Johnson to "take all necessary



measures to repel an armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." With the support of Congress in hand and having been nominated for the presidency in his own right, Johnson said he would stop the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, but that American "boys" should not be sent to do the fighting that Asian "boys" with U.S. help could do themselves. Receiving opposing views from various experts inside and outside the government, Johnson chose to listen to those he wanted to hear, discounting those who suggested that the U.S. should not become deeply involved in the war. Trying to protect his domestic agenda at home, he nevertheless gradually escalated the U.S. commitment in South Vietnam, eventually sending U.S. combat units that resulted in more than 500,000 American troops in-country by early 1968.

Also on this day: The Joint Chiefs of Staff send a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, concurring with an August 19 cable from Ambassador Maxwell Taylor in Saigon who called for "a carefully orchestrated bombing attack on North Vietnam" to prevent "a complete collapse of the U.S. position in Southeast Asia."

### **1967 Major George E. Day shot down over North Vietnam**

Badly injured after ejecting when his North American F-100F is shot down over North Vietnam, Major George E. Day is captured and severely tortured. He later managed to escape and eventually made it to the DMZ. After several attempts to signal U.S. aircraft, he was ambushed and recaptured, and was later moved to prison in Hanoi, where he continued to strongly resist to his captors. Finally released in 1973, Major Day was awarded the Medal of Honor for his conspicuous gallantry while a POW.

## **AUGUST 27**

### **1970 Agnew meets with President Thieu in Saigon**

Vice President Spiro Agnew meets with South Vietnamese president Nguyen Van Thieu in Saigon. In a speech at Ton Son Nhut air base, Agnew praised the South Vietnamese people for suffering "so much in freedom's cause" and promised that "there will no lessening of U.S. support." Meanwhile, MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam) reported that 52 Americans died and 358 were wounded during the week August 16-22, the lowest casualty toll since the week of December 3, 1966.

### **1972 U.S. aircraft conduct heavy raids on Hanoi and Haiphong**

In the heaviest bombing in four years, U.S. aircraft flatten North Vietnamese barracks near Hanoi and Haiphong as part of ongoing Operation Linebacker I, part of President Nixon's response to the NVA Easter Offensive. Planes also hit bridges on the northeast railroad line to China. In an associated action, four U.S. ships raided the Haiphong port area after dark, shelling to within two miles of the city limits. As the U.S. ships withdrew from the area, the cruiser USS *Newport News* sank one of two North Vietnamese patrol boats in pursuit, and destroyer USS *Rowan* set the other on fire.

## **AUGUST 28**

### **1968 DNC endorses Johnson administration platform on the war in Vietnam**

The Democratic National Convention in Chicago endorses the Johnson administration's platform on the war in Vietnam and chooses Vice President Hubert Humphrey as the party's nominee for president. The decision on the party platform resulted in a contentious three-hour debate inside the convention hall.

Outside, a full-scale riot erupted, where antiwar protesters battled with police and National Guardsmen. By the time the convention was over, 668 demonstrators had been arrested and many Americans were stunned by the images of armed conflict in the streets. Humphrey's Republican opponent, Richard Nixon, very successfully used this incident in a call for return to law and order that won him much support during the election campaign.

### **1966 North Vietnamese pilots being trained in Soviet Union**

It is reported in three Soviet newspapers that North Vietnamese pilots are undergoing training in a secret Soviet air base to fly supersonic interceptors against U.S. aircraft. This only confirms earlier reports that the Soviets had initiated close relations with North Vietnam after a visit by Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin to Hanoi in February 1965 during which he signed economic and military treaties with the North, pledging full support for their war effort. The Soviets and North Vietnamese leadership planned military strategy and discussed North Vietnam's needs to prosecute such a strategy. The Soviets agreed to supply the necessary war materials, to include air defense weapons for the North and offensive weapons to be employed in the South. At one point in the war, the Soviets would supply 80 percent of all supplies reaching North Vietnam.

### **1967 More voices raised against the war**

Reverend Thomas Lee Hayes, speaking for the National Mobilization Committee, announces that there will be a massive protest march on October 21 in Washington. In the Senate, Mike Mansfield (D-Montana) made a proposal endorsed by 10 other senators to bring a peace plan before the United Nations.

### **1972 U.S. Air Force gets its first ace since Korean War**

The U.S. Air Force gets its first ace (a designation traditionally awarded for five enemy aircraft confirmed shot down) since the Korean War. Captain Richard S. Ritchie, flying with his "backseater" (radar intercept officer), Captain Charles B. DeBellevue, in an F-4 out of Udorn Air Base in Thailand, shoots down his fifth MiG near Hanoi.

Two weeks later, Captain DeBellevue, flying with Captain John A. Madden, Jr., shot down his fifth and sixth MiGs. The U.S. Navy already had two aces, Lieutenants Randall Cunningham and Bill Driscoll.

By this time in the war, there was only one U.S. fighter-bomber base left in South Vietnam at Bien Hoa. The rest of the air support was provided by aircraft flying from aircraft carriers or U.S. bases in Thailand.

Also on this day: Back in the United States, President Nixon announces that the military draft will end by July 1973.

## **AUGUST 29**

### **1964 Khanh steps down**

Nguyen Khanh steps down as president of South Vietnam and Xuan Oanh, former professor at Trinity College in Connecticut, is named prime minister. Khanh had been a major player in the instability that followed the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963. This period was marked by ten successive governments in Saigon within 18 months. A military junta headed by General Duong Van Minh as chief of state assumed control of the government upon Diem's death. On January 30, 1964, Khanh, a 37-year-old Major General, led a bloodless coup against Minh, but allowed him to stay on as titular head of state. What followed was a series of governments, none of which was able to govern; one Johnson administration official suggested that the coat of arms of the South Vietnamese government should be a turnstile. With the passing of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution earlier in August, General Khanh sought to take advantage of the new situation. He promoted himself to the presidency, hastily issued a new constitution, and dismissed former figurehead chief of state Minh. These moves were answered by protests when students and Buddhist took to the streets demonstrating against Khanh's new government and the continuing influence

of Catholics in the government. Khanh spoke with some of the demonstrators but said he would have to discuss their complaints with U.S. ambassador Maxwell Taylor. Two days later, he resigned. The Military Revolutionary Council made up of top South Vietnamese generals met to choose a new head of state. They chose a triumvirate of Generals Khanh, Minh, and Tran Thien Kheim as an interim government to restore order. Xuan Oanh was chosen prime minister of the new government, but Khanh retained the premiership. However, he was ousted in February 1965 by Generals Nguyen Cao Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu. Khanh then went to the United States and settled in Palm Beach, Florida. Washington had watched the political instability in South Vietnam with great alarm and hoped that Ky and Thieu could establish a viable government that would fight the communists.

### **1971 President Nguyen Van Thieu retains control of National Assembly**

President Nguyen Van Thieu retains control of the South Vietnamese National Assembly as candidates backing him sweep the opposition in the Mekong Delta, with a solid majority in the 159-member lower house. Thieu will be re-elected in October amid charges of corruption that resulted in the withdrawal of his two opponents, General Duong Van Minh and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky. The election insured one man rule in Saigon and greatly damaged the government's image and credibility with the South Vietnamese people.

### **1972 Nixon announces another troop reduction**

President Nixon sets December 1 as the target date for reducing U.S. troops strength in Vietnam by 12,000, to 27,000, an all-time low since the American troop buildup began in 1965.

## **AUGUST 30**

### **1969 Ho Chi Minh responds to Nixon letter**

Ho Chi Minh's reply to President Nixon's letter of July 15 is received in Paris. Ho accused the United States of a "war of aggression" against the Vietnamese people, "violating our fundamental national rights" and warned that "the longer the war goes on, the more it accumulates the mourning and burdens of the American people." Ho said he favored the National Liberation Front's 10-point plan as "a logical and reasonable basis for the settlement of the Vietnamese problem." Ho demanded that the United States "cease the war of aggression," withdraw its troops from Vietnam and allow self-determination for the Vietnamese people. President Nixon would not reveal that he had received this communication until

his speech to the nation on November 3.

### **1966 China agrees to provide aid to North Vietnam**

Hanoi Radio announces that Deputy Premier Le Thanh Nghi has signed an agreement with Peking whereby the People's Republic of China will provide additional economic and technical aid to North Vietnam. China had already been providing support to the Communists in Vietnam since the war against the French. When the U.S. became decisively involved after the Gulf of Tonkin incident, China increased the support to both North Vietnam and the insurgents in South Vietnam. It was this support and that provided by the Soviet Union that permitted the North Vietnamese to prosecute the war against South Vietnam and the U.S. forces there.

### **1970 Elections held in South Vietnam**

An estimated 6 million South Vietnamese cast ballots for 30 seats at stake in the Senate elections. While the voting was going on, Communist forces attacked at least 14 district towns, a provincial capital, and several polling places. Fifty-five civilians were reported killed and 140 wounded.

## **AUGUST 31**

### **1955 Dulles supports Diem's decision not to hold national election**

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles supports South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem's position regarding his refusal to hold "national and general elections" to reunify the two Vietnam states. Although these elections were called for by the Geneva Accords of July 1954, Diem and his supporters in the United States realized that if the elections were held, Ho Chi Minh and the more populous north would probably win, thereby reuniting Vietnam under the Communist banner. Accordingly, he refused to hold the elections and the separation of North and South soon became permanent.

### **1965 Ky refuses to negotiate with the Communists**

Premier Nguyen Cao Ky announces that South Vietnam would not negotiate with the Communists without guarantees that North Vietnamese troops would be withdrawn from the South. He also said that his government would institute major reforms to correct economic and social injustices. Also on this day: In the United States, President Johnson signs into law a bill making it illegal to destroy or mutilate a U.S. draft card, with

penalties of up to five years and a \$10,000 fine.

### **1967 Senate Committee calls for stepped-up bombing**

Senate Preparedness Investigating Committee issues a call to step up bombing against the North, declaring that McNamara had "shackled" the air war against Hanoi, and calling for "closure, neutralization, or isolation of Haiphong." President Johnson, attempting to placate Congressional "hawks" and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, expanded the approved list of targets in the north, authorizing strikes against bridges, barracks, and railyards in the Hanoi-Haiphong area and additional targets in the previously restricted areas along the Chinese border.

### **1970 Thieu government maintains control of Senate**

In South Vietnam, antigovernment Buddhist candidates appear to win 10 of 30 Senate seats contested in the previous day's election. However, the Senate as a whole remained in the firm control of conservative, pro-government supporters. Catholics still held 50 percent of the Senate seats, even though they constituted only 10 percent of the population of South Vietnam.

### **1972 U.S. weekly casualty figures hit new low**

U.S. weekly casualty figures of five dead and three wounded are the lowest recorded since record keeping began in January 1965. These numbers reflected the fact that there were less than 40,000 American troops left in South Vietnam by this time and very few of these were involved in actual combat. U.S. troop withdrawals had begun in the fall of 1969 following President Richard Nixon's announcement at the Midway conference on June 8, 1972, that he would begin reducing the number of American troops in Vietnam as the war was turned over to the South Vietnamese as part of his "Vietnamization" policy. Once the troop withdrawals began, they continued on a fairly regular basis, steadily reducing the troop level from the 1969 high of 543,400.