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IMAGES OF A LENGTHY WAR



The United States Army in Vietnam

Joel D. Meyerson

America's long involvement in Vietnam produced a rich and remarkably candid photographic record. Thousands of pictures, released during the fighting, became important to American feelings about the conflict. Thousands more were preserved in pictorial libraries as a vivid form of historical documentation. This book, a volume in the U.S. Army's Vietnam series, offers a comprehensive photographic chronicle of the war in Vietnam. In telling images and narrative, it captures the significant aspects of the Army's experience in Vietnam, beginning with the period of advice and assistance to the French through active intervention with ground combat troops and gradual withdrawal. Many of the photographs depict men in action on the Asian battlefield. Others show changing events in Washington, Hanoi, and other world capitals that fueled the collision of forces. As uniquely dramatized moments, the photographs in this valuable study invite reflection, an invitation that will be accepted by those who wish to increase their understanding of the Vietnam War.

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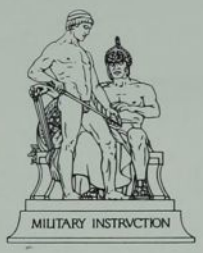
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United States Army in Vietnam

Images of a Lengthy War

by

Joel D. Meyerson



Center of Military History
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. . . to Those Who Served



Foreword

During America's involvement in Vietnam, photographers enjoyed almost unlimited access to the men and events of the war. Thousands of pictures were released to the American public while the conflict was still in progress. Many more were preserved in the photographic libraries of the armed forces, other governmental agencies, and the private news services.

Images of a Lengthy War, a volume in the United States Army in Vietnam series, makes available for study and reference some of the important photographs of the Vietnam War. It covers the three decades of the Army's experience in Vietnam, from the early years of advice and support to the French government through active intervention with combat forces and gradual withdrawal. Many of the photographs have been selected to show the complex nature of the war, in particular the demands of conducting counterguerrilla operations while undertaking conventional campaigns against enemy regulars. While the focus of the work is the American military, policy decisions in Washington and political developments in Vietnam are also amply illustrated to place the war in context. As a unique form of evidence, the photographs that follow, most of them appearing in print for the first time, are a valuable resource in recalling the look of Vietnam.

Washington, D.C.
26 April 1985

PATRICK J. HOLLAND
Colonel, USA
Acting Chief of Military History

The Author

Joel D. Meyerson received his B.A. from Yale University and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard University. In 1970 and 1971, he served with the U.S. Army in Vietnam as commander of a military history detachment, attaining the rank of captain. He taught history at the University of Arizona and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History at Harvard before joining the U.S. Army Center of Military History in 1975. Dr. Meyerson is associate editor of a four-volume study, *Province in Rebellion: A Documentary History of the Founding of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1774–1775* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), and has contributed to the *New England Quarterly*. He is currently writing a second book in the U.S. Army in Vietnam series, Logistics in the Vietnam Conflict.

Preface

This book traces the Army's experience in Vietnam in photographs and words. It is offered not as a formal piece of interpretive scholarship but as a collection of images or impressions of the war. Some of the photographs in these pages may strike a nerve or seem troubling for various reasons, a reminder that the war is still close in time and that emotions about its course and conduct are still deeply engaged. I have tried in selecting these photographs, nonetheless, to see the wholeness of the Vietnam War years; my aim has been to illustrate and perhaps to make Vietnam in some measure more accessible for reflection.

In researching and writing this book, I have received the kind support of a great many people. Brig. Gen. James L. Collins, Jr., former Chief of Military History, showed interest and patience from the beginning of the project. His successor, Brig. Gen. Douglas Kinnard, offered suggestions and helpful guidance as the book took form. I am most grateful to them. My colleagues who contributed to my ideas on Vietnam or offered pointed advice—some of which I stubbornly rejected—were William G. Bell, John D. Bergen, Jeffrey J. Clarke, Alexander S. Cochran, Vincent H. Demma, William M. Hammond, Richard A. Hunt, George L. MacGarrigle, and Ronald H. Spector. I alone am responsible for the errors and inadequacies that may linger. Col. James W. Dunn and Lt. Col. Richard O. Perry, successive chiefs of the center's Histories Division, read the complete manuscript and helped prepare the way for publication. Charles B. MacDonald, Stanley L. Falk, and John Schlight, my chiefs in the Southeast Asia Branch, pushed me toward greater clarity in my thinking about the war. It is a pleasure for me now to acknowledge their contribution.

At every stage of the research, I have had the benefit of the expert knowledge and advice of many people throughout the federal government. I am especially indebted to Viola M. Destefano and Calvin F. Douglas of the U.S. Army Audiovisual Center, Ada Scott of the 1361st Audiovisual Squadron (USAF), Oscar P. Fitzgerald of the Navy Memorial Museum, and John T. Dyer of the Marine Corps Historical Center. Jack B. Pfeiffer of the Central Intelligence Agency bore patiently with my requests for assistance, as did E. Philip Scott of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. Col. Roy M. Stanley, USAF, formerly with the Defense Intelligence Agency, was generous beyond the call.

For kindly making photographs available at little or no cost to the center, I am indebted to Benjamin J. Chapnick of Black Star, Robert E. Doyle of the National Geographic Society, Wes Gallagher of the Associated Press, F.W. Lyon of United Press International, Thomas P. Orr of Newsweek, James R. Shepley of Time, and the many photographers, officials, and soldiers named in the photo credits. Thanks also are due to Barry Zorthian,

formerly of Time, and to Hedrick L. Smith of the New York Times for assistance early in the project. For permission to publish a photograph taken by the late Dickey Chapelle, I am grateful to Robert P. Meyer.

Finally, for answering queries, donating criticism, and offering tangible encouragement, I want to thank Lenore Stein, Jack Shulimson, Lawrence J. Paszek, Col. James F. Ransone, David F. Trask, Norman M. Cary, Lt. Gen. Thomas J. H. Trapnell, General Frederick C. Weyand, and particularly Douglas Pike, director of the Indochina Archives at the University of California, Berkeley. The editorial expertise of John W. Elsberg and Barbara H. Gilbert, assisted by Joycelyn M. Canery, was essential in forcing me to reconsider my syntax and much more. Gustenia B. Scott typed the draft manuscript and prepared the final copy. Arthur S. Hardyman, chief of the Graphic Arts Branch, designed the book and, together with Linda M. Cajka and Howell C. Brewer, prepared the maps. Mr. Hardyman also helped me in selecting the photographs and laying out the volume page by page. His technical advice has been invaluable throughout; he deserves considerable credit for what is good in this study.

Washington, D.C.
26 April 1985

JOEL D. MEYERSON

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Images of a Lengthy War


CHINA
TONKIN
CHINA
Red R.
Black R.
Dien Bien Phu
HANOI
BURMA
Red River Delta
Haiphong
GULF OF TONKIN
Mekong R.
LAOS
HAINAN
Vinh
VIENTIANE
Hue
Da Nang
THAILAND (SIAM)
ANNAM
BANGKOK
CAMBODIA
Tonle Sap
Mekong R.
Da Lat
BURMA
PHNOM PENH
COCHINCHINA
SAIGON
GULF OF THAILAND (SIAM)
SOUTH CHINA SEA
Can Tho
Mekong River Delta
FRENCH INDOCHINA
High ground
0
150 MILES
0
150 KILOMETERS

MAP 1

1

Setting the Stage 1945–1954

Until the late 1940s Indochina meant little to Americans. The French colony in Southeast Asia attracted American businessmen, tourists, and adventurers in small numbers before World War II. It served as a minor theater for U.S. naval, air, and intelligence operations during the war years of the Japanese occupation. But except for President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who spoke of a postwar trusteeship for the colony as a means of accommodating the nationalism that had been sweeping the region since the Japanese victories over the European powers, most American policy makers manifested little interest in the distant land. When France insisted at the end of World War II on reclaiming its Asian empire, President Harry S. Truman acquiesced. His attention focused elsewhere—on building a Western European bulwark against Stalinist Russia.

Late in 1946 war broke out in Indochina between the French and a revolutionary nationalist movement led by Ho Chi Minh. Initially, the United States encouraged the two sides to negotiate their differences, perhaps to find a place for Ho's republic within the colonial French Union. Increasing evidence in 1947 that the revolutionary Viet Minh were Communist dominated, and fear that American involvement might bring down the moderate government in Paris, soon led the United States to defer to French solutions.

From the first those solutions were military and reflected French confidence in an easy victory. French strategy was to extend military strength into the countryside to destroy enemy bases and troop concentrations before the Viet Minh could escape into the jungle and mountains. Some operations lasted for months, involving thousands of troops, including paratroopers, armor, artillery, and support from the French Air Force. Whenever the Viet Minh made a stand they suffered heavy casualties. The French, however, often experienced logistical problems and were forced to return to their own bases near the towns before dispersing the revolutionaries.

The Viet Minh fought a less conventional kind of war. Although their commander, General Vo Nguyen Giap, formed a number of main force battalions and armed them with heavy weapons, he initially relied on guerrilla forces to carry out hit-and-run raids against French outposts and columns, and on increasing numbers of sympathetic peasant villagers to provide him with intelligence, manpower, and supplies. By 1949 nearly half of the country's peasants, many responding to Ho's appeal for national resistance and his program of reform, had come under Viet Minh control. When Chinese Communist armies arrived on Vietnam's border, creating sanctuaries for the main force Viet Minh, General Giap broke a three-year military stalemate. His forces began attacking in division-size formations.

The Communist triumph in China, and Moscow's recognition of Ho Chi Minh's government in January 1950, ended America's ambivalence toward the Indochina War. What many American officials had regarded as a distant colonial conflict was now seen as a struggle by the West against expanding communism. The United States acted quickly. In February 1950 President Truman recognized the State of Vietnam, the non-Communist government under the



Thousands of Vietnamese gathered in Hanoi's Ba Dinh Square to hear Ho Chi Minh read the Declaration of Independence of Vietnam on 2 September 1945. Ho quoted liberally from Thomas Jefferson and the French revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man. (*Center of Military History*)

former emperor Bao Dai which the French established as an alternative to the Viet Minh. In May direct American aid to Indochina began, a program that quickened when fighting erupted in Korea in late June. Eventually, the United States contributed in military and economic support nearly 80 percent of the cost of the war to the French, or more than $2 billion in supplies, equipment, and assistance. American aid experts, as part of a special economic mission in the country, brought farming and public health benefits to Vietnamese villages. U.S. military men assigned to the new Military Assistance Advisory Group, Indochina, funneled American tanks, planes, and guns to the French Expeditionary Corps.

Buoyed by the promise of large-scale reinforcements and the influx of American supplies, the French Army in 1951 seemed to revive. In the north the new French commander, General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, fortified the perimeter of the heavily populated Red River Delta and crushed a huge enemy assault against this "de Lattre Line." At the same time, while holding the enemy at bay, he began to recruit an indigenous army and to reorganize French units into special mobile groups. During a trip to the United States in September of that year, he won an increase in the size and speed



French troops, feeling heavy pressure from Viet Minh forces, pull back from Yen Phu outpost through the Tonkinese marshes. One of the vehicles still bears the markings of the Military Defense Assistance Program under which the United States furnished military aid to Indochina. *(Courtesy of James H. Tate)*

of American aid deliveries to Vietnam. He impressed American officials with his unswerving confidence in the final outcome and stimulated growing American sympathy for the French war effort.

The gains of 1951 were soon undone. French reluctance to grant political concessions to the Vietnamese hampered recruitment of a Vietnamese army. The resulting shortage of manpower affected all phases of French operations, tying down regular units in static defense of roads, bridges, and towns; conceding the initiative to the enemy; and increasing tensions with American military advisers who thought the French insufficiently aggressive. Each venture into enemy territory now became perilous—subjecting French supply columns to interdiction and their spearheads to attack at the enemy's leisure and exposing the villages behind French lines to infiltration by guerrillas and political cadres. After de Lattre's defeat in late 1951 at the town of Hoa Binh, and the inconclusive campaigns of his successor, General Raoul Salan, during the following year, there was growing discontent in France with the rising war costs in lives and resources. Various officials began to talk of negotiating an honorable withdrawal.

Seven years after the fighting started, the climactic battle of the Indochina War took place at Dien Bien Phu. On 13 March 1954, thirty-three main force battalions of Viet Minh, about 50,000 men, backed by triple that number of support troops and coolie transport workers, began the siege of the French strongpoint near the border with Laos. General Henri Navarre, the new French commander, had occupied Dien Bien Phu in order to cut enemy supply trails from Communist China and blunt a strong enemy offensive in the upper Mekong River valley that was upsetting his offensive campaign plan of 1953. U.S. military advisers who inspected Navarre's fortress stood divided on whether it was defensible. By late March the United States was debating military intervention. That debate lasted two months, splitting the military, unsettling Congress, and straining the Western alliance. Perhaps mindful of Army Chief of Staff Matthew B. Ridgway's warning that bombing Viet Minh artillery in the surrounding hills would not by itself extricate the French, President Dwight D. Eisenhower agreed to intervene only if Congress gave its support and France and Great Britain joined the United States in a phalanx of united action.

The issue soon became academic. On 7 May, fifty-five days after the siege began, France surrendered what remained of the battered garrison at Dien Bien Phu to Viet Minh officers. One day later a peace conference convened at Geneva, ratifying the end of a century of French dominance in Indochina. The United States throughout the proceedings counseled France against capitulation, hoping to find some way to save Indochina. The partitioning of Vietnam at the 17th Parallel offered a solution.

* * * * * *

A Distant Backwater Struggle



A tower ruin of the lost Cham civilization rises above the Old Mandarin Road in colonial Vietnam. (*Center of Military History*)

Colonialism Revived



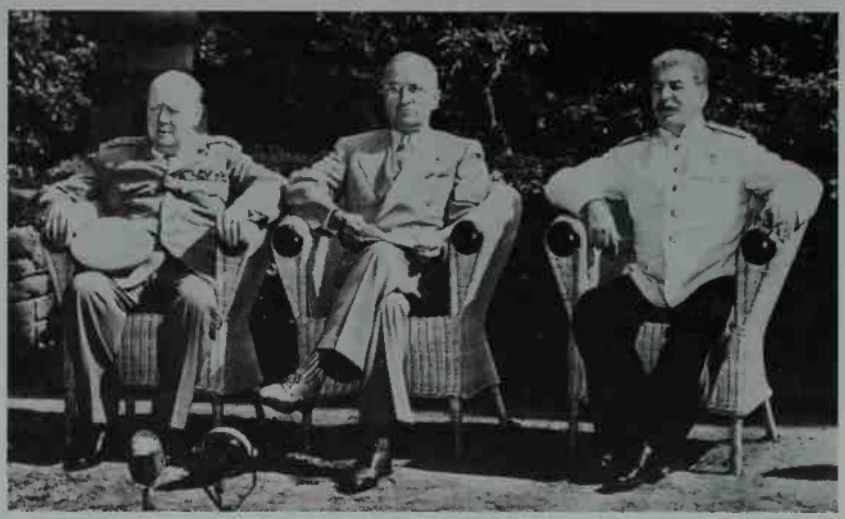
An official in the royal Annamese government in Hue poses before World War II for a visiting French artist. The court mandarins in the French protectorate of Annam lacked all but the trappings of dynastic power. (*Copyright National Geographic Society*)



Japanese cycling troops parade through Saigon in August 1941. The Japanese occupation of Indochina crippled French authority and encouraged native revolutionaries. (*Wide World Photos*)



TBF–1 Avengers from the USS *Essex* approach the coast of Indochina during a bombing mission in early 1945. Throughout World War II, Indochina was a minor theater of operations for American war planners. *(National Archives)*



After the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, where he met with Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill *(left)* and Marshal Joseph Stalin *(right)*, President Harry S. Truman, concerned for the Western alliance, acquiesced in the colonial reoccupation of Indochina. *(Indochina Archives, Berkeley)*



Maj. Archimedes L.A. Patti of the Office of Strategic Services *(front row left)* was one of several sympathetic Americans present in Hanoi at the creation of the Vietnamese democratic republic. To his left stands Vo Nguyen Giap, commander of the Viet Minh armed forces, while a Vietnamese band plays the "Star-Spangled Banner," August 1945. *(Courtesy of Archimedes L.A. Patti)*



French troops enter Hanoi in March 1946 after successful negotiations between Ho Chi Minh and General Jacques Leclerc, commander of the reoccupation force. (*E.C.P. Armees-France*)



Welcomed to Fontainebleau in June 1946 as Vietnamese chief of state, Ho soon concluded that France was hedging on Vietnamese unity and independence. Both sides began to prepare for war. (*National Archives*)



French troops watch for Viet Minh movement in Hanoi after attacks on French positions and residential districts, which marked the start of war. Unable to hold out in the cities, the insurgents retreated to prearranged bases in the countryside. (*Wide World Photos*)

The French Way of War



French military strategy was to hold the cities and the surrounding rural areas. An island of industry, government, and modernity, Saigon in 1948 seemed distant from the fighting. (*Center of Military History*)



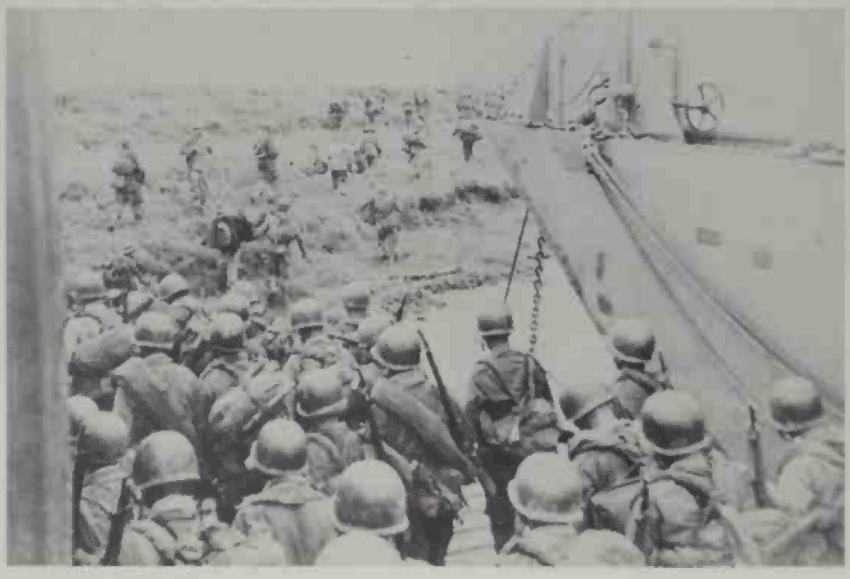
Watchtowers such as this one in Tay Ninh Province in southern Vietnam helped French forces control the major highways, at least during daylight. (*Center of Military History*)



A French convoy pauses near Ninh Hoa in central Vietnam. Because the French were heavily motorized, supply was often confined to a single road, which was likely to run through forests and defiles dangerously vulnerable to ambush. (*National Archives*)



Colonial troops guard the Trans-Indochina Railroad, a critical artery of communication, near Qui Nhon. (*Center of Military History*)



A large French attack force in Tonkin includes mobile groups, armored vehicles, amphibians, and artillery. Forces of this caliber were often enough to brush aside the Viet Minh. (*Center of Military History*)



French 105-mm. howitzers, part of a five-battery force, defend a strongpoint on a river line west of Hanoi. (*E.C.P. Armees-France*)



A French soldier uncovers a cache of Viet Minh grenades, many of them American made. (*E.C.P. Armees-France*)



French troops bring in enemy prisoners, members of the regional forces. Rarely before 1950 did main force Viet Minh units stand and fight. (*E.C.P. Armees-France*)

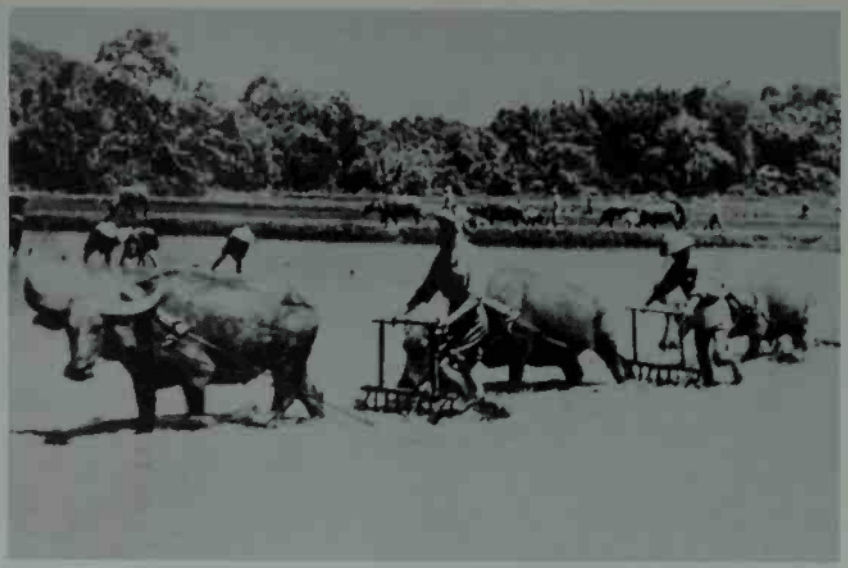
A People's Army



Vietnamese villages, such as this one in Tonkin, became Ho Chi Minh's weapon against the resources of the Westernized cities. Forced to retreat to the hinterlands, the Viet Minh succeeded in fitting their revolution to peasant traditions. (*Center of Military History*)



Peasant women attending a Viet Minh literacy class dramatize the effort of the cadres to create grass-roots solidarity through organization and indoctrination. (*Library of Congress*)



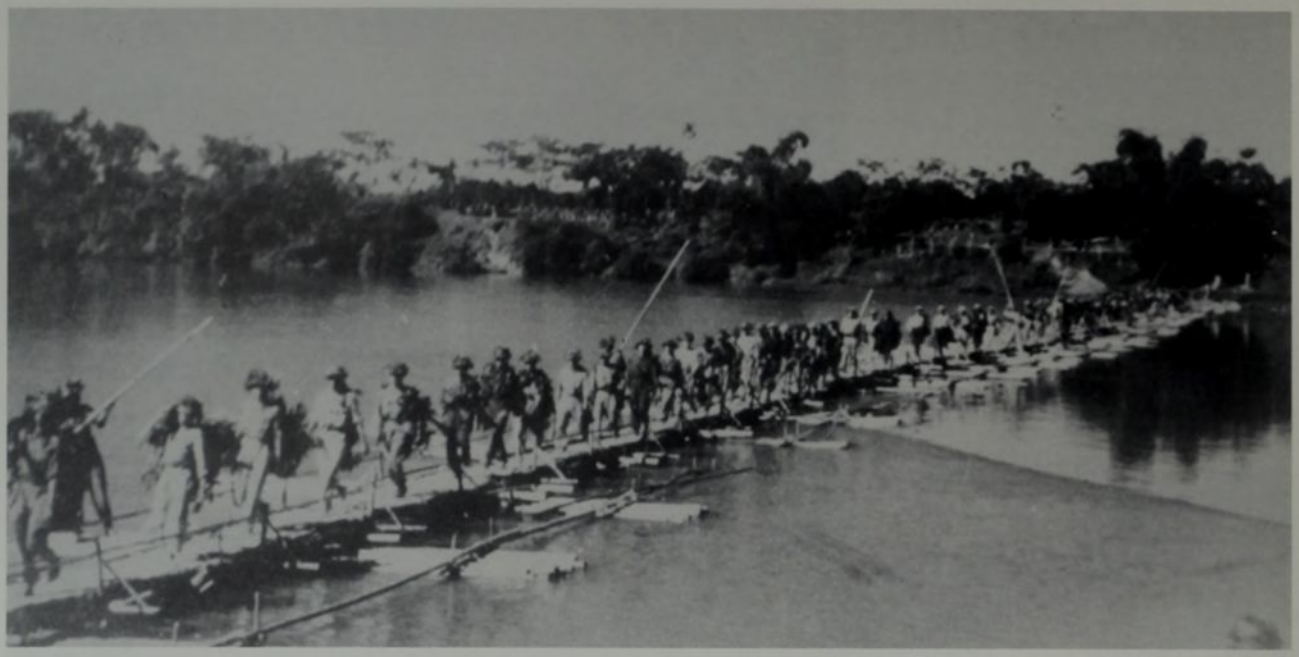
Viet Minh soldiers and villagers plow rice fields in northern Vietnam. Since food tended to be scarce in the Tonkin interior, the regular army controlled its collection and distribution. (*Center of Military History*)



Villagers load hand grenades for the Viet Minh at a small arms factory in Cochinchina. The main Viet Minh demand on the people was for labor and portage. (*Center of Military History*)



Tonkin natives carry food to the regular army. Most supplies were moved at night, when the French were generally inactive. (*Center of Military History*)



Although the Viet Minh relied on guerrilla operations, General Giap also fielded well-armed regular divisions, each with an organic engineer battalion capable of supporting movement with pontoon bridges. (*Center of Military History*)

An artillery unit of the People's Army of Vietnam fires guns captured from the French. Until 1950, when the Chinese Communists offered assistance, artillery was in short supply. (*Center of Military History*)



The West Draws the Line



Truman confers with French Prime Minister Rene Pleven in 1951. Standing are Secretary of State Dean Acheson (*left*) and Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall. The Communist victory in China and the outbreak of fighting in Korea changed the context of Indochina in American eyes. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

De Lattre Into the Breach



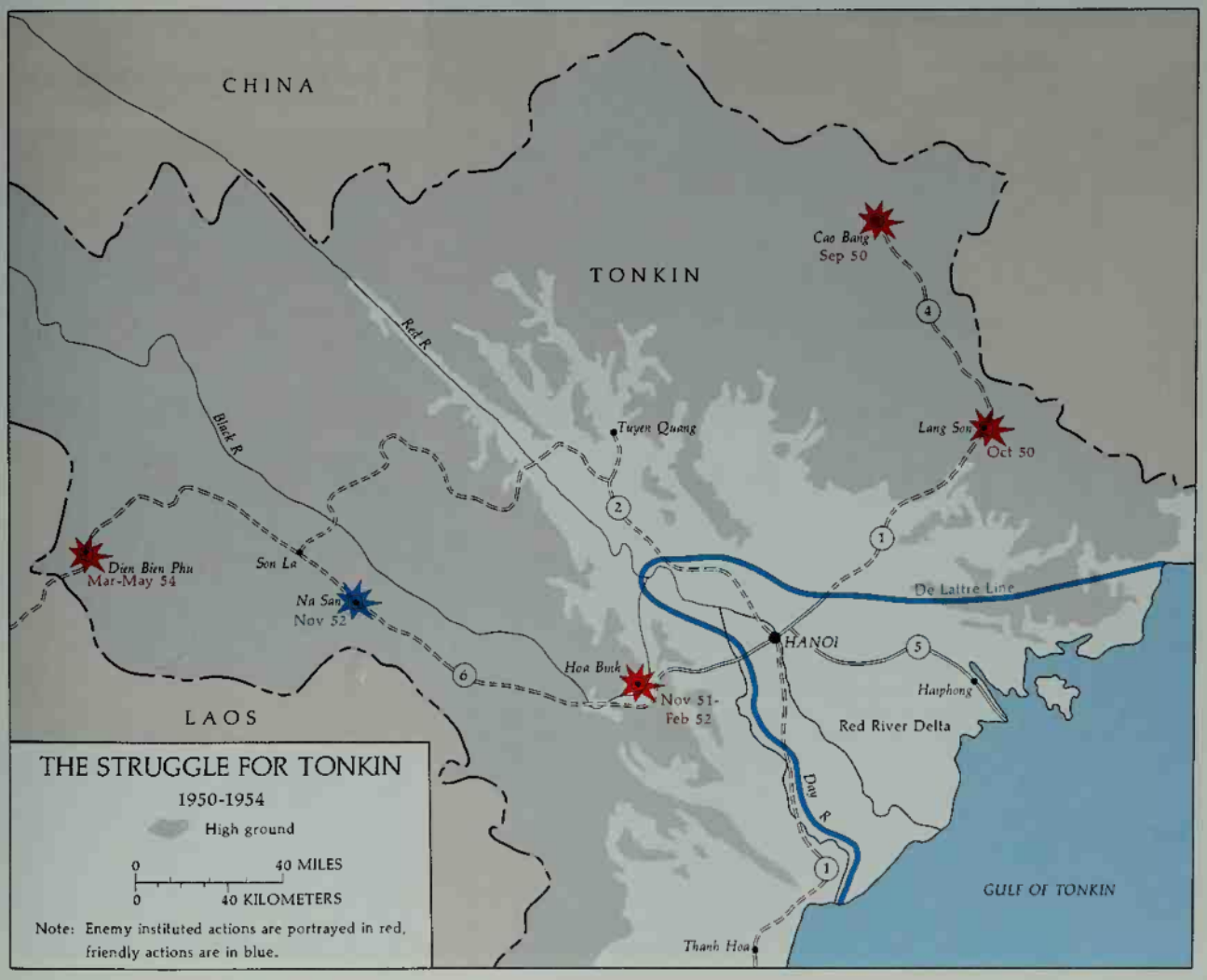
A U.S. Navy escort carrier ties up in Saigon in 1951 with a load of American F-8F Bearcats for the French Expeditionary Corps. American arms deliveries stiffened French morale. (*United Press International*)



Accompanied by General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, General J. Lawton Collins, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff (*second from left*), visited French forces in Hanoi in October 1951. De Lattre wears a black arm band for his son killed in Vietnam. Congressman John F. Kennedy (*rear, second from right*) is on a private tour in Indochina. (*U.S. Army*)



French troops construct a blockhouse along the de Lattre Line. The Red River chain of defensive positions included over 1,200 concrete strongpoints and enclosed 7,000 square miles of territory. (*Indochine: Sud-Est Asiatique*)



MAP 2



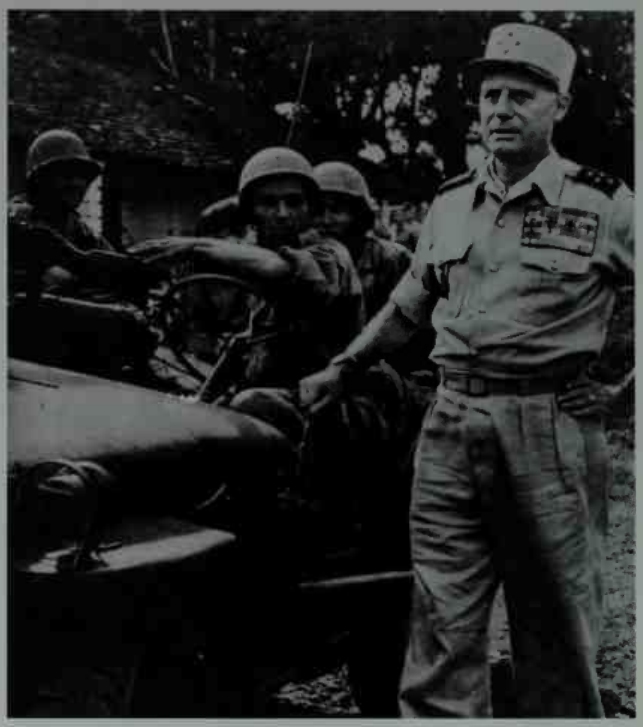
French troops guard rice fields on the plains west of Hanoi. Defensive posts in the Red River Delta drained allied manpower. (*Center of Military History*)



A tank bogs down while patrolling behind the de Lattre Line. (*E.C.P. Armees-France*)



Viet Minh mortar fire brings destruction to the airfield at Hoa Binh. De Lattre's attack on Hoa Binh, twenty-five miles beyond his perimeter, was intended to reassure the French home front that the war was going well. Instead, his exposed forces attracted the fury of three enemy divisions. (*E.C.P. Armees-France*)



General Raoul Salan, de Lattre's successor as commander, had the unhappy task of ordering the retreat from Hoa Binh. (*Indochine: Sud-Est Asiatique*)

French paratroopers search for snipers on a road out of Hoa Binh. Twenty thousand French soldiers were involved in evacuating the salient. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Perfecting Independence



The object of allied political hopes in Indochina was the former emperor of Annam, Bao Dai. Persuaded in 1949 to sign an agreement for associated statehood within the French Union, he spent the next four years at Da Lat in semi-retirement. (*Center of Military History*)

In an outburst of Vietnamese nationalism, two hundred delegates from various political groups convened a congress in Saigon in October 1953 and called for full independence. The United States urged the delegates to soften their demands. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)





Mobile propaganda units were given to the State of Vietnam by the American mission. Direct U.S. technical assistance to the Vietnamese aroused French suspicions. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Rice seed is distributed in the Red River Delta by an American agricultural expert. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



President Nguyen Van Tam dedicates a rice farmers' cooperative in Ben Tre Province in Cochinchina. Aid for the cooperative was provided by the American Mutual Security Agency. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

Toward a National Army



Officer candidates of the Vietnamese National Army were taught by French instructors. General Salan hoped to have fifty-six native battalions by 1953. (*E.C.P. Armees-France*)



"Annamite" artillerymen train on a small French fieldpiece during maneuvers in 1931. Before the revolution, 11,000 Frenchmen and native militia were able to keep order in Indochina. (*National Archives*)



A village smolders on the outskirts of Hue after a Viet Minh attack in 1952. The inability of the French to offer protection from Viet Minh terror argued strongly for a native army. (*Copyright National Geographic Society*)



Soldiers attend an arms class at a Vietnamese Army regional school in Ban Me Thuot. (*Center of Military History*)



Vietnamese Army officers and American advisers journeyed to South Korea in 1953 to study the training of the Korean Army. Brig. Gen. Thomas J. H. Trapnell, chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Indochina, is third from the left, front row. (*U.S. Army*)



Vice President Richard M. Nixon speaks with a Vietnamese Army infantry sergeant during a visit to Indochina in 1953. Despite pressure from Washington, foot-dragging in Paris hampered the growth of the native army. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Among the elements filling out the French Union forces were native auxiliaries from the religious sects in Cochinchina, such as this detachment of Hoa Hao soldiers. (*National Archives*)



Vietnamese National Army troops defend a village south of Haiphong in 1953. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

End of an Empire



French troops parachute into Dien Bien Phu during the height of the Viet Minh siege. (*Indochine: Sud-Est Asiatique*)

Desperate Measures



General Henri Navarre, appointed commander in early 1953, tailored his plan of operations to meet American military criticism of past French strategy. (*Indochine: Sud-Est Asiatique*)

A C–47 of the French Air Force is temporarily between missions at Na San. The successful defense of Na San in northwest Tonkin in 1952 helped convince Navarre that strong "air-land bases" could spread insecurity in the enemy rear area. (*U.S. Air Force*)





A paratrooper takes up a firing position during the French advance into Lang Son. To improve the French situation in northern Tonkin and demonstrate allied capabilities to American observers, Navarre in mid-July 1953 attacked the enemy-held border town, destroying large stores of ammunition and equipment. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Besides operating in Tonkin, Navarre in late July 1953 sent a Franco-Vietnamese amphibious force to clear the coast between Quang Tri and Hue. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Fresh from Korea, a French battalion wearing the patch of the U.S. 2d Infantry Division disembarks at Saigon in November 1953. The arrival of reinforcements buoyed the French commander. (*U.S. Navy*)



The 3d Vietnamese Paratroop Battalion tends its wounded after heavy fighting near Seno in Laos. Giap's campaign in Laos disrupted the French offensive strategy and convinced Navarre that he needed a new airhead in northwest Tonkin. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



In November 1953, French and Vietnamese paratroopers occupied the valley floor at Dien Bien Phu. (*Courtesy of Howard Sochurek*)



Lt. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, chief of a special military mission to Indochina (*right*), inspected Dien Bien Phu in February 1954 and pronounced it defensible, though not without its dangers. Col. Christian de Castries, the redoubt commander, is on the left. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

Dien Bien Phu and After



Ho plans the attack on Dien Bien Phu, hoping to influence big power negotiations about to begin at Geneva. Second from left is Pham Van Dong, vice president of the democratic republic. Giap is on the right. (*Black Star*)



Thousands of support troops and transport workers succeeded in keeping Giap's siege forces well supplied. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



A French medical evacuation helicopter comes under heavy fire at Dien Bien Phu. From March 1954, enemy artillery and antiaircraft guns made aerial supply drops and evacuation extremely hazardous. (*U.S. Navy*)



Viet Minh guns assail the dying fortress. French sorties to deal with the enemy artillery were costly and rarely successful. (*Indochine: Sud-Est Asiatique*)



General Matthew B. Ridgway (*center*), shown with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, opposed American intervention at Dien Bien Phu and in Indochina generally. He warned that the U.S. Army would face immense logistical problems, and to win in Indochina, it would have to draw down its forces elsewhere. (*U.S. Army*)



The Viet Minh hoist their flag over de Castries' bunker. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



The Geneva Agreements in July 1954 brought an end to French dominion in Indochina. (*United Press International*)



President Dwight D. Eisenhower at a news conference on 21 July said that he would not be bound by the decisions taken at Geneva and that he was "actively pursuing discussions with other free nations" to organize a collective defense in Southeast Asia. (*Dwight D. Eisenhower Library*)

2

Sources of a New War, 1954–1960

The year beginning in the summer of 1954 was a time of intense effort in Washington and Saigon to establish a strong central government in South Vietnam. The prospect did not seem favorable in the weeks immediately following the Geneva Conference when administration officials began planning for the defense of a non-Communist Vietnam. A national intelligence estimate spoke of deep political divisions in the South and warned that the Viet Minh would very likely extend their control throughout the countryside as the French departed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed reluctance to begin training the Vietnamese army in the absence of a native authority able to raise and maintain armed forces. When the Catholic mandarin, Ngo Dinh Diem, arrived in Saigon in late June as the new premier of the State of Vietnam, he had no local constituency of any sort. Only his immediate family in the capital, and a handful of American intelligence agents and the military advisory group, seemed to take seriously his talk of achieving genuine independence and a triumph over the Communists.

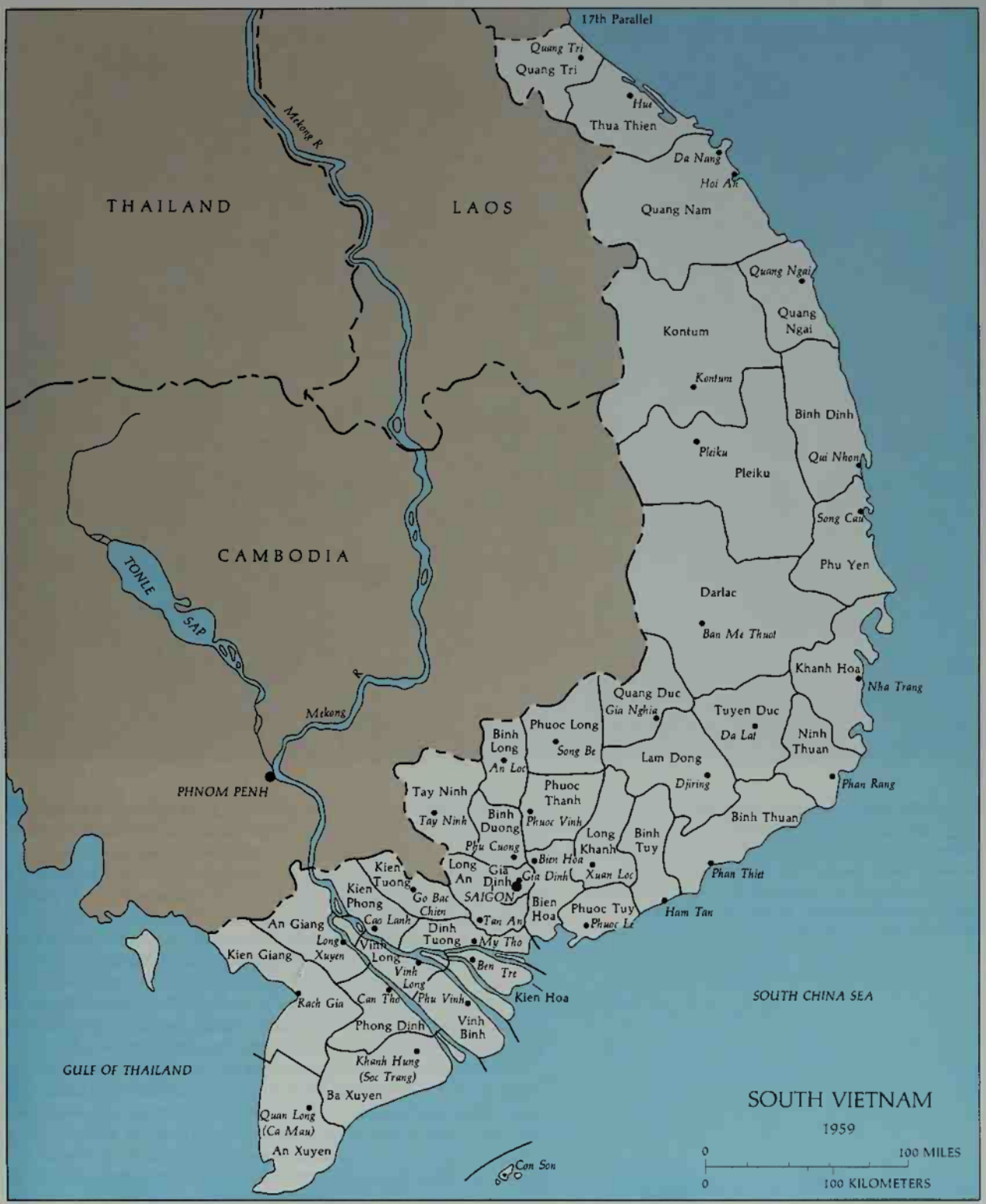
President Eisenhower hardly hesitated. As early as August, the State Department informed the Joint Chiefs and the Army that building up the Vietnamese forces in the South was the best means to stabilize the central government. Two months later the administration acted on that premise and began funneling military aid through Diem's treasury, cutting off the French. From that moment the balance in Saigon shifted, giving Diem, the U.S. embassy, and Edward G. Lansdale, Diem's adviser from the Central Intelligence Agency, the leverage they needed to defeat the government's enemies. After thwarting a plot by dissident officers, and a threat from several sects—the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Binh Xuyen—that led to pitched battles in Saigon early in the spring, Diem by May 1955 controlled the army and the bureaucracy and held nearly all of the political high cards. Except for the formality of a referendum scheduled for October, urged on Diem by the American mission,



Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Indochina from 1954 to 1955, General O'Daniel was responsible for organizing and training the new army in South Vietnam. He quickly replaced French instructors and advisers with Americans. (*Center of Military History*)

to determine whether the country would be a monarchy under Bao Dai or a republic with Diem as president, the issue of sovereignty below the 17th Parallel had been settled to the administration's satisfaction. In Diem and his new government, said Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the United States had won an important cold war victory. In May the administration announced new aid programs for the South Vietnamese Army.

Over the next few years the United States provided nearly $1 billion in military aid and assistance to the Saigon government, sparing no effort to strengthen Diem's position. To reorganize and retrain the underdeveloped fighting units and bring order to a chaotic supply system, the Military Assistance Advisory Group quickly expanded to 740 officers and enlisted men, more than double the limit fixed by the Geneva Agreements. Headed by a succession of U.S. Army three-star generals, John W. O'Daniel, Samuel T. Williams, and Lionel C. McGarr, the military mission reshaped the South Vietnamese Army.


17th Parallel
Quang Tri
Quang Tri
Hue
Thua Thien
Da Nang
Hoi An
Quang Nam
Quang Ngai
Quang Ngai
Kontum
Kontum
Kontum
Binh Dinh
Qui Nhon
Pleiku
Pleiku
Song Cau
Phu Yen
Darlac
Ban Me Thuot
Khanh Hoa
Nha Trang
Quang Duc
Gia Nghia
Tuyen Duc
Da Lat
Ninh Thuan
Lam Dong
Djiring
Phan Rang
Binh Thuan
Phan Thiet
Ham Tan
Phuoc Long
Song Be
Binh Long
An Loc
Phuoc Thanh
Phuoc Vinh
Binh Duong
Phu Cuong
Tay Ninh
Tay Ninh
Long Khanh
Binh Tuy
Xuan Loc
Bien Hoa
Gia Dinh
Long An
Gia Dinh
SAIGON
Bien Hoa
Tan An
Phuoc Tuy
Phuoc Le
My Tho
Dinh Tuong
Kien Tuong
Kien Phong
Go Bac Chien
Cao Lanh
An Giang
Long Xuyen
Vinh Long
Vinh Long
Ben Tre
Kien Giang
Rach Gia
Can Tho
Phu Vinh
Kien Hoa
Phong Dinh
Vinh Binh
Khanh Hung (Soc Trang)
Ba Xuyen
Quan Long (Ca Mau)
An Xuyen
Con Son
THAILAND
LAOS
CAMBODIA
PHNOM PENH
Mekong R
Mekong R
TONLE SAP
GULF OF THAILAND
SOUTH CHINA SEA
SOUTH VIETNAM
1959
0
100 MILES
0
100 KILOMETERS

MAP 3



Ngo Dinh Diem meets with village elders during one of his infrequent trips to the countryside. Although he insisted to his American advisers that he knew what was best for the peasants, Diem looked backward to Confucian traditions, dismissing the revolutionary legacy of the Viet Minh war. (*Center of Military History*)

For the most part progress was rapid. To meet a conventional invasion of North Vietnamese troops across the borders, which the many Korean War veterans on the advisory group staff considered the most serious threat, the advisers replaced the French-style mobile groups with standard divisions similar to those of the U.S. Army. To remedy the lack of commanders and staff officers, as well as drivers, engineers, artillerymen, logisticians, and instructors with the skills to train others, new training and education programs quickly proliferated and followed U.S. Army patterns. By 1960 over 1,600 South Vietnamese soldiers were studying in the United States or in other allied countries. The United States supplied most military equipment and financed the territorial forces at modest levels.

Where the territorials were concerned—the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps—Diem and the U.S. mission had different ideas. The Americans regarded them as the main internal security force and expected them to release the regular army for external defense. Diem conceived of them as a political counterweight to the power of the army and filled their leadership positions with loyal supporters. Poorly trained and ill-equipped, they numbered in 1957 some 85,000,



A political commissar welcomes Montagnard recruits to a Viet Cong training camp in the Central Highlands. (*Center of Military History*)

far too few to provide adequate village defense when the Communist underground in that year took up arms against Ngo Dinh Diem.

The speed with which the revolution spread surprised even the Communists. As one captured guerrilla later put it to his interrogator, the peasants "were like a mound of straw, ready to be ignited." The receptiveness of the peasants to the southern guerrillas, or Viet Cong, was later attributed by most U.S. officials to the policies of the Diem government. While the cities and towns prospered in the 1950s thanks to infusions of American foreign aid, the villages languished from continuing government indifference to their welfare and political traditions. When Diem in 1957 traveled to the United States on an official visit, and won accolades for distinguished leadership, he had little notion of the expanding Communist control over vast areas in the Mekong Delta and the northern lowlands. Dependent on the regime for much of its information about the countryside, the American mission in Saigon seemed to know even less.

Initially, the guerrillas focused on small sabotage and propaganda actions and took steps to rebuild their wartime networks within the villages. When North Vietnam in 1959 took active control of the

southern rebellion, sending in well-trained specialists in military and political warfare, the level of violence against the government rose dramatically. In 1958 the number of village and district officials murdered by the Viet Cong was approximately 700; two years later it was 2,500. New main force units also appeared, conducting large-scale operations, especially in the Central Highlands, against government outposts and government-controlled villages and even elements of the South Vietnamese Army.

There were more ominous indications that the war against the government was intensifying. In May 1959 Hanoi activated a regular army transportation group to establish a supply and infiltration route into the South, which became known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Hanoi also reconstituted the southern branch of the Central Committee, the so-called COSVN (Central Office for South Vietnam) headquarters, and in late 1960 founded the National Liberation Front, an organization intended to appear indigenous to South Vietnam.

The South Vietnamese Army proved unable to cope with the guerrillas. While Diem instituted new controls in the cities and countryside, including an unpopular peasant relocation program known as the "agroville" system, the army's seven infantry divisions remained road bound or deployed near their outposts, and unable to develop the sources of rural intelligence needed to find the Viet Cong. In 1960, after a year of debate by the Joint Chiefs, the military advisers introduced counterguerrilla tactics into the army's unit training program. U.S. Army Special Forces teams also arrived that year to begin training Diem's ranger formations in counterinsurgency. Diem's mistrust of the army, manifested in his excessive rotation of his best commanders, his promotion of officers for their loyalty rather than their competence, and his penchant for ordering regiments on missions without going through the chain of command, dampened the effect that the advisers' changes might have had on the war. Could Diem be persuaded to mend his ways and institute political reforms, asked many civilians in the U.S. mission led by Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow. Would not pushing too hard for reform jeopardize the government and detract from the war, countered members of the military advisory group. As 1960 ended with the adverse trends in the South unchecked, debate among Americans in Saigon focused increasingly on Diem himself.

* * * * * *

Diem Comes to Power



The government of Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem formally assumed power in Saigon on 7 July 1954, beginning the existence of an independent state in the southern half of Vietnam. Donald R. Heath, the U.S. ambassador, is in the second row, center. (*Courtesy of James H. Tate*)

Taming the Army and the Sects



General Paul Ely, last commander of the French Expeditionary Corps, visits an officer instruction center of the Vietnamese National Army. Diem's first task as prime minister of South Vietnam was to assert control over the French-built army. (*Courtesy of James H. Tate*)



Col. Edward G. Lansdale, seated with Lt. Gen. Nguyen Van Hinh (*left*) and Brig. Gen. Le Van Ty, shifted the weight of the Central Intelligence Agency to Prime Minister Diem's behalf. When Hinh, the army chief of staff, balked at supporting the new government, Lansdale threatened him with the loss of U.S. assistance. (*Courtesy of Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, USAF*)



To blunt the challenge of Vietnam's politico-religious sects which hoped for territorial autonomy, Lansdale met with Cao Dai leader Trinh Minh The (*center*) at his mountain lair near Tay Ninh City. (*Courtesy of Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, USAF*)



In Saigon, Cao Dai troops parade during ceremonies integrating them into the South Vietnamese Army. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



After a year of guerrilla war against the regime, Ba Cut, the Hoa Hao leader, was captured in the Mekong Delta and beheaded at Can Tho. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



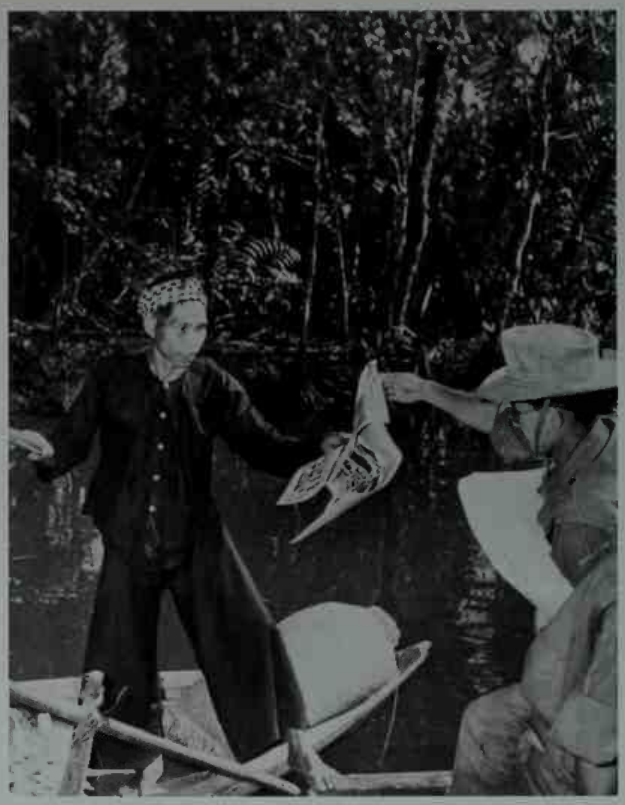
In April 1955, soldiers of the regular army battled troops of the Binh Xuyen sect for control of the capital city. Revenues from its Saigon gambling concessions and political support from Bao Dai made the Binh Xuyen a formidable opponent of the central government. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



During the Binh Xuyen crisis General J. Lawton Collins, special envoy to South Vietnam, proposed that Diem be replaced with a coalition government. Diem's victory over the Binh Xuyen ended the sect threat to his leadership and reassured Washington. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



American and French aid helped rebuild Saigon residential areas burned out during the Binh Xuyen fighting. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



A soldier distributes pro-Diem literature during Operation LIBERTY, the army's occupation of the Ca Mau Peninsula in the Mekong Delta. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

Troops of the South Vietnamese Army enter a village in Binh Dinh Province, an area being vacated by the Viet Minh. One result of this pacification action was the return of many young people from the hills to life along the coast. (*Courtesy of Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, USAF*)



Founding the Republic



A demonstration in Saigon in May 1955 called for the abolition of the Bao Dai monarchy. (*Center of Military History*)

Evacuees from the North, most of them Catholic, provided Diem with his first popular base in South Vietnam. With the aid of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, some 800,000 people fled the Communists. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)





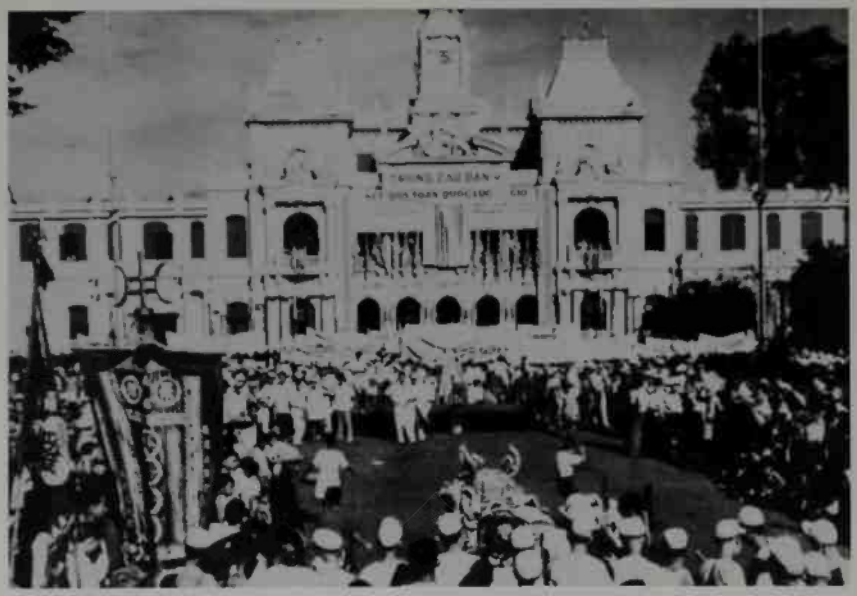
Rear Adm. Lorenzo S. Sabin, commander of the sea evacuation from North Vietnam, confers with Senator Mike Mansfield in Saigon Harbor. In the background, the USS *Montrail* has just arrived with refugees. (*National Archives*)



A northern Catholic peasant and his family begin life anew in South Vietnam. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



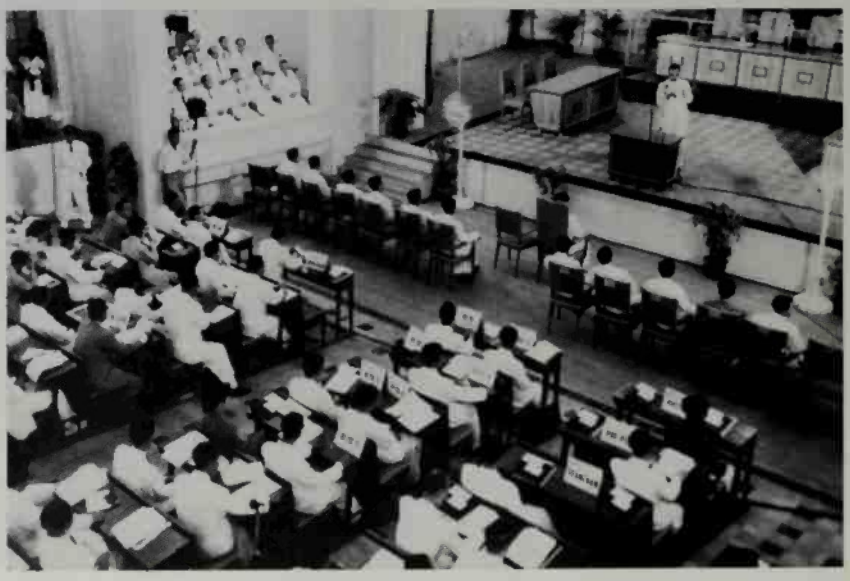
Diem kneels in prayer during midnight mass at the governor-general's palace. Diem's role in the rescue of the northerners brought him favorable publicity in the United States. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Crowds gathered before city hall in Saigon on 26 October 1955 to celebrate Diem's election as president of the new republic. (*State Department*)



Elections for a representative assembly were held in early 1956. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Meeting for the first time on 15 March 1956, the National Assembly took as its primary task the ratification of a presidential draft of a constitution. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

Institutions of the New Regime



Soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam parade through the city of Da Nang. (*Center of Military History*)

Forging a Modern Military



Lt. Gen. Samuel T. Williams makes his rounds during a South Vietnamese battalion training exercise. During Williams' five years as advisory chief, the South Vietnamese Army emerged as a conventional fighting force. (*Center of Military History*)



Among the mountains of American equipment left behind by the departing French were hundreds of military vehicles. To recover the excess, the United States set up a Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission of 350 men, thereby doubling the size of the advisory group in South Vietnam. (*Bernard B. Fall Collection*)



The Quang Trung Training Center near Saigon was the South Vietnamese Army's principal training establishment for enlistees and draftees. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Samuel L. Myers, USA*)



Vietnamese and American officers visit a rifle range at Nha Trang. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Samuel L. Myers, USA*)



Pointing out a target during a tactical training problem at the Nha Trang Noncommissioned Officers Academy, an acting platoon leader issues orders to his troops. The rifles are .30-caliber M1 Garands. (*Center of Military History*)



Artillerymen of the 2d Field Division train near their headquarters at Hue. Precursors of the heavy standard divisions which emerged in 1959, field divisions had an assigned strength of 8,500. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Samuel L. Myers, USA*)



Engineers of the 11th Light Division build rafts near Ban Me Thuot in the Central Highlands. Light divisions had about 5,000 men and fewer supporting elements than the field divisions. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Samuel L. Myers, USA*)



An American adviser conducts a Saturday inspection of the 4th Field Division at its cantonment in Bien Hoa. The 4th Division guarded the invasion approaches to Saigon. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Samuel L. Myers, USA*)



Patrolled by the South Vietnamese Navy, the Song Be River in the old Viet Minh War Zone D just north of Saigon was still quiet in early 1957. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Samuel L. Myers, USA*)



Artillery guards the Demilitarized Zone, the buffer between the two Vietnams. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Samuel L. Myers, USA*)



Maj. Gen. Tran Van Don, a South Vietnamese corps commander and veteran of insurgency warfare in Indochina, was uneasy with the American preoccupation with a conventional invasion from North Vietnam. Maj. Gen. Samuel L. Myers, deputy chief of the advisory group, is on the right. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Samuel L. Myers, USA*)

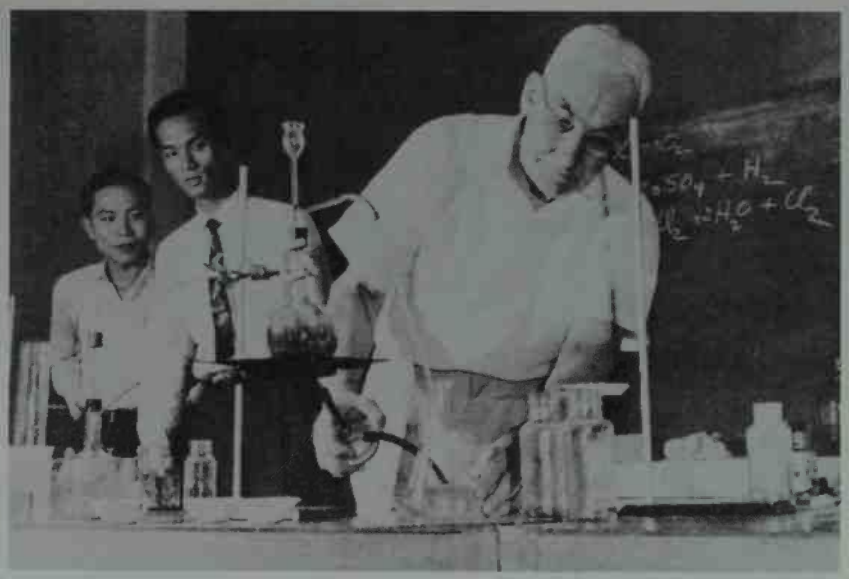
Economic and Social Development



Ceremonies mark the opening of a farming project in Cochinchina. Though the war and partition dealt a blow to the economy of the South, Diem and his advisers were determined to restore agricultural and industrial production and compete in the arena of world opinion with North Vietnam. (*Center of Military History*)



Special importance was attached to rehabilitating the French-built transportation system. Signs on these locomotives in Saigon read "Vietnamese-American Cooperation." (*Center of Military History*)



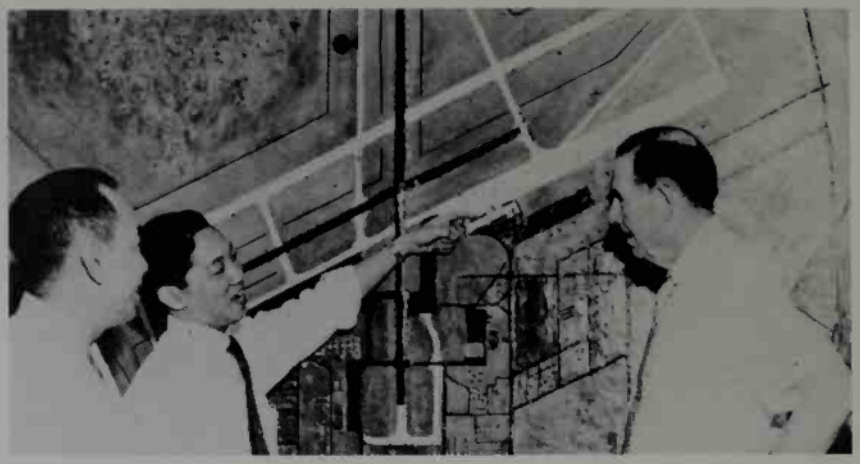
An American education adviser gives a science demonstration for Vietnamese high school teachers. (*Center of Military History*)



A mobile unit distributes educational information for rural economic development. (*Center of Military History*)



At the Cai San refugee resettlement area in the fertile Mekong Delta, thousands of acres abandoned during the war were restored to rice production with U.S. aid. (*Agency for International Development*)



An American-trained Vietnamese engineer outlines plans to expand Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport. (*Center of Military History*)

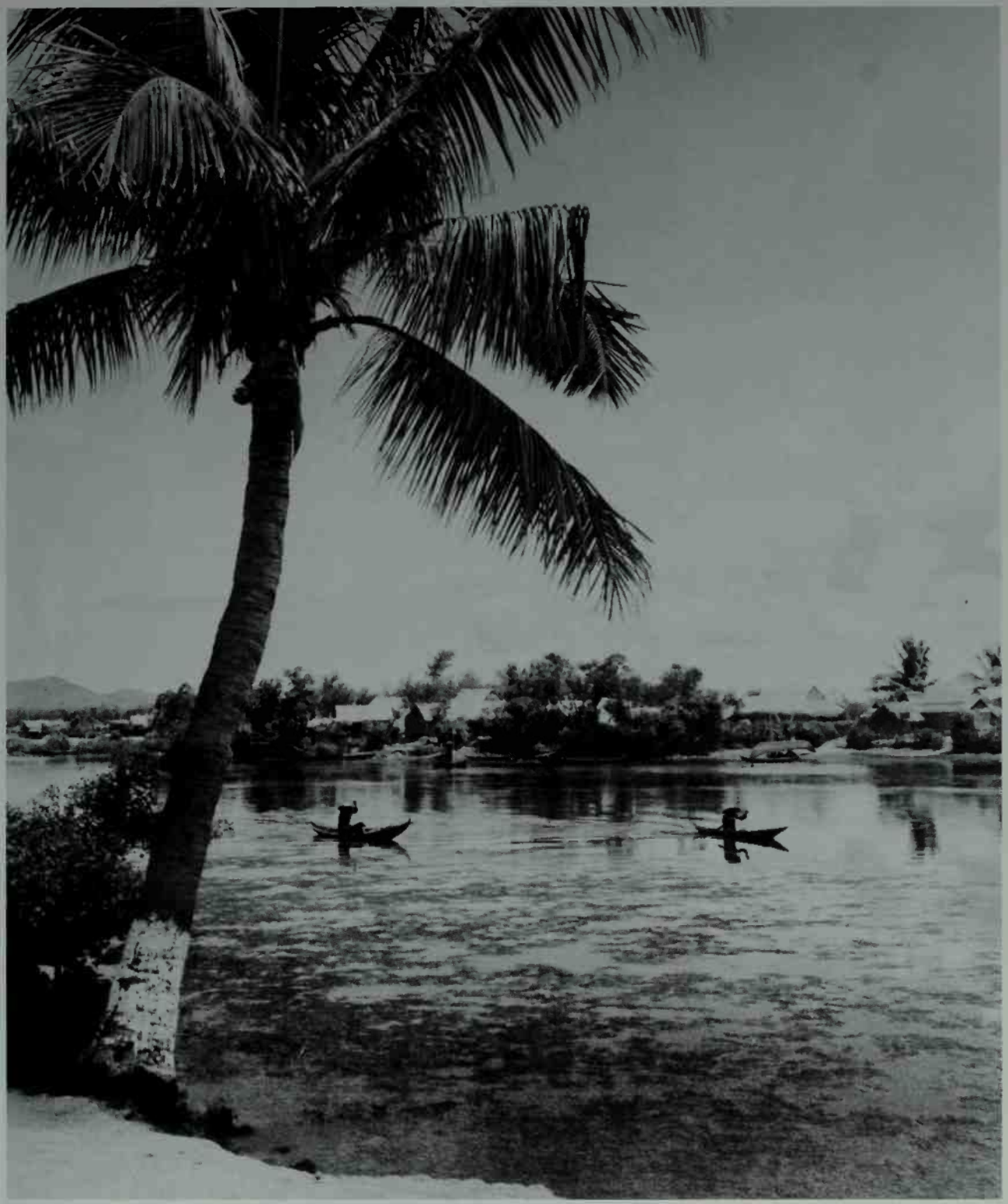


The bulk of American economic aid supported the military budget. Work proceeds on the twenty-mile-long Saigon–Bien Hoa highway, which General Williams judged to be important to the security of the capital. (*Center of Military History*)



Government officials and an adviser from Michigan State University plan a training program for government employees. Most civil servants lived in the cities and had only the vaguest knowledge of conditions in the rural areas. (*Center of Military History*)

Revolution and Reaction



As always, the success or the failure of government in Vietnam rested with the people of the countryside. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

Sources of Disaffection



By 1956 Diem's mandarin outlook had begun to manifest itself in policy. While the urban classes benefited from U.S. assistance, many peasants and landless farm laborers languished from neglect. (*Center of Military History*)



The secretary of state for agrarian reform bestows a land title on a refugee from the North. Except for Catholic northerners, whom Diem singled out for largess, the government's land reform program had little impact. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



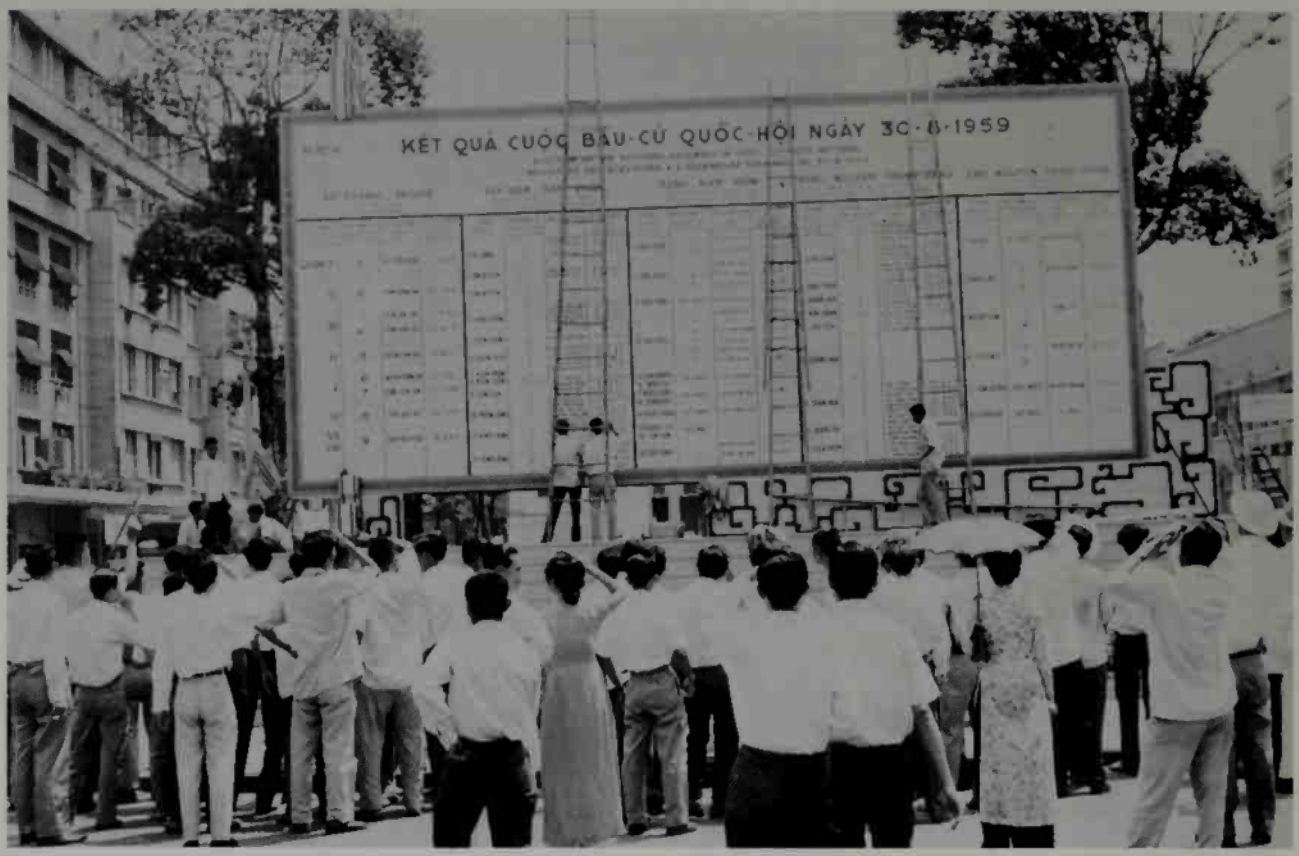
To many peasants the district headquarters building, such as this one in Phong Dinh Province, embodied the insensitivity and injustice of the Saigon government. (*Center of Military History*)



Classes were conducted for tax collectors to improve the flow of revenue from rural areas. (*Center of Military History*)



Government forced-labor programs were later remembered with bitterness by many peasants. (*Agency for International Development*)



The National Assembly elections of August 1959 pleased Diem's American supporters but were closely controlled at all levels by the central government. (*Courtesy of Robert Scigliano*)



While President Diem's policies were creating disaffection in town and countryside, President Eisenhower accorded him a hero's welcome during a visit to the United States in 1957. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles is on Eisenhower's left. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

The Insurgency Spreads



Peasants use oxcarts to transport ammunition for the Viet Cong. By 1958, extensive guerrilla supply trails had appeared in the border areas. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



In 1954 many Viet Minh soldiers and cadres said farewell to their families in the South and regrouped above the 17th Parallel in North Vietnam. Four years later, hundreds of regroupees had begun to filter southward to strengthen the insurrection. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



In so-called liberated zones the Viet Cong fortified villages, anticipating government attacks. *(Center of Military History)*



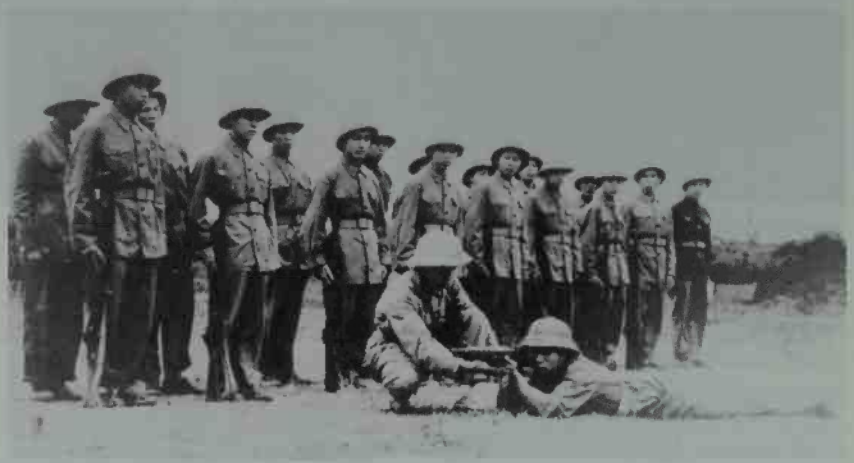
Guerrillas sort grain rations for the People's Liberation Army, the Viet Cong's military arm. *(Indochina Archives, Berkeley)*



Nguyen Huu Tho, a southern lawyer and the chairman of the National Liberation Front's central committee, reports to the front's first congress in December 1960. *(Indochina Archives, Berkeley)*



A procession of Catholics winds through a village in a Communist-controlled area of Kien Hoa Province. Religious front organizations with no visible links to Hanoi helped vitalize opposition to the Diem regime. (*Center of Military History*)



Recruits in Giap's People's Army of Vietnam receive rifle training in 1959. The possibility of a return to armed struggle in the South led to expansion and modernization of the North Vietnamese forces. (*Center of Military History*)



In Hanoi the Third Party Congress of September 1960 ratified the previous year's decisions to intensify the struggle. Le Duan, one of four southern Vietnamese in the new politburo, and former secretary of the central committee's southern directorate, is seated front row left next to Ho Chi Minh. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

Searching for Solutions



At the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group headquarters the seriousness of the rural insurrection was slow to gain credence. (*U.S. Army*)

The Vi Thanh agroville in Phong Dinh Province was one of the largest regroupment centers organized by the government. Twenty thousand peasants from four adjacent districts were brought in to provide labor. (*Center of Military History*)

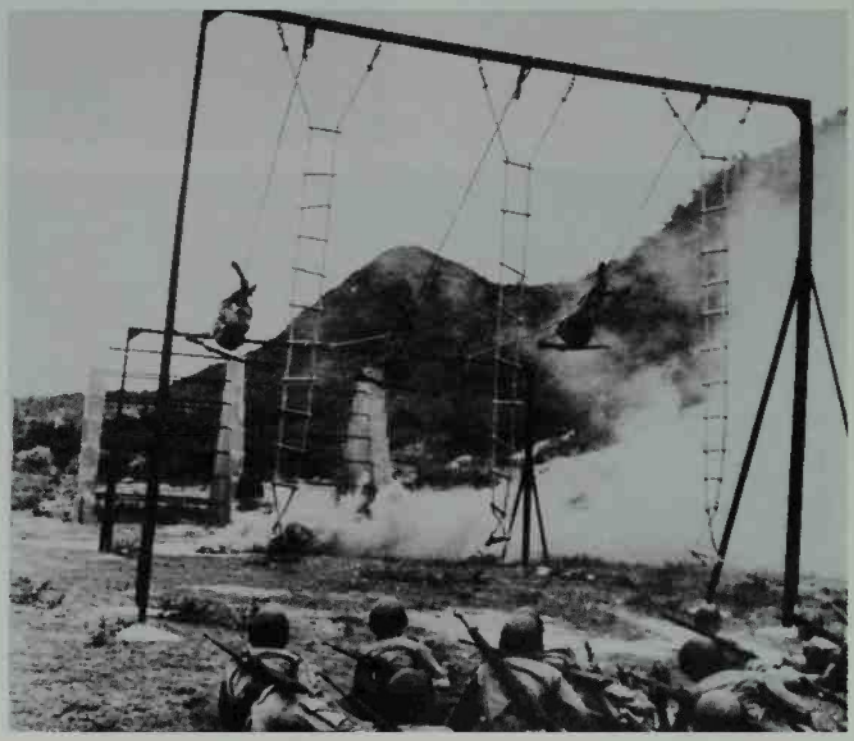




The Republican Youth Movement was one of Diem's attempts to develop support for the Saigon government. A concomitant of public employment, the movement dispatched paramilitary units to defend loyal villages. (*Courtesy of Robert Scigliano*)



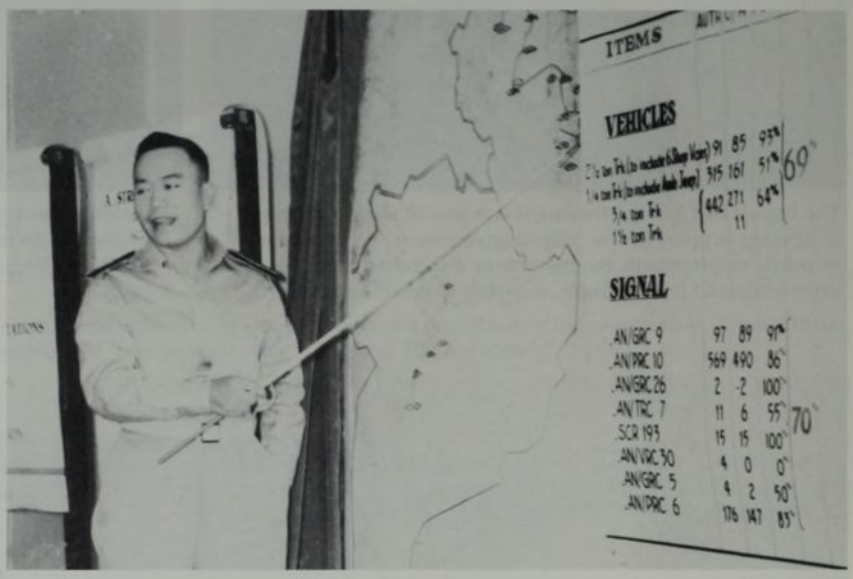
Training was expanded for the rural Civil Guard, the previously neglected paramilitary force controlled by President Diem's province chiefs. (*Courtesy of Robert Scigliano*)



Regular soldiers test a new confidence course at the Commando School at Nha Trang. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr, USA*)



Diem receives honors at the Psychological Warfare School, Fort Cay Mai, near Saigon. By June 1960 the advisory group had instituted a full-scale counterinsurgency training program, with emphasis on intelligence and psychological warfare. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr, USA*)



A South Vietnamese officer briefs U.S. advisers on the availability of vehicles and communications equipment. The United States sped deliveries of modern materiel to improve the performance of the South Vietnamese Army. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr, USA*)



Sweeps by South Vietnamese forces into the Iron Triangle, an enemy base north of Saigon, netted guerrillas and caches of supplies. (*Courtesy of Robert Scigliano*)



Alarmed by the enemy's aggressiveness and the politicization of the military command, Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh (*center*) urged the presidential palace to weed out corrupt and incompetent army officers. Diem reacted by assigning the popular general to a meaningless headquarters. (*Center of Military History*)



A November 1960 coup attempt in Saigon increased Diem's mistrust of the regular army. After a thirty-hour battle, these and other soldiers loyal to the palace defeated the paratroop insurrection. (*Black Star*)



Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow chairs a meeting of the American mission, with General Williams seated at his left. Durbrow and Williams argued frequently about the most fitting American response to the insurrection. (*Courtesy of Col. Nathaniel P. Ward, USA*)

3

A Deepening Involvement 1961–1965

The growing success of the guerrilla forces and the inability of the American mission to unite on a solution soon put the new president and his policies in Vietnam to the test. Within months of entering office, John F. Kennedy set in motion a substantial increase in American assistance and transformed a limited-risk policy into a broad commitment. His decisions on Vietnam followed a vigorous call-to-arms election campaign and were designed, as the president made clear then and later, to help reassert the credibility of American power abroad. Kennedy was far from reckless in his handling of foreign policy issues, and in no sense was he certain that the war had a ready solution. But by late 1961, after setbacks for pro-Western forces in Cuba and Laos, Kennedy saw no alternative but to take a stand in Vietnam. His buildup of arms and advisers began in December after a lengthy policy review. A year later the number of U.S. forces in Vietnam reached 11,000.

The centerpiece of the American counterguerrilla campaign was a vigorous two-pronged offensive, a political attack against the enemy's strength in the villages and military pressure against the main forces. Political officers trained in new State Department counterinsurgency courses arrived to help the government "win the hearts and minds" of the southern peasants through programs of economic and social assistance. Army officers who had received crash training at Fort Bragg brought advice on dealing with enemy ambush techniques, on performing small-unit search-and-cordon operations, and on developing a capability for rapid deployment. To prepare for unconventional operations in Vietnam and elsewhere, the president created a top-level interagency body in Washington, the Special Group (Counterinsurgency), headed by General Maxwell D. Taylor, Kennedy's military adviser. Determined to respond to Hanoi's "war of national liberation," Kennedy had formulated a comprehensive strategy. Through 1962 it seemed that this strategy would turn the tide.

The impact of the approach was soon evident in every fighting zone. In the rugged Central Highlands, Montagnard country and a key terminus of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, tribal self-defense groups proliferated rapidly under the auspices of the Special Forces. In the lowlands around Saigon and in the Mekong Delta, a program of strategic hamlets replaced the agrovilles of the 1950s. While these efforts were under way to separate the people from the guerrillas, South Vietnamese regular units took the offensive. U.S. Army and Marine Corps helicopters ferried troops into battle to trap and destroy the main forces. U.S.-made armored personnel carriers went into action, opening up enemy base areas in the Mekong Delta. By April 1962 over 350 Army and Marine Corps advisers were operating with South Vietnamese battalions, planning attacks, arranging for supplies, organizing communications, and calling in support from the U.S. Air Force. The presence of the advisers seemed to inspire many South Vietnamese commanders. The establishment of a new U.S. headquarters in Saigon in February 1962, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), under an Army four-star general, Paul D. Harkins, testified to the growing American involvement in the war.

The one disquieting note in the deepening commitment was the performance of the Saigon government. Diem's ability to arrest the country's social and political decline was regarded as crucial to the



President John F. Kennedy confers with Brig. Gen. William P. Yarborough during a combat-readiness demonstration at the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center, Fort Bragg, October 1961. A student of guerrilla war, the president believed that unconventional operations and counterinsurgency were the answer to the growing tumult in South Vietnam. (*U.S. Army*)

success of the Kennedy strategy. The White House hoped that the weight of its advice and support would offer the mandarin leader the personal security he needed to undertake significant reforms. By early 1963 his interference in the conduct of military operations and the continued politicization of the officer corps began to weaken the war effort. Advisers present at the government's defeat at the battle of Ap Bac spoke bitterly of divided command and a "go slow" policy ordered by the palace to keep army casualties low. The strategic hamlet program revealed serious weaknesses also, including government corruption and mismanagement. The Communists, who had feared the rural experiment from its inception, were soon picking off the government settlements one by one.

One year after the administration had made its commitment, it was asking new questions about Diem's fitness as an instrument of U.S. policy. His tightening of press censorship in the winter and spring of 1963 and his attacks and those of his secretive brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, against their critics in the U.S. mission accelerated the American reappraisal. His crackdown during the summer on Buddhists demonstrating for their religious rights brought the first in a series of warnings from the embassy and the White House. It also stirred a group of his generals. Early in the fall they won assurances of American support if they overthrew the government.

Diem was murdered in November and replaced by a military

Vietnamese T-28 fighter-bombers, with American advisers riding in the second seats, head inland to attack Viet Cong positions in 1962. The arrival of American advisers and equipment was a tonic to the South Vietnamese forces. (*U.S. Army*)



council that was promptly recognized by the United States. The administration expected the change in government to restore army morale quickly, since the generals who overthrew Diem were being hailed by the people as national heroes. In fact, Diem's demise was the prelude to a period of instability that lasted nearly two years, a time of coups and countercoups in Saigon that brought the Communists close to victory. One month after the military uprising succeeded, the government began suffering its highest casualties of 1963. More alarming trends followed the December meeting of the Communist Ninth Plenum when Hanoi made its decision to seek a battlefield solution. In the next twelve months, strong main force battalions—seeded with a larger number of northerners than ever before, and increasingly well armed with Soviet-designed mortars, rocket launchers, and assault rifles—stepped up the pace of combat, inflicting heavy losses on the South Vietnamese Army, and progressively confining the authority of the South Vietnamese government to the cities and provincial towns. In the highlands, the Special Forces experiment among the Montagnard tribes collapsed when responsibility was transferred, at Saigon's insistence, to the South Vietnamese Army. In the lowlands, amid the ruins of the strategic hamlets, densely populated districts again



A Viet Cong unit plans an attack on a government outpost near the province capital of Tay Ninh City. By mid-1964 a stable liberated zone had emerged from the Central Highlands to the northern fringes of the Mekong Delta, and the tide of war was running in the Communists' favor. (*United Press International*)

became bitterly contested areas, and many villages began flying the Viet Cong flag.

The United States attempted to stem the Communist advance without changing the nature of the conflict. In the year that followed the assassination of President Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson reaffirmed the American commitment to Vietnam by sending in hundreds of planes and helicopters and raising the advisory level to 23,000. Continuing reverses on the battlefield brought the strategy of limited assistance into serious question. In March 1964 the Joint Chiefs recommended heavy bombing attacks against the North and repeated that advice to the president for the rest of the year. Civilians in the State and Defense Departments offered plans of graduated pressure to signal resolve without closing the door completely to negotiations with Hanoi. Although President Johnson remained cautious about the war and unwilling to escalate in an election year, he did order air strikes in August against the North in response to attacks on a U.S. destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin. While he was careful to characterize the reprisal raids as a one-time measure only, rather than a major change in White House policy, the incident foreshadowed the final transformation in strategy and won for the president a resolution of congressional support.



On 8 March 1965, U.S. marines landed on Red Beach in central I Corps with the mission of protecting the U.S. air base at Da Nang. Within weeks the marines were fighting the Viet Cong. (*Newsweek*)

In December 1964, confronted with further deterioration in the southern countryside, and heavy enemy attacks on U.S. installations, the president ordered a bombing campaign that in the next three months spread from Laos to North Vietnam. The ROLLING THUNDER raids against North Vietnam almost immediately became a source of controversy. The Joint Chiefs argued that Johnson's control of targets and mission routes seriously limited the campaign's effectiveness. The Joint Chiefs were not the only critics of the air attacks. By late March the bombings had stirred peace demonstrations on the domestic front.

The president made another important decision: on 8 March 1965, in response to a request from Harkins' successor, General William C. Westmoreland, two battalion landing teams of marines arrived at Da Nang with the mission of securing the airfield and supporting installations. They were the first organized ground combat units committed to Indochina by an American president, and Johnson, with the quiet support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, wasted little time before committing other units and broadening their mission. He had not yet decided on a massive buildup of forces or a major American effort, but neither was he shrinking from the possibility. Early in May, while his advisers debated deployment schedules and the merits of alternative strategies, Johnson asked Congress to provide a supplemental appropriation for the intensifying war in Vietnam. No one attempted to conceal from the legislators that the administration intended to send additional forces. How many would be sent remained an open question: the outcome depended as much on the enemy as it did on Washington.

* * * * * *

The Kennedy Buildup



Landed by a U.S. Army H-21 helicopter, South Vietnamese soldiers flush a Viet Cong guerrilla from a rice field near Saigon. The arrival of helicopters on the South Vietnamese battlefield contributed to the government's success in 1962. (*Courtesy of Allan Galfund*)

Fastening the Commitment



President Eisenhower and President-elect Kennedy confer at the White House shortly after the 1960 election. Convinced that his predecessor had failed to take the initiative abroad, Kennedy called on his countrymen to serve as "watchmen on the walls of freedom" and committed his administration to a policy of global activism. (*U.S. Army*)

In 1961 Communist-bloc leaders appeared in Red Square on the 44th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev (*third from left*) had pledged Soviet support for wars of national liberation. Ho Chi Minh is second from the left. (*Wide World Photos*)





Soviet aid in Laos to the Communist Pathet Lao included this BTR40 armored car. Facing significant enemy gains in Laos and elsewhere, Kennedy resolved to take a stand in South Vietnam. (*Center of Military History*)



Troops deploy at Fort Benning from Sikorsky H-34's during an early demonstration of air-mobility. Many Washington officials believed that the helicopter was the answer to guerrilla war. (*U.S. Army*)



A team of the U.S. Army Special Forces, the embodiment of American counterinsurgency techniques, plans a raid during training at Fort Bragg. In the spring of 1961, Kennedy agreed to send 400 Special Forces troops to train the South Vietnamese in counterguerrilla warfare. (*U.S. Army*)



A Viet Cong upsurge in the fall of 1961 forced the United States to reassess the level of assistance to Vietnam. (*Center of Military History*)



General Maxwell D. Taylor (*left*) is briefed in Saigon at Military Assistance Advisory Group headquarters by Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr in October 1961. In a pessimistic report to the president, Taylor urged a major expansion in U.S. military aid to the South, including the dispatch of combat troops for base defense. (*Courtesy of Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr, USA*)



U.S. Army H-21 helicopters are unloaded at the port of Saigon. Unwilling to face the consequences of military defeat, Kennedy strengthened the U.S. commitment to South Vietnam. (*U.S. Army*)

Organizing the Countryside



To counter the enemy in the Central Highlands and win the allegiance of the mountain tribes, the Special Forces established fortified base camps such as this one near Buon Brieng and trained the highland villagers in self-defense. (*Courtesy of Howard Sochurek*)



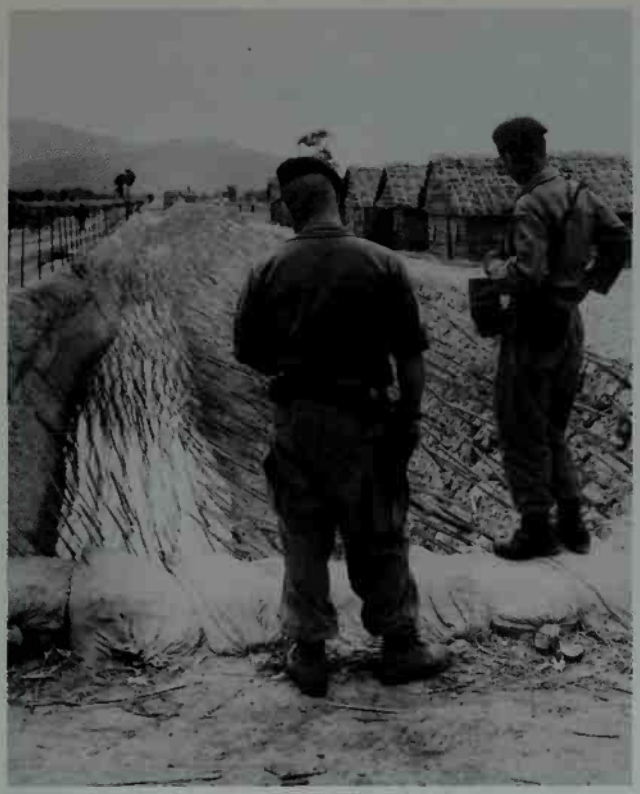
A Montagnard woman of the Rhade tribe dries rice in Darlac Province. The Rhade were the first uplanders to join in the civilian self-defense program. (*U.S. Army*)



Medical visits figured importantly in the civic action of the Special Forces. (*U.S. Army*)

A Montagnard commando team, led by Special Forces troops, sets out on a mission near Ba To in Quang Ngai Province. (*U.S. Army*)





Two Special Forces soldiers inspect punji stake defenses at a strategic hamlet in An Giang Province southwest of Saigon. Top priority in the government's strategic hamlet program was protection of the Mekong Delta and the capital region. (*U.S. Army*)



Safeguarding the strategic hamlets was entrusted to the Self-Defense Corps, the local militia which was controlled by the district chiefs. (*U.S. Army*)



Ngo Dinh Nhu (*in the dark suit*), Diem's brother and chief adviser, attends the dedication of a strategic hamlet near Cu Chi. The impetus behind the program, Nhu spoke of building more than 11,000 hamlets to provide security for the rural population. (*U.S. Army*)

Arms and Advice



Troop carriers and gunships from three U.S. Army helicopter companies return a South Vietnamese landing force from a foray in Kien Giang Province deep in the delta. (*U.S. Army*)



Paul D. Harkins (*right*), commanding general of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, escorts Army Chief of Staff Earle G. Wheeler upon his arrival in Saigon for a ten-day inspection of Vietnam. The creation of the new military assistance command in February 1962 gave the Americans in Vietnam the equivalent of an operational headquarters in a theater of war. (*U.S. Army*)



The slow but durable B-26 light bomber was one of the mainstays of the U.S. Air Force's Farm Gate counterinsurgency unit which began to see heavy action in early 1962. Of the estimated number of enemy casualties in that year, about a quarter were caused by allied air power. (*U.S. Air Force*)



Armored vehicles move through muddy water in Long An Province during the massive Operation MORNING STAR in late 1962. Introduction of the armored personnel carrier M113 seemed to give South Vietnamese forces the edge in the Mekong Delta. (*U.S. Army*)



Government forces often paid a stiff price for their increased aggressiveness against the Viet Cong. A Vietnamese ranger who lost his right hand is directed by a U.S. Army adviser to a waiting helicopter. (*U.S. Army*)



A U.S. Air Force T-28 overhead covers a landing zone for helicopters and infantry. Though lapses in coordination between strike aircraft and helicopter units marred some operations, results were generally encouraging. (*U.S. Army*)



A South Vietnamese ranger examines Viet Cong battle dead after a successful operation forty miles southwest of Saigon. While the war was far from won, battle statistics in 1962, including body counts, enemy defections, and the ratio of weapons captured to weapons lost, had turned strongly favorable. (*U.S. Army*)

A Middle Watershed



Viet Cong resistance on the battlefield began to grow in late 1962. Visible near the canal, Viet Cong raiders burn the pro-government village of Vinh Quoi in the delta south of Saigon. (*Estate of Dickey Chapelle*)

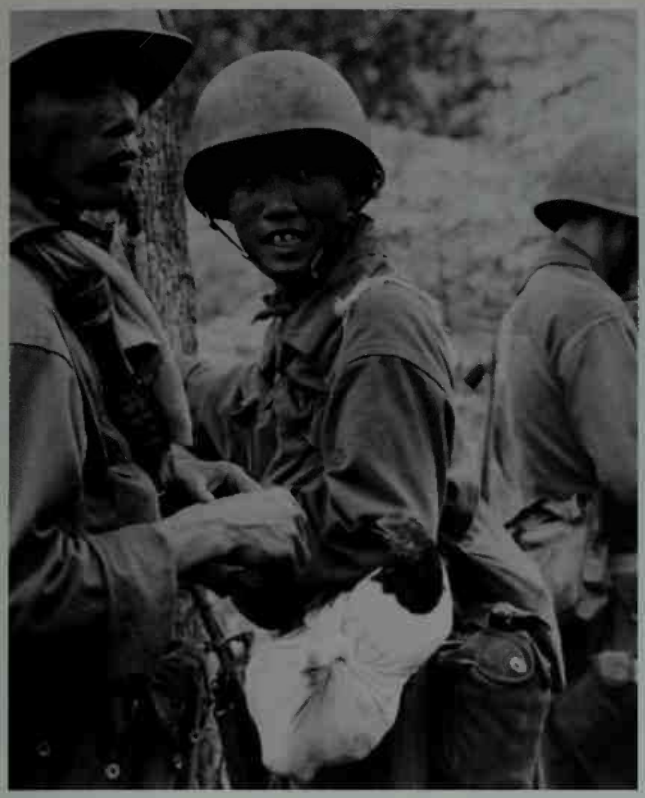
The Battle Goes Sour



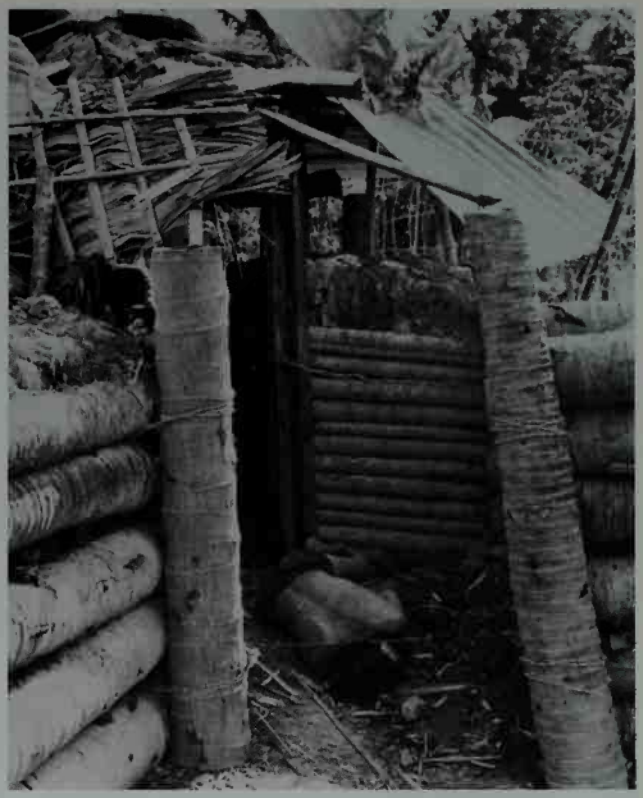
Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara (*left*) catches up on dispatches during a trip to Vietnam in 1962. McNamara's interest in statistical progress led him to overrate the success of the counterinsurgency program. (*U.S. Army*)

An American pilot flees from his burning helicopter during an operation in the Ca Mau Peninsula. The Army's H-21 "flying banana" proved vulnerable to enemy automatic weapons fire. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)





South Vietnamese troops have appropriated their next meal from peasants they were meant to defend. Abuses against villagers by poorly led government soldiers set back pacification in many provinces. (*U.S. Army*)



The body of a Self-Defense Corps soldier lies in the rubble of his outpost in Dinh Thuong Province. (*U.S. Army*)



An artillery unit of the South Vietnamese 25th Division readies a 155-mm. howitzer (M114A1) for firing in Quang Ngai Province. Many members of the American mission questioned the use of artillery in populated areas. (*U.S. Army*)



A U.S. Air Force C-123B releases defoliant along Highway 1 east of Saigon. Though U.S. military observers thought that chemical defoliants were ideal against enemy ambush sites, the State Department argued that the political repercussions would outweigh the military gains. (*U.S. Air Force*)

Viet Cong structures on the plains south of Saigon burn after a napalm attack by U.S. Air Force Skyraiders. As with defoliants, the appropriateness of napalm in a guerrilla war divided the American mission. (*U.S. Air Force*)





A South Vietnamese soldier assembles villagers for questioning. As momentum went out of the allied shooting war in 1963, many peasants began favoring the enemy and intelligence in the countryside dried up. *(U.S. Army)*



From the left, David Halberstam of the *New York Times*, Malcolm Browne of the Associated Press, and Neil Sheehan of United Press International confer at a base in the delta. Their reports from the countryside, based on discussions with U.S. advisers, were critical of the South Vietnamese Army. American officials in Saigon thought that the correspondents and advisers were overreacting. *(Copyright 1963 Time Inc.)*



Lt. Col. John Paul Vann *(left)*, the senior adviser with the South Vietnamese 7th Division, asserted that the southern army was avoiding battle on orders from Diem. *(U.S. Army)*



The government defeat at Ap Bac in Dinh Thuong Province in January 1963 shocked Saigon and Washington. A UH-1B Huey recovers one of the five U.S. helicopters shot down in the day-long encounter between a South Vietnamese regimental task force and a Viet Cong battalion. (*U.S. Army*)



Advisers examine the battle gear of South Vietnamese casualties after the allied failure at Ap Bac. (*U.S. Army*)



A South Vietnamese soldier stacks dead comrades aboard a truck after a firefight near Tan Hiep in the delta in March 1963. (*U.S. Army*)

The End of Diem



The president consults with McNamara and General Taylor after a meeting at the White House in January 1963. Alarmed by the deterioration on the battlefield, Kennedy began questioning the alliance with Ngo Dinh Diem. (*John F. Kennedy Library*)



Diem addresses an opening session of the National Assembly. Recognizing that reform would imperil his personal authority and convinced that the Kennedy administration would never abandon him, Diem fended off American suggestions to broaden and vitalize his regime. (*Courtesy of Robert Scigliano*)



Buddhist-led demonstrations in the spring and summer of 1963 revealed the breadth of disaffection for the Diem regime. (*Magnum Photos*)



On 11 June 1963, the Venerable Quang Duc, a life-long Buddhist monk, set himself afire at a busy intersection in Saigon to protest government policies. A wave of revulsion against the South Vietnamese government spread around the world. (*Wide World Photos*)



Diem was no stranger to opposition. The 1962 strafing of the palace by disgruntled fighter pilots sealed his mistrust of the military. (*U.S. Army*)



The American ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, meets with Ngo Dinh Diem at the palace in Saigon. Lodge encouraged the conspiracy of the South Vietnamese generals. (*Center of Military History*)



Captured in Cholon, a suburb of Saigon, where he had taken refuge in a Catholic church, Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated in an armored personnel carrier on 2 November 1963. (*Paris Match*)



Maj. Gen. Tran Van Don, a leader in the plot against Diem, is cheered by street crowds in Saigon shortly after the coup. Relief and optimism briefly reigned in the cities after the uprising. (*United Press International*)



In the countryside the war went on as before. (*U.S. Army*)

Decisions for War



The Tonkin Gulf crisis which brought a resolution of congressional support for President Lyndon B. Johnson was an important milestone on the path to intervention in force. The president signed the resolution at the White House before television cameras on 10 August 1964. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)

The Downward Spiral



Sensing victory, the Viet Cong increased the pressure against the South Vietnamese Army. Several main force units in 1964 were re-armed with new Soviet-designed assault rifles, the AK47 Kalashnikov, distinguished by the curved magazine. (*Center of Military History*)



A government outpost near Cu Chi fell to the Viet Cong in July 1964. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



In the Central Highlands, discontent among the Montagnards, aggravated by Viet Cong agents, threatened the safety of Special Forces camps, including this one at Buon Brieng. (*Center of Military History*)



A South Vietnamese Army truck goes up in flames after a Viet Cong ambush in the Central Highlands. Travel everywhere outside the cities grew hazardous. (*U.S. Air Force*)



As the pace of fighting quickened, enemy terror turned indiscriminate. A peasant in Binh Dinh Province weeps over his daughter who was killed by guerrillas. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



A Viet Cong tax collection station and a monument to Viet Cong dead stand defiantly along a road just south of Saigon. Government troops no longer patrolled the area. (*Center of Military History*)



Hidden in a base area, Viet Cong soldiers prepare an American-made 75-mm. recoilless rifle for battle. In 1963 and 1964, government forces lost some 22,000 weapons to the enemy. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



While the war went badly in the provinces, indecision reigned in Saigon, fueled by rivalries among the generals. The prime minister in mid-1964, Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh, is shown in army fatigues. His chief opponent, Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh, the army chief of staff, is in khaki. The new U.S. ambassador, General Maxwell D. Taylor, is third from the left. (*U.S. Army*)



Buddhists riot in downtown Saigon near the U.S. embassy, protesting attempts by Catholics to control the military government. Religious animosity in the capital heightened political tensions. (*Newsweek*)

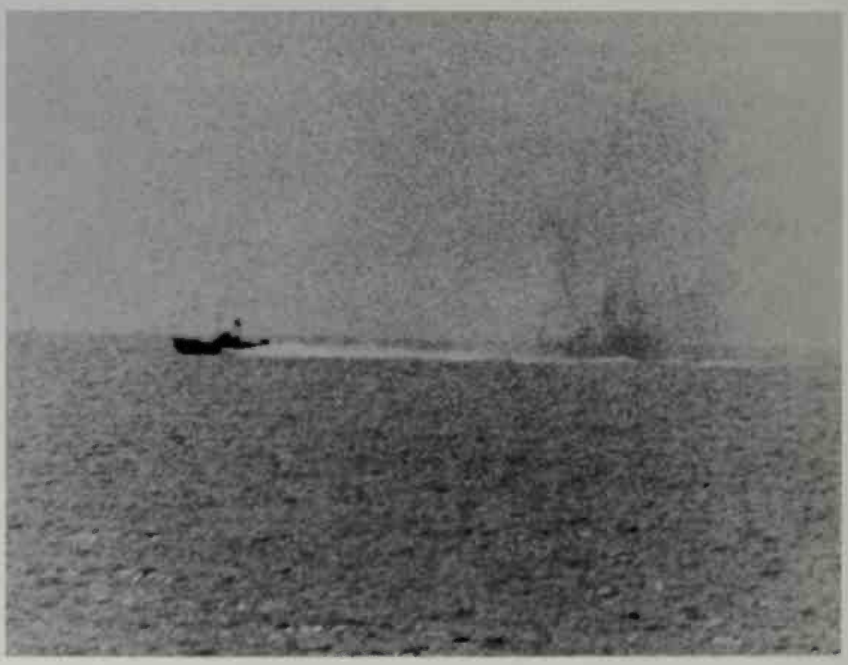


An imperiled Montagnard hamlet in a Viet Cong–controlled valley in the Central Highlands is viewed from a U.S. helicopter. By late 1964 the rural areas, with few exceptions, belonged to the Communists. (*Courtesy of Howard Sochurek*)

Intervention in Force



President Johnson and his leading military and civilian advisers meet at his ranch in Texas. In mid-1964, after months of doubt and hesitancy, the president began to prepare for war. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)



The attack by North Vietnamese PT boats on the destroyer USS *Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin electrified the Johnson administration. Two days later, on 4 August 1964, after an alleged second attack, the president ordered a retaliatory air strike against North Vietnam. (*U.S. Navy*)



Airmen of the Royal Australian Air Force began arriving in Saigon with their Caribou transports in August 1964. To increase domestic support for his Vietnam policy, Johnson pressed allied nations to contribute to the war. (*U.S. Army*)



A mortar crew of the CIA-supported Meo army of Maj. Gen. Vang Pao occupies a hilltop in northern Laos. In late 1964, the United States sent a signal to Hanoi by undertaking air strikes in behalf of the Meo forces against the Pathet Lao. (*Center of Military History*)



Undeterred by American pressure, the Communists stepped up their attacks in South Vietnam. In November the Viet Cong mortared the air base at Bien Hoa, destroying six U.S. Air Force B-57's and killing or wounding twenty-three U.S. servicemen. (*U.S. Air Force*)



Villagers bury their dead after the battle of Binh Gia in December. In four days of fighting at the Catholic village east of Saigon, two regiments of the Viet Cong 9th Division destroyed two South Vietnamese battalions of rangers and marines. The battle was regarded as a major event by both sides. (*U.S. Army*)



An enemy mortar and sapper attack on 7 February 1965 turned Pleiku into a graveyard for U.S. helicopters. Eight Americans died; 104 were wounded. (*U.S. Army*)



After viewing the destruction of Pleiku, McGeorge Bundy, the president's assistant for national security, recommended that Johnson order reprisals against North Vietnam. At the right is William C. Westmoreland, commanding general of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. *(U.S. Army)*



An A-4 Skyhawk is launched from the USS *Coral Sea* in one of the first ROLLING THUNDER raids against North Vietnam. (*U.S. Navy*)



During an April press conference at the Pentagon, McNamara summarizes the results of the bombing campaign. It was rapidly becoming clear that air power alone would not save South Vietnam. (*U.S. Army*)



In May 1965 the 173d Airborne Brigade, the first U.S. Army ground combat unit to enter Vietnam, took up position near Bien Hoa. (*U.S. Army*)

4

Taking the Offensive, 1965–1967

In the summer of 1965, after months of debate over the advisability of large-scale deployments, the Johnson administration took the final steps necessary to transform an escalating advisory effort into an American land war. Like many of the decisions that over the years had deepened the U.S. involvement, the commitment of ground troops was regarded at the time as the last measure needed to accomplish America's objectives in Indochina. The violence of the Viet Cong's spring offensive, and evidence of the infiltration of North Vietnamese regular units, left little doubt in Washington that hard fighting lay ahead. But the prevailing view at the White House was that the campaign would be comparatively brief, with negotiations following shortly, and would not require the mobilization recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to put the United States on a wartime footing. It would be like a filibuster, Johnson said of the expedition, "enormous resistance at first, then a steady whittling away, then Ho hurrying to get it over with." The military leadership was more guarded in its appraisal, worried that the country might be embarking on a lengthy war.

Initially, the injection of American combat forces seemed to throw Hanoi off stride, for the enemy lost momentum by the end of the year. General Westmoreland was not without his anxious moments, since he elected to go into battle without an effective logistical base and with units which had little or no training in jungle warfare. By late autumn, however, his hope of breaking the Communist advance and providing a modicum of security for the populated areas—his emergency program for 1965—had been realized through a series of spoiling attacks deep into enemy-held territory. U.S. military strength had passed 150,000, and every major unit was actively engaged—the marines, a brigade of the 101st Airborne Division, and the South Koreans on the coastal plain; the airmobile 1st Cavalry on the approaches through the Central Highlands; and the 1st Infantry Division and a battalion of Australians near Saigon. En-

counters with enemy units occurred regularly near U.S. installations, and the war was taken to the farthest borders of the nation with tactical air power and heliborne forces. A satisfying low ratio of American-to-enemy casualties in the first important ground engagements, particularly the 1st Cavalry's bloody battle with three North Vietnamese regiments in the la Drang in November, confirmed Westmoreland's decision to use American troops for search-and-destroy operations, rather than in defensive enclaves to protect the villages. An enclave strategy, he felt, would concede the initiative to the enemy.

But if the search-and-destroy strategy was confirmed, so was the enemy's riposte. There were some ten North Vietnamese regiments in the South by November 1965, and approximately 200,000 Viet Cong regulars, guerrillas, and militia. In Washington, questions were raised about Westmoreland's year-end request for more troops to match this infiltration and recruitment. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara warned of a standoff at higher levels of fighting. The new troop level agreed to by the Johnson administration, some 470,000, raised the specter of an open-ended war.

Furnished with thousands of soldiers and marines and the most modern weapons available in the American arsenal, Westmoreland, despite the concerns in Washington, took the battle to the Com-

Finding his choices narrowing as Communist forces pressed their attack, President Johnson decided in July 1965 to deploy American divisions for combat in South Vietnam. General Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is on the right. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)



munists. No enemy redoubt or concentration, he later reported, was too remote or formidable for the American fighting forces. Through late 1967, from the rugged Demilitarized Zone south to the plains of the delta, each of forty-five major search-and-destroy operations accounted for over 500 enemy dead. Some operations took months to complete, others just a few days. But all were distinguished by a single purpose: not to seize positions or hold terrain in the traditional manner, but to corner and destroy Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops faster than the Communists could replace them, to wage a war of attrition wherever the enemy could be found.

It was an unusual conflict for American fighting men, trained as they were for conventional war in Europe and Korea and accustomed to clear boundaries between opposing armies. Because there were no front lines on the map, and because the enemy could be anywhere and everywhere and was often indistinguishable from the population, combat operations were decentralized to a high degree. All divisions and separate brigades operated from fortified base camps. Though securing surrounding villages and terrain was one command concern, companies and battalions usually ranged far afield, often traveling by helicopter, building temporary infantry positions and makeshift fire support bases from which artillery could cover the hunt for enemy forces. On many operations

A U.S. Air Force B-52 bombards a suspected enemy base north of Saigon. The strategic bombers were employed increasingly en masse to take advantage of their destructive power. (*U.S. Air Force*)



American units penetrated deep into the jungle, dependent entirely on helicopter and radio for supply and evacuation. All support and security in such cases went through the helicopter landing zone. Logistics of necessity was as mobile as the combat it supported.

Considerable effort was made to sustain the forces. Every month, at seven deepwater ports and their lesser satellites, from Da Nang and Qui Nhon and Cam Ranh Bay to Newport outside Saigon, a million short tons of supplies came ashore. Depots and warehouses proliferated, as did air bases and airstrips, power plants and hospitals, and a modern communications system that brought new flexibility to military command and control. There were other technological developments. To locate an enemy who practiced elusiveness as an operational art form, the military air-dropped sensors along infiltration routes and near known staging areas, used portable radars and starlight scopes to tighten the defense of its outposts, and programmed computers to predict the enemy's battle patterns in wet and dry season, his likely choice of time and place to attack, and his blend of forces.

Nowhere in the South were the Communists safe from American firepower. Artillery and air strikes pounded their base areas incessantly and were repeatedly relied on to dislodge enemy troops at small cost in American lives. Flying above the clouds, inaudible



Troops of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), on an isolated landing zone during Operation PERSHING in 1967, await a second wave of helicopters. Its many helicopters enabled the experimental division to maneuver long distances with continuous artillery and logistical support. (*U.S. Army*)

in the jungle below, B-52 bombers with 58,000-pound payloads obliterated the enemy's tunnels, staging areas, and supply trails. Armed with rockets, grenade launchers, and machine guns, the Huey helicopter gunship no sooner made its mark as an excellent close air support instrument than it began to be superseded by the more formidable Cobra gunship. The troops themselves were veritable walking arsenals. The new M16 rifle, a lightweight automatic, was particularly effective at close quarters. The M79 grenade launcher, two to a rifle squad, had an effective range of over 300 meters.

On all important battlefronts fighting was intense. In I Corps, along the Demilitarized Zone, the marines constructed a series of defensive strongpoints and pounded infiltrating North Vietnamese divisions with air strikes and artillery, and were shelled in return. In II Corps, while the 4th Division conducted a holding action in the Central Highlands, the 1st Cavalry and other units in Operations WHITE WING, IRVING, THAYER, and PERSHING fought a village war in the provinces along the coast. But the largest campaigns in the American offensive were the sweeps made in III Corps north of Saigon—Operations CEDAR FALLS, JUNCTION CITY, and MANHATTAN. For twenty years the three Communist bases in the area—War Zones C and D and the Iron Triangle—had served the revolution as springboards for attacks near the capital. Despite occasional incursions by South Vietnamese and American forces, the tunnels and bunkers and winding trail systems had survived intact. Westmoreland in early 1967 attacked in strength, using elements of the 1st and 25th Divisions and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, destroying command and supply centers, evacuating Viet Cong villagers, and killing nearly 3,500 of the enemy in four months of offensive action. In June U.S. forces opened up still another front, initiating operations in IV Corps or the Mekong Delta. Road-clearing actions also spread in another attempt to keep the enemy forces on the run. All of the momentum gained in late 1966 appeared to carry over into 1967. And yet, said Westmoreland in his reports to the Joint Chiefs and the president, the war in South Vietnam had not been won.

U.S. troops fought well. Under extremely trying conditions—swamps and impenetrable jungle, leeches and malaria and dysentery, mines and ambushes and sniping from distant tree lines, and an elusive but lethal foe—American units won the major encounters. Enemy losses were staggering. Even allowing for exaggerations in body counts, the enemy death toll in 1967 averaged about 7,000 soldiers a month. The enemy showed remarkable resilience. Regiments reportedly put out of action would reappear in battle, practically up to strength, four or five months later. The difficulty of finding and holding contact with the enemy also frustrated U.S. commanders and began to raise questions about the value of big operations, as critics pointed to the lack of surprise and the increasing damage caused by American firepower to the civilian population.

Gradually a preference for methods less aggressive than search and destroy, particularly an interest in pacification or "the other war," began to acquire a substantial constituency in Washington, including a number of members of the Army staff. The driving force was initially President Johnson, who, feeling the pressure of war


THAILAND
LAOS
CAMBODIA
SOUTH VIETNAM
Ho Chi Minh Trail
Sihanouk Trail
TONLE SAP
Mekong R
Mekong R
PHNOM PENH
Sihanoukville
Khe Sanh
Quang Tri
Da Nang
Quang Ngai
Dak To
Kontum
Pleiku
Qui Nhon
Tuy Hoa
Cam Ranh
Nha Trang
Ban Me Thuot
Tay Ninh
SAIGON
Phan Thiet
My Tho
Can Tho
I CORPS
II CORPS
III CORPS
IV CORPS
CAPITAL MILITARY DISTRICT
SOUTH CHINA SEA
GULF OF THAILAND
MAJOR ALLIED OPERATIONS
1965-1967
0 75 MILES
0 75 KILOMETERS

MAP 4

costs and public opinion, stated his commitment to pacification and rural reform during a Honolulu summit conference in February 1966. One year later a revised and unified program, called Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS), was established as a U.S. military responsibility, and Robert W. Komer, a White House assistant, arrived as Westmoreland's civilian deputy to be in charge. Progress was somewhat halting at first, for new managerial tools were still being developed, retraining of South Vietnamese paramilitary forces was just getting under way, and U.S. commanders fighting the main force war were sometimes reluctant to release scarce infantry battalions for missions of population security. By mid-1967, however, Westmoreland reported signs of improved prospects. The number of people under revolutionary control had declined to 17 percent of the population of South Vietnam, the main forces were being driven into their sanctuaries and reduced to nipping at the edges of government areas, and roads were being opened and enemy soldiers were surrendering in larger and larger numbers—all indications that the weight of the U.S. effort was grinding the Communists down.

The only uncertain battlefield note was Hanoi's decision to increase conventional pressure along the Demilitarized Zone, perhaps to open new trails into the A Shau Valley, already an enemy redoubt,



Residents repair to a landing zone as Ben Suc Village is forcibly evacuated during CEDAR FALLS. American reporters criticized the U.S. command for deliberately increasing the refugee population. (*U.S. Army*)

or to draw U.S. forces northward away from the population in order to disrupt pacification. Determined to defend South Vietnam to the borders, Westmoreland hurried Army units north to reinforce the marines. Once again, this time because of the rapid shift to the north, he called on President Johnson for additional forces. An optimum force of 200,000 more men, he said in March 1967, would enable him, if authorized, to drive into the enemy's sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia and to secure the northern border by landing troops in the North, somewhere just above the Demilitarized Zone. Asked by Secretary McNamara how long the war was likely to last, he replied three to five years, depending on the number of troops the president offered him.

The debate that broke out in the administration over the troop request revealed growing division over strategy and progress in the war. Through the spring and summer, the president, facing domestic discord over the fighting and disenchantment within his own cabinet, moved toward a ceiling on American manpower in South Vietnam. Westmoreland, reacting to the growing pessimism in the White House and in the country, stepped up military pressure and pacification and assistance to the South Vietnamese armed forces. In November, summoned home by the president for a round of public relations, he spoke confidently of the statistical indicators and the problems that the Communist forces were encountering. ''I see progress as I travel all over Vietnam,'' he told the National Press Club in Washington, insisting that the end was coming into view. He also coupled his expressions of optimism with a warning: battlefield losses might force the Communists to rethink their strategy, with unpredictable consequences for the war.

* * * * * *

Stemming the Tide



Soldiers of the 1st Cavalry conduct a search-and-destroy mission in defense of their new division base camp at An Khe in the highlands. By the end of 1965 U.S. Army strength in the South had risen to 120,000. (*U.S. Army*)

Deployments Quicken



South Vietnamese troops battled three Viet Cong regiments at the district town of Dong Xoai in Phuoc Long Province in June 1965. Government losses were unprecedentedly high, raising American fears that the army was near collapse. (*Wide World Photos*)



Enemy terror continued unabated in the cities. Americans and Australians remove bodies from a Saigon restaurant destroyed by two bomb blasts in late June. (*U.S. Army*)



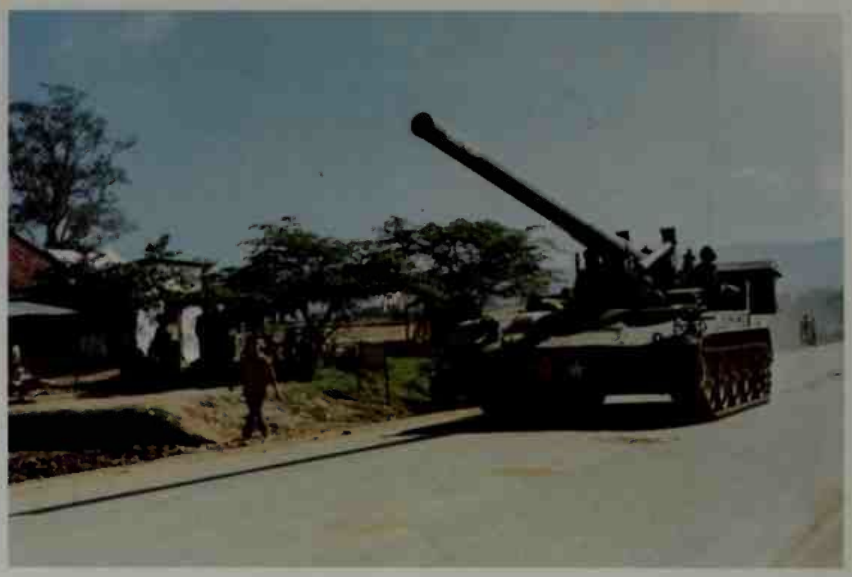
Troops of the 1st Cavalry Division depart Fort Benning for Vietnam. (*U.S. Army*)



Laden with 1st Cavalry equipment, the USS *Boxer* in August 1965 begins the long journey from Florida to the port of Qui Nhon. (*U.S. Army*)



A unit of the 1st Infantry Division settles in during the summer near Bien Hoa. By autumn, the "Big Red One" had entered combat in the jungles north of Saigon. (*U.S. Army*)



Filling out the American presence in the Central Highlands, a 175-mm. gun (M107) of the 25th Infantry Division rumbles toward a staging area near Pleiku. (*U.S. Army*)



Henry Cabot Lodge, beginning his second tour as U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, found a youthful military government in Saigon headed by Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Cargo vessels congested the port of Saigon during the American buildup. Bigger ports and piers were soon necessary to relieve the growing bottleneck. (*Newsweek*)

The Battle Is Joined



Highway 19, snaking through the An Khe Valley, provided an invasion corridor from Pleiku east to the coast. General Westmoreland worried that an enemy victory in the Central Highlands would slice the country in two and end southern resistance. (*U.S. Army*)



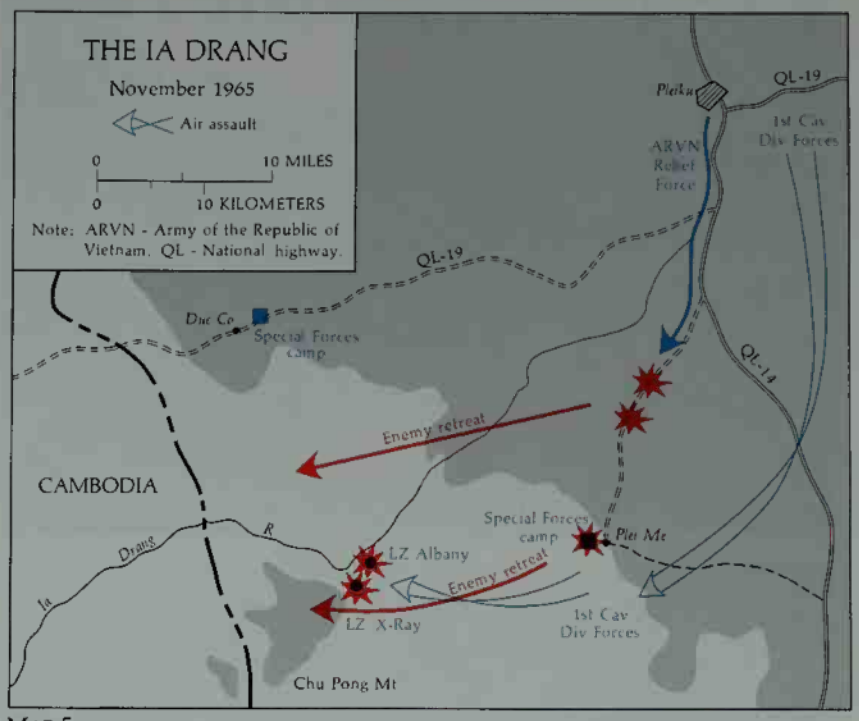
Anticipating airmobile strikes by U.S. forces in Vietnam, the Viet Cong prepared probable landing zones as helicopter ambush sites, using a variety of small arms and antiaircraft weapons. (*Center of Military History*)



Operation STARLITE, a Marine Corps action near Chu Lai in mid-August 1965, was the first regimental-size U.S. battle since the Korean War. At least half of the 600 Viet Cong killed were accounted for by a battalion of the 4th Marines, whose command group is shown searching one of the enemy's fortified villages. (*U.S. Marine Corps*)

The contest for the Central Highlands began in mid-October when the North Vietnamese besieged a Special Forces camp at Plei Me. South Vietnamese armor broke the siege one week later, and the 1st Cavalry Division pursued the enemy westward toward Cambodia. (*United Press International*)





MAP 5

The 1st Cavalry Division's baptism by fire took place in the elephant grass at Landing Zone X-RAY in the Ia Drang Valley in mid-November. In three days of bloody combat, the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, repulsed attacks by two North Vietnamese regiments. The soldier at the left fires the 5.56-mm. M16 rifle. (*U.S. Army*)





One American unit in the Ia Drang, the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry, walked into a murderous ambush near Landing Zone ALBANY. When the action ended on 17 November, American bodies were strewn about the battlefield. (*Wide World Photos*)

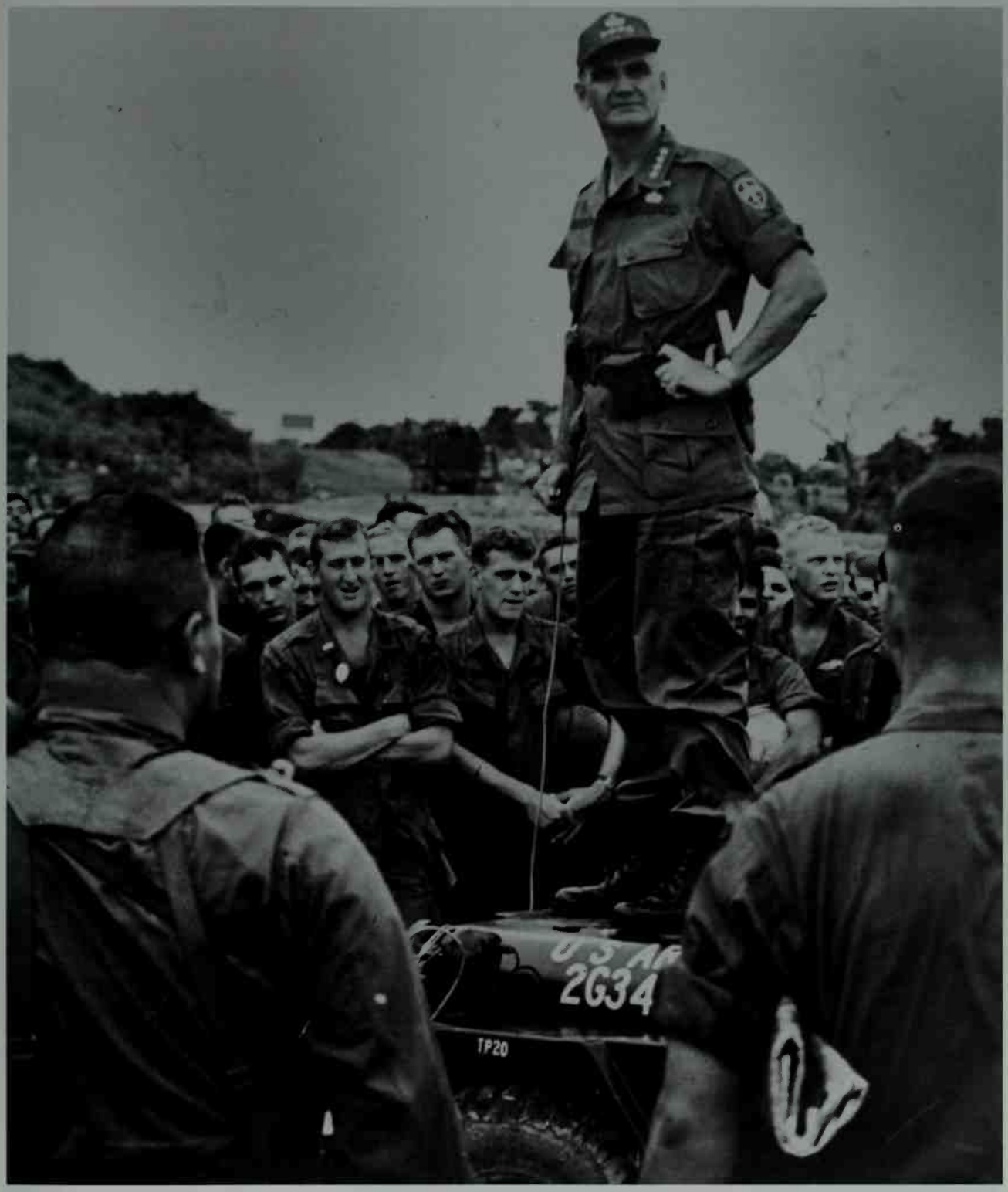


Skytroopers clean their weapons after the battle. Three hundred Americans died in the highlands campaign. The equivalent of a North Vietnamese division was put out of action. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



In Washington, McNamara fields questions at a Pentagon press conference. Though the threat to the highlands had dissipated, the secretary now believed that the war was going to be a long one. (*U.S. Army*)

The Westmoreland Campaign



General Westmoreland addresses men of the 1st Cavalry Division at an infantry base in II Corps. Optimistic and certain U.S. power would prevail, he took the war to the enemy. (*U.S. Army*)

Surveillance in the Mountains



A UH-1B gunship fires rockets and machine guns at an enemy position in the highlands. The U.S. command deployed light forces at first to screen the mountainous borders. (*U.S. Army*)



During a rite at Ban Me Thuot in which Montagnard tribesmen renewed their loyalty to South Vietnam, the II Corps commander, Maj. Gen. Nguyen Huu Co, sips ceremonial wine. (*U.S. Army*)



Communicating in the rugged highlands challenged American ingenuity and technology. The Hon Cong Mountain signal site at An Khe was the control center of 1st Cavalry communications. *(U.S. Army)*



Airdropped along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, acoustic and seismic sensors listened in on enemy movement in the border areas. *(U.S. Air Force)*



At a forward supply point at Pleiku, stockpiled ammunition and rations stand ready for loading onto helicopters for dispersal to U.S. fire bases. A CH-47 Chinook waits in the background. *(U.S. Army)*



A mile south of the Demilitarized Zone, a member of the 4th Marines rushes forward with a 3.5-inch rocket round during Operation PRAIRIE in September 1966. The Marine Corps strongpoints on the northern border extended from Gio Linh to Khe Sanh. (*U.S. Marine Corps*)



A 25th Division battery of 105-mm. howitzers (M101A1) supports a border action in Pleiku Province with high-angle fire. (*U.S. Army*)



Paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade prepare to be lifted into action by helicopter during Operation FRANCIS MARION. Surveillance of four North Vietnamese regiments was the objective of the mid-1967 operation in western Pleiku Province. (*U.S. Army*)

Securing the Coastal Belt



By late 1966 the Cam Ranh Bay complex in II Corps included a deepwater port, a depot, and a jet airfield. One of General Westmoreland's strategic priorities was to defend his bases along the coast. (*U.S. Army*)



An Air Force F-100D Super Sabre attacks a Viet Cong base with two Mk82 drag bombs. Until the ground force buildup, the U.S. command relied on tactical air power to contain the enemy. (*U.S. Air Force*)



UH-1D Hueys pick up soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division during a search-and-destroy action on the Bong Son Plain in Binh Dinh Province. By early 1966 U.S. forces had taken the offensive on the coast. (*U.S. Army*)



1st Cavalry troops, searching a village just north of Qui Nhon during Operation IRVING, found women and children and caches of supplies but, because of the enemy's warning network, no enemy soldiers. (*U.S. Army*)



A CH-54 "flying crane" prepares to hoist a 155-mm. howitzer as artillerymen close a mountain fire base in eastern Binh Dinh Province. Helicopters moved artillery units frequently during the search for the enemy's forces. (*U.S. Army*)



A steel-hulled enemy trawler carrying 250 tons of supplies burns near the mouth of the Co Chien River. By 1967 the naval Operation MARKET TIME had sharply reduced maritime infiltration along the coast. (*U.S. Navy*)

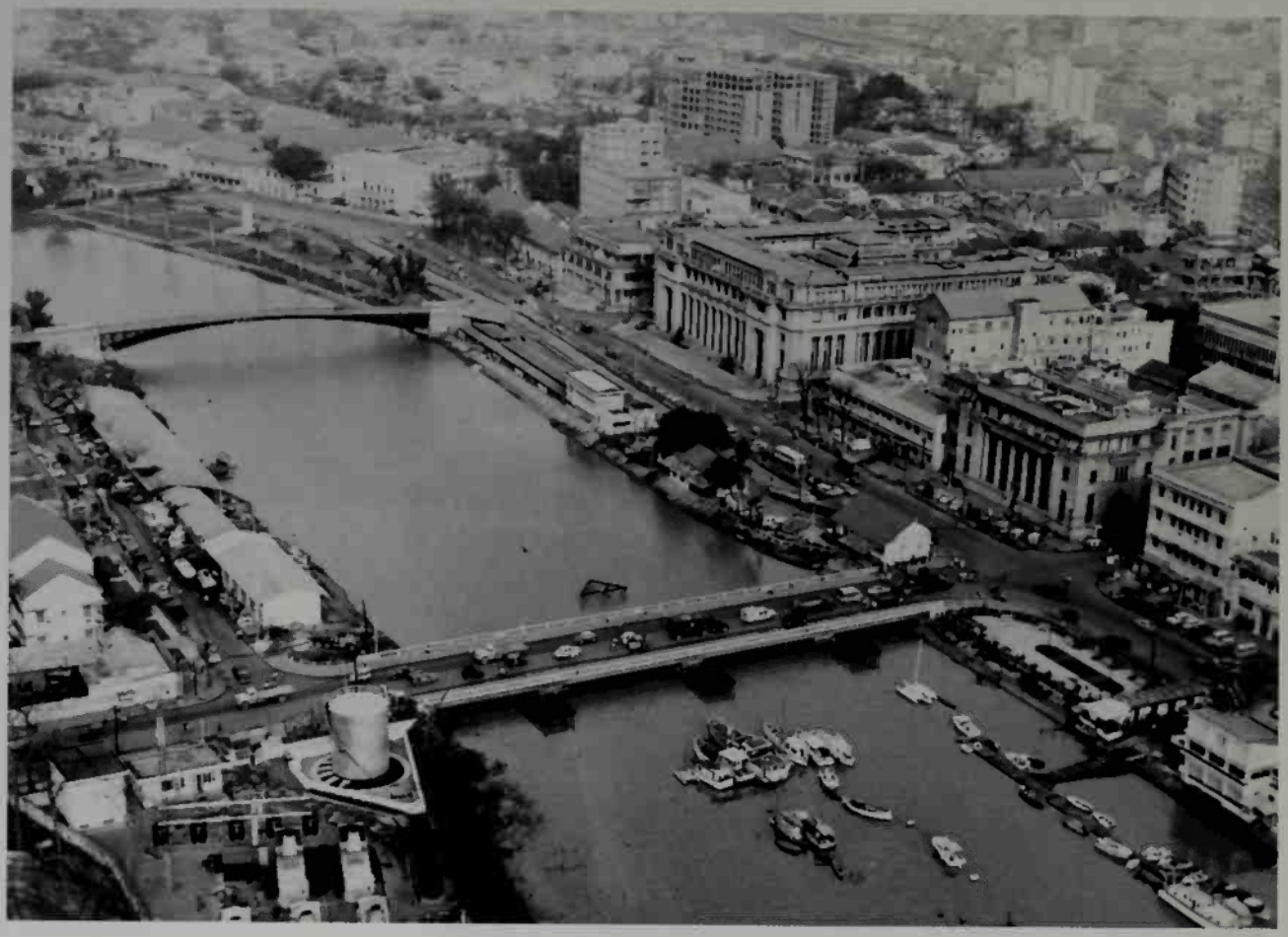


A radio-telephone operator and a rifleman watch a Viet Cong structure burn during Operation PERSHING. The soldiers belong to the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, the main aerial reconnaissance arm of the 1st Cavalry Division. (*U.S. Army*)



Viet Cong guerrillas captured in the An Lao Valley, an enemy redoubt in Binh Dinh Province, march to an interrogation point. Though the province remained sympathetic to the Communists, allied sweeps kept the enemy's larger units off the populated coastal strip. (*U.S. Army*)

The Corridor Engagements



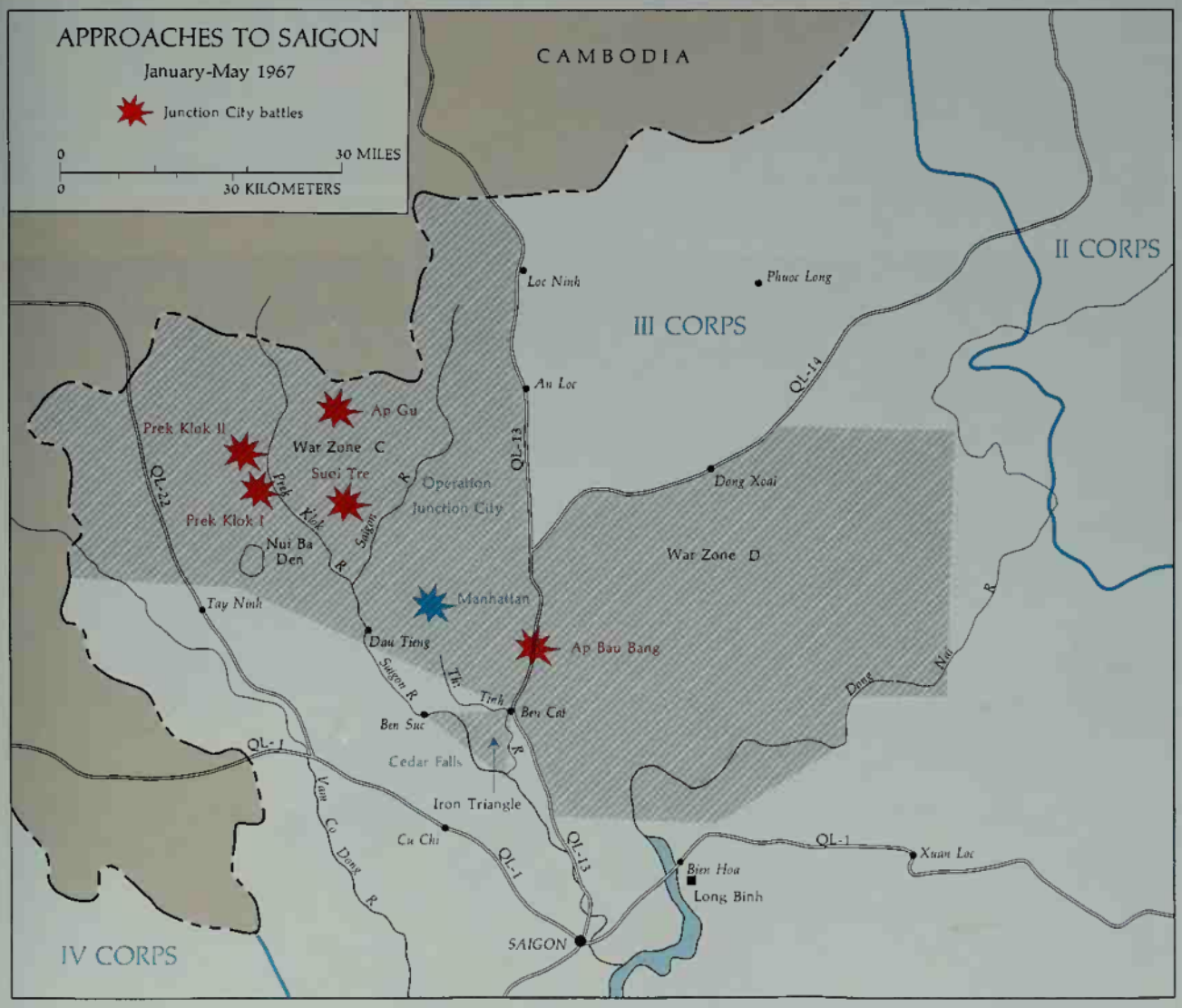
Saigon's old financial quarter dominates the Kinh Ben Nghe waterfront. The allied objective in III Corps was to control the approaches to the capital city. (*Center of Military History*)



Troops of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade examine the body of a U.S. soldier after his scout jeep struck an antitank mine near Tay Ninh City in 1966. Strong enemy bases northwest of Saigon made the area extremely hazardous to allied soldiers. (*U.S. Army*)

The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment's ACAV's (armored cavalry assault vehicles) gave U.S. forces in III Corps a powerful base-busting capability during the offensives of 1967. (*Newsweek*)





MAP 6



1st Division engineers descend a ladder to clear a landing zone during CEDAR FALLS. The nineteen-day operation in January 1967, which involved twenty infantry and armored units, was designed to destroy the enemy's command and supply system in the Iron Triangle. (*U.S. Army*)

Evacuated, bulldozed, and crushed, Ben Suc Village, a major Viet Cong supply center, smolders at the edge of the Iron Triangle. "If the U.S. has its way," stated *Time* magazine, "even a crow flying across the Triangle will have to carry lunch from now on." (*Copyright 1967 Time Inc.*)





Self-propelled 155-mm. howitzers (M109) established blocking positions in enemy War Zone C as Operation JUNCTION CITY began in February 1967. Supported by thirteen artillery bases ringing the objective, twenty-six battalions invaded the enemy redoubt in the largest operation of 1967. (*U.S. Army*)



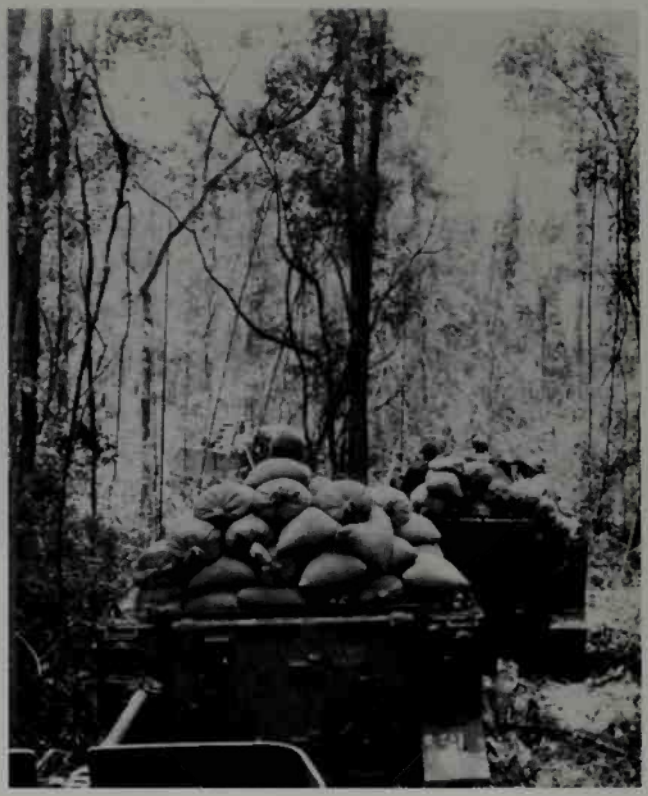
Riflemen of the 173d Airborne Brigade push through a wooded area near Highway 13 on the right flank of the main allied attack. (*U.S. Army*)



Elements of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment "circle the wagons" on the eastern edge of War Zone C. Unsuccessful attacks against strong American defensive positions at Prek Klok, Ap Bau Bang, and Ap Gu accounted for the heaviest Viet Cong losses during the operation. (*United Press International*)



A U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules air-drops supplies to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade twenty-five miles northeast of Tay Ninh during phase II of JUNCTION CITY in April. (*U.S. Army*)

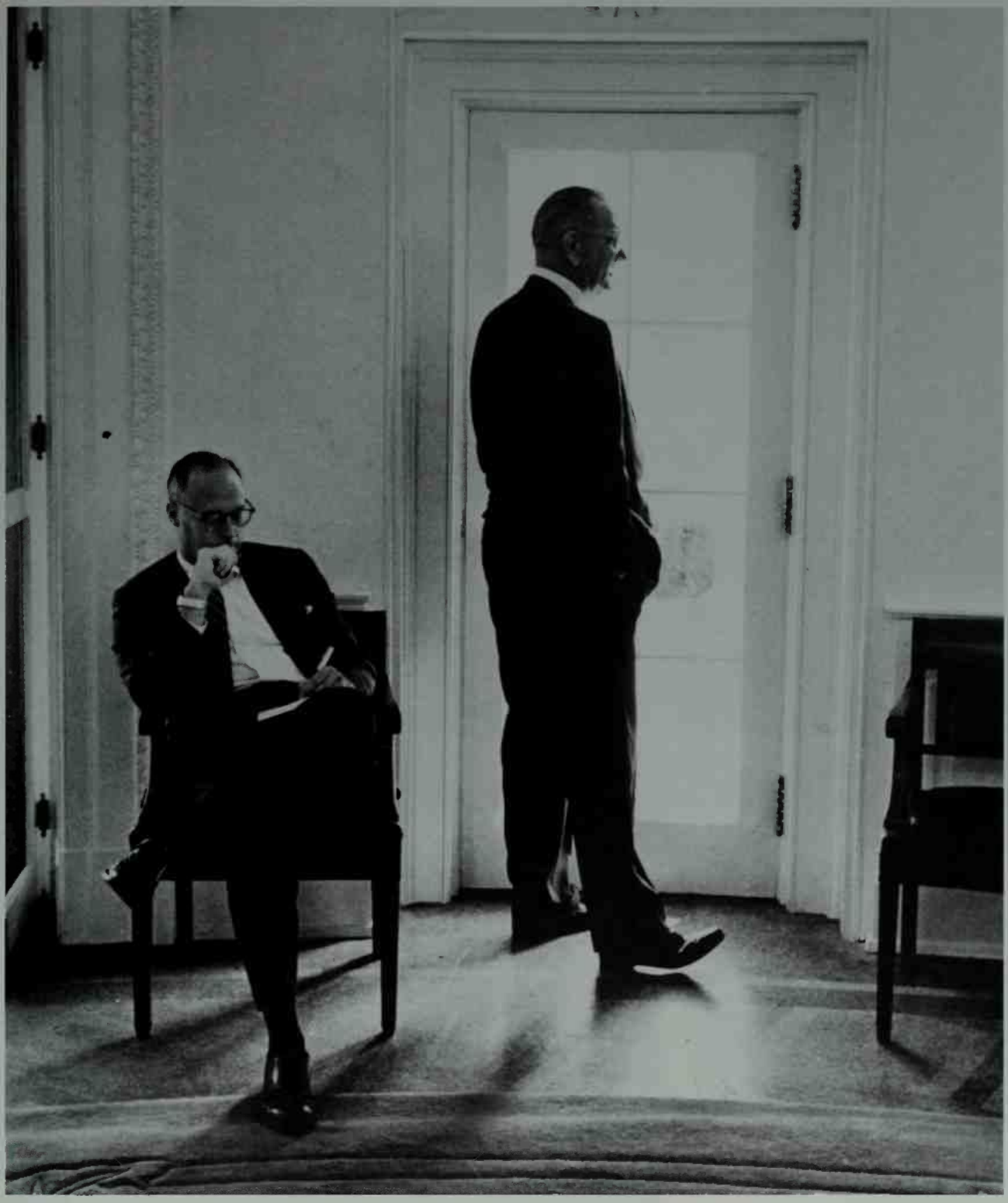


Piled high with rice captured near Lai Khe, armored vehicles press through the forest toward a nearby landing zone. Some 5,000 bunkers and structures, 900 tons of foodstuffs, and thousands of rounds of ammunition were uncovered by allied forces in the enemy base area. (*U.S. Army*)



With the enemy body count running high during the allied offensives, Westmoreland felt certain that the war for III Corps was being won. (*United Press International*)

Strains of an Open-ended War



In the White House, President Johnson and Robert W. Komer mull over the lengthening war. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)

The Nation-building Question



A Vietnamese girl, holding a box of C rations, looks on as paratroopers of the 173d Airborne move on a search-and-destroy mission through the area in early 1966. The presence of American troops increased population security temporarily, but few U.S. Army commanders committed their forces to pacification on a regular basis. (*U.S. Army*)



In February 1966 President Johnson and South Vietnamese officials met at Honolulu to devise a new pacification agenda for South Vietnam. Lt. Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu, the South Vietnamese chief of state (*leaning forward*), and Premier Ky (*on Thieu's right*) sit directly across from Johnson. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Members of a Marine Corps combined action platoon offer protection to coastal villagers during the rice harvest. The leatherneck experiment in pacification in I Corps, which stressed limited use of firepower and close coordination with territorial forces and assigned marines to live in the villages, appealed to administration officials. (*U.S. Marine Corps*)



Pacification, to succeed, required a strong southern army, yet desertion and avoidance of the draft continued to run high. These slackers were rounded up during a dragnet in Saigon. (*Center of Military History*)



Separatism in I Corps, reflected in this 1966 protest at Hue against U.S. policy in Vietnam, did not seem to bode well for the future of the Saigon government. (*Center of Military History*)

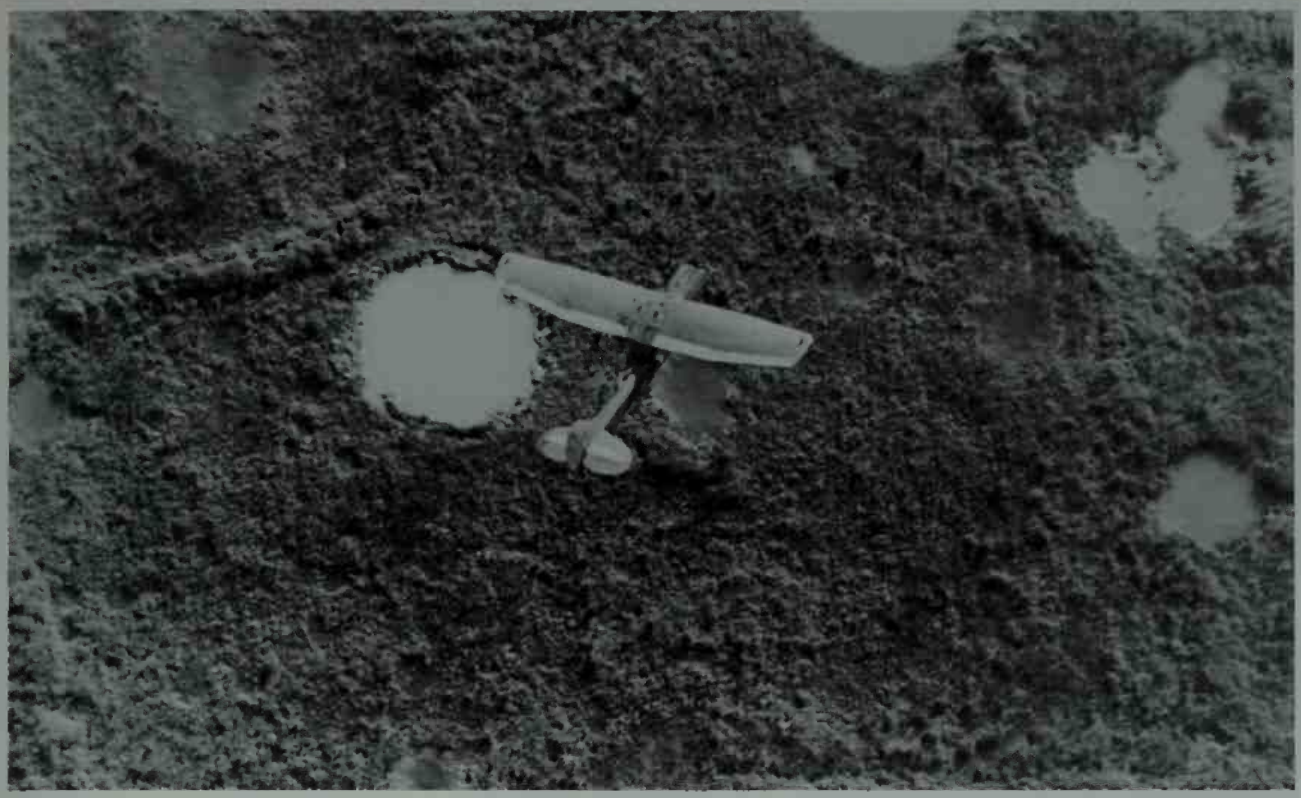


A member of the police field force checks the identification cards of peasants to see whether they are registered on government rolls as district residents. Training the police and paramilitary forces became an important goal of the U.S. command in 1967. (*Newsweek*)

A South Vietnamese military convoy passes a small territorial outpost (*right*) on the road between Saigon and Tay Ninh in 1967. Fewer ambushes along the roads late in the year suggested that rural security was slowly improving. (*U.S. Army*)



Attrition Doubted and Defended



A Cessna O-1 Bird Dog flies over abandoned fields just south of the 17th Parallel in search of the enemy. The North Vietnamese buildup in the hills and plains of Quang Tri Province created a new military threat in early 1967. (*U.S. Army*)



Corpsmen aid marines who were hit by shrapnel from a mortar round during Operation PRAIRIE III at the end of March. Enemy pressure in the north forced Westmoreland to pull Army units from II and III Corps to help the marines. (*U.S. Marine Corps*)



General Westmoreland's request in April for additional American soldiers rekindled debate in the administration over the attrition approach. Questions were raised about the command's reliance on body counts, the imbalance of support troops to fighting troops, and the size of the enemy's forces. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)



The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., addresses a peace rally near the United Nations in New York City on 16 April. Growing antiwar sentiment in the country raised doubts about public support for a wider war. (*New York Times*)



While tension increased in the United States, national elections in South Vietnam in September 1967 brought out some five million voters after a spirited campaign among eleven slates of candidates for president and vice president of the republic. Two of the candidates address a rally in Saigon's Lam Son Square. The National Assembly building is in the background. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



1st Cavalry skytroopers, working with Vietnamese police, comb a village on the Bong Son Plain in a late summer continuation of Operation PERSHING. By early autumn, according to an optimistic assessment at headquarters in Saigon, heavy casualties were causing the enemy serious problems in recruiting and morale. (*U.S. Army*)



Smoke and explosions mark a new target of U.S. Navy aircraft, a fuel storage facility northwest of Hanoi. Confident it was grinding down the enemy, the United States increased the pressure against the North in the summer and fall. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

5

Tet and the Aftermath, 1968

By the end of January 1968 General Vo Nguyen Giap, the North Vietnamese commander, had completed the final details of his general offensive. He had prepared carefully for the attack into enemy territory which he and the other members of the politburo hoped would change the complexion of the war and perhaps achieve total victory. Some 84,000 soldiers had been eased into position, southern guerrilla forces backed by regulars of the North Vietnamese Army, awaiting the signal to strike on the thirty-first, the new year holiday of Tet revered by the Vietnamese. Everything appeared ready for the audacious gamble—a simultaneous assault on a hundred towns.

Secret planning for the offensive had begun the previous July, with the pivotal decision by Hanoi to modify its strategy of big-unit actions. While several generals had continued to insist on the viability of large-scale battles, this approach had proved costly in lives and resources, with few immediate benefits for the insurrection. As early as 1966, reports from COSVN headquarters had spoken of a loss of initiative on the battlefield as American mobility and firepower took their toll. With the growing weakness of the revolutionary forces raising questions as to the inevitability of a Communist victory, relations between the cadres and the southern peasants had deteriorated sharply. The northern leadership decided it was time for escalation.

The chances for success seemed favorable. Though the half-million American troops in the South were a formidable military obstacle, less than 20 percent were in combat units, and they, in Giap's words, were stretched "taut as a bowstring" from the delta to the Demilitarized Zone. The American military presence, moreover, concealed serious weaknesses and contradictions in the South, including the failure of Generals Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky to gain popular acceptance and legitimacy for the Saigon government. If everything went according to plan, a suc-

cessful offensive against the cities and towns would demonstrate the irremediable weakness of the South Vietnamese Army, ignite a popular urban uprising against the government, and create within America intense political pressure on the administration for a negotiated settlement favorable to the revolution. Even if the offensive fell short militarily, it would prove, Hanoi believed, the resilience of the revolutionary forces and demonstrate to Washington that the war in Vietnam was unwinnable on acceptable terms.

The opening phase of the Communist plan was launched in September 1967. A series of attacks in relatively isolated border areas—at Con Thien, Loc Ninh, Dak To, and Khe Sanh—designed to draw U.S. forces away from the towns, it worked with considerable precision. Khe Sanh was particularly riveting, because many observers remarked on its similarity to the siege of Dien Bien Phu. Westmoreland believed that the battle portended an enemy attempt to seize the northern provinces. In late January he began providing the U.S. marines at the combat base with the heaviest air support of the Vietnam War.

While Westmoreland prepared for an enemy attack along the Demilitarized Zone, the Communists moved toward the second phase of their operation, the attack on the cities. Deep in the countryside, supplies of food, medicine, and ammunition—streaming in over the Ho Chi Minh Trail and through the ports of Cambodia—reached the highest levels of the Vietnam War. Closer to the cities, Viet Cong units, mainly sappers and local force battalions, assem-



Minister of defense and third-ranking member of the North Vietnamese politburo, Vo Nguyen Giap in the summer of 1967 began planning the offensive which he hoped would shorten the war. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)


SOUTH CHINA SEA
THAILAND
LAOS
CAMBODIA
Quang Tri
Khe Sanh
Hue
Da Nang
Tam Ky
Chu Lai
Quang Ngai
QL-14
Dak To
Kontum
QL-1
QL-19
An Khe
Pleiku
Qui Nhon
Hau Bon
Tuy Hoa
Ban Me Thuot
QL-21
Ninh Hoa
Nha Trang
Da Lat
Cam Ranh
QL-14
An Loc
QL-13
QL-22
QL-20
QL-11
Phan Rang
Tay Ninh
Phu Cuong
Bien Hoa
Xuan Loc
QL-1
Phan Thiet
Moc Hoa
SAIGON
Long Binh
QL-15
Chau Phu
Tan An
My Tho
Phuoc Le
QL-4
Sa Dec
Go Cong
Vung Tau
Rach Gia
Vinh Long
Ben Tre
SOUTH CHINA SEA
Can Tho
Phu Vinh
Mekong River Delta
Soc Trang
QL-4
QL-4
Bac Lieu
Ca Mau
TET OFFENSIVE
1968
0
50 MILES
0
50 KILOMETERS

MAP 7

bled, drew equipment, and drilled in street fighting. The last few miles of infiltration were concealed by the crush of Tet holiday traffic. Both sides since 1966 had observed cease-fires for the holiday, and Hanoi correctly assumed that many troops would be on furlough and that security in the cities would be generally light. So while the allied armies began to settle in for a few days' rest, bringing their operations to a gradual halt, Viet Cong battalions quietly slipped into attack position and waited for the moment to strike.

The offensive broke like a thunderclap simultaneously across the nation. Surfacing within the urban defenses that they had infiltrated with such success, the Viet Cong assaulted nearly every major airfield and broke into almost every provincial capital and over sixty district towns. In the delta, local force battalions swept into Can Tho, Vinh Long, My Tho, and Ben Tre, entrenched themselves in the poorer quarters, and pinned down the South Vietnamese in their military compounds. At Hue eight Viet Cong and North Vietnamese battalions, using foul weather to advantage, brushed past the city's defenses and occupied the market, the university, and the citadel of the emperors. At the end of the first day, Quang Tri, Da Lat, Kontum, and Ban Me Thuot were all under heavy attack. Saigon and its suburbs were thrown into turmoil, with enemy assaults on the U.S. embassy and Tan Son Nhut Airport.

The allies were unprepared. For months American and South Vietnamese intelligence units had been picking up signals of the offensive—shifts of major guerrilla units, realignments of tactical headquarters, even captured documents that outlined the plan in some detail, including instructions in rallying disaffected South Vietnamese units and appealing to the urban population. The scope of the coming attack was not believed. "Even had I known exactly what was to take place," said Westmoreland's intelligence officer, Maj. Gen. Phillip B. Davidson, "it was so preposterous that I probably would have been unable to sell it to anybody." Westmoreland faced a different worry during the first week of the offensive. He believed that the attack on the cities was a diversion from Khe Sanh.

For the most part the allies recovered quickly from the surprise and evicted the attackers from the cities within a few days. Several cities, however, were fought over for a longer period of time and suffered extensive damage from enemy and allied firepower. In the delta, where the brunt of the allied counterattack was borne by the riverine force of the U.S. 9th Division, the new year battles did not subside until mid-February. In Saigon, which until Tet had been almost impervious to the war and revolution, enemy suicide squads inflicted heavy damage on government installations. Hue suffered the bitterest ordeal. A place, until Tet, of quiet charm and faded glory, of parks, tile-roofed houses, palaces, and shrines, its streets and yards afterward were scarred with scores of grave mounds, the result of a massacre of some 3,000 Hue residents by the enemy's occupying force. The liberation of the city was itself a trial, among the bloodiest battles of the Vietnam War. Unable to seal off the enemy penetration because of Westmoreland's decision to hold back his reserve in I Corps against a possible all-out assault on the marines at Khe Sanh, the allies for three weeks were no stronger than Hue's invaders and in fact were suffering from resupply problems. South of the Perfume River, the 5th Marines took a week to advance four blocks from the MACV compound to the province hospital. Inside



Troops of the 5th Marines walk a rubble-strewn street in Hue after the 25-day-long battle for the imperial capital. The tower of the nineteenth century citadel of emperor Gia Long rises in the background. (*U.S. Marine Corps*)

the citadel, the South Vietnamese Army's elite 1st Division made little headway at all until reinforced. Three enemy regiments thought to be part of the ring around Khe Sanh were later discovered to have joined in the attack and occupation. The blocking positions they established north and west of the city in mid-February delayed the arrival of a 1st Cavalry brigade for nearly two weeks. Losses during the battle were heavy—allied casualties consisted of over 500 killed; enemy dead, perhaps ten times that number. Aside from the citizens executed in the occupation, hundreds were missing and presumed dead. Over 100,000 were left homeless in the city's rubble.

By the end of February the Tet offensive had run its course in every corps area, and the enemy was retreating to the safety of his rural sanctuaries. General Westmoreland pronounced the attack on the cities a costly defeat for the Communists. The military results later proved him correct. Nowhere but in Hue had the invaders secured a foothold. Nowhere had the people of the cities risen up to welcome the guerrillas as their liberators. In a month of bitter combat, nearly half the attacking force perished, some 40,000 soldiers and members of the revolutionary infrastructure, forcing Hanoi to speed replacements south. Never again would the local guerrillas



During the battle for Saigon, Eddie Adams of the Associated Press photographed the execution of a Viet Cong lieutenant by Vietnam's National Police chief, Nguyen Ngoc Loan. The picture was run on the front page of many American newspapers. Later it won a Pulitzer Prize. (*Wide World Photos*)

bear the brunt of the fighting. The revolution in the South would never be quite the same.

But there were other consequences of the Tet offensive, and they were serious for the allies as well. To defend the cities, a large number of U.S. and South Vietnamese battalions had been withdrawn from the contested countryside. The exacting efforts of the previous two years in organizing rural security—the labors of the revolutionary development teams, the government's *Chieu Hoi* amnesty program to encourage enemy defections, the buildup of the Regional and Popular Forces to provide for local defense—had all suffered setbacks during Tet. While the gains for the enemy were less than anticipated, and were reduced some months later during an accelerated pacification campaign, the offensive in several provinces, said U.S. officials, came very close to succeeding. Six hundred thousand more people in the South were added to the rolls of refugees. Questions were raised about the lack of any warning from the citizenry and about the degree to which enemy agents had infiltrated the government.

The gravest consequences for the war effort, however, were those in the United States. Over the previous year, the Johnson ad-



Under severe public pressure to change his policy, President Johnson announces on 31 March that he will not seek reelection and calls on the leaders of North Vietnam to negotiate a settlement of the war. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)

ministration had been reassuring the American people that the Communist forces were being beaten, pushed back toward the borders, and that the United States was firmly in command of the tempo of the war. Now there were pictures, transmitted into American living rooms, of combat in the embassy garden, pictures that shocked many Americans and raised doubts about the administration's claims of military progress. Assertions of a Tet victory by President Johnson, amid announcements from MACV headquarters of record-high American dead and wounded, drew unfavorable comments in the press and Congress. The well-publicized remark of a U.S. major after the battle at Ben Tre that "it became necessary to destroy the town to save it" struck many as an apt summation of a puzzling war.

Through February the president continued to issue optimistic statements on the fighting, emphasizing the heavy losses suffered by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese and the tenacity shown by the Saigon government in defending its cities and towns. In fact, the president and his advisers were stunned and alarmed by the events in South Vietnam, deeply concerned that the enemy was winning a major psychological victory and increasingly conscious that the American people would now be more reluctant than ever to sup-

port an inconclusive conflict. When General Westmoreland and the Joint Chiefs requested 205,000 more troops—both to exploit the enemy's weakness with counterattacks and to reconstitute the Army's reserve in the United States—a presidential study group headed by the new Secretary of Defense Clark M. Clifford concluded that the request would only further Americanize the war without bringing a military victory in Vietnam closer. Unwilling to put the country on a wartime footing at a time of rising public discontent with the conduct of the fighting, the president agreed with the study group and in March made the decision to seek a negotiated settlement with North Vietnam. On the thirty-first of the month, in a dramatic televised address, he announced a partial halt to U.S. bombing raids against the North and, as a further gesture of peace, his withdrawal from the 1968 election race. Three days later, undoubtedly feeling the effects of its battle losses, Hanoi accepted the president's offer to open peace talks. The talks bogged down in procedural wrangles for the rest of the presidential term, but Johnson never gave serious thought to renewing the bombing campaign.

Nor did he approve further troop increases. Troops in the pipeline would increase U.S. force levels by another 30,000, and further counteroffensives in April and May would sweep through the A Shau Valley and the hinterlands of Saigon, keeping pressure on the enemy. Never again would the American command, however, be encouraged by officials in Washington to believe that additional manpower might be forthcoming. Gradual escalation had ended and so had the prospect of achieving a military victory.

* * * * * *

141. NGUYEN-HUE SAIGON
Tel: 92.026 - 92.031

PRESS RELEASE

United States Mission in Vietnam

January 5, 1968

CAPTURED DOCUMENT INDICATES FINAL PHASE OF REVOLUTION AT HAND

Subordinate level Communist party activists of the National Liberation Front forces are being told that the final phase of the revolutionary war in

- 11 -

Action to be taken: Use very strong military attacks in coordination with the uprisings of the local population to take over towns and cities. Troops should flood the lowlands. They should move toward liberating the capital city /Saigon/, take power and try to rally enemy brigades and regiments to our side one by one. Propaganda should be broadly disseminated among the population in general, and leaflets should be used to reach enemy officers and enlisted personnel. The above subject should be fully understood by cadre and troops; however, our brothers should not say that this order comes from the Party and Uncle /Ho Chi Minh/, but to say it comes from the /Liberation/ Front. Also, do not specify times for implementation.

Emulation: From 1 December on, all units should take the initiative to

Twenty-five days before the Tet offensive, the U.S. embassy released this translation of a captured document which ordered attacks on Saigon and other cities. Most American officials declined to take the threat seriously. (*Center of Military History*)

Reassessment in the North



Aging and in uncertain health, Ho Chi Minh hoped to break the stalemate in the South while he and his generation of revolutionaries could still enjoy victory. General Van Tien Dung, chief of staff of the North Vietnamese Army, is on the right. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Smoke billows from the Thai Nguyen steel complex near Hanoi during an attack by Air Force fighter-bombers. The American bombing of the North was a factor in the politburo's reassessment of its protracted war strategy. (*U.S. Air Force*)



General Nguyen Chi Thanh, commander of revolutionary forces in the South and member of the North Vietnamese politburo, was criticized by Giap and others for the high costs and limited gains of his big-unit strategy. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



A captured member of a Viet Cong assassination team leads U.S. troops to the meeting place of his terrorist ring. By mid-1967 the insurgency appeared to be in trouble. (*U.S. Army*)



Troops with the U.S. Army's Task Force OREGON examine the document pouch of a dead North Vietnamese soldier after a firefight in Quang Ngai Province in June 1967. High battle casualties during the year accelerated Hanoi's reappraisal. (*U.S. Army*)



Shacks and houseboats crowd a malodorous canal in Saigon. North Vietnam's hopes for a popular uprising in the South hinged in part on the poverty in the major cities. (*Copyright National Geographic Society*)



Government troops throw tear gas to keep demonstrators inside Saigon's Buddhist Institute. Buddhist unrest in the capital in the spring of 1966 seemed to give a good indication of the revolutionary potential in the cities. (*U.S. Army*)



Hanoi hypothesized that strong antiwar sentiment in the United States, typified by this protest at the Pentagon in 1967, would force President Johnson to come to terms after a Communist Tet victory. (*U.S. Army*)

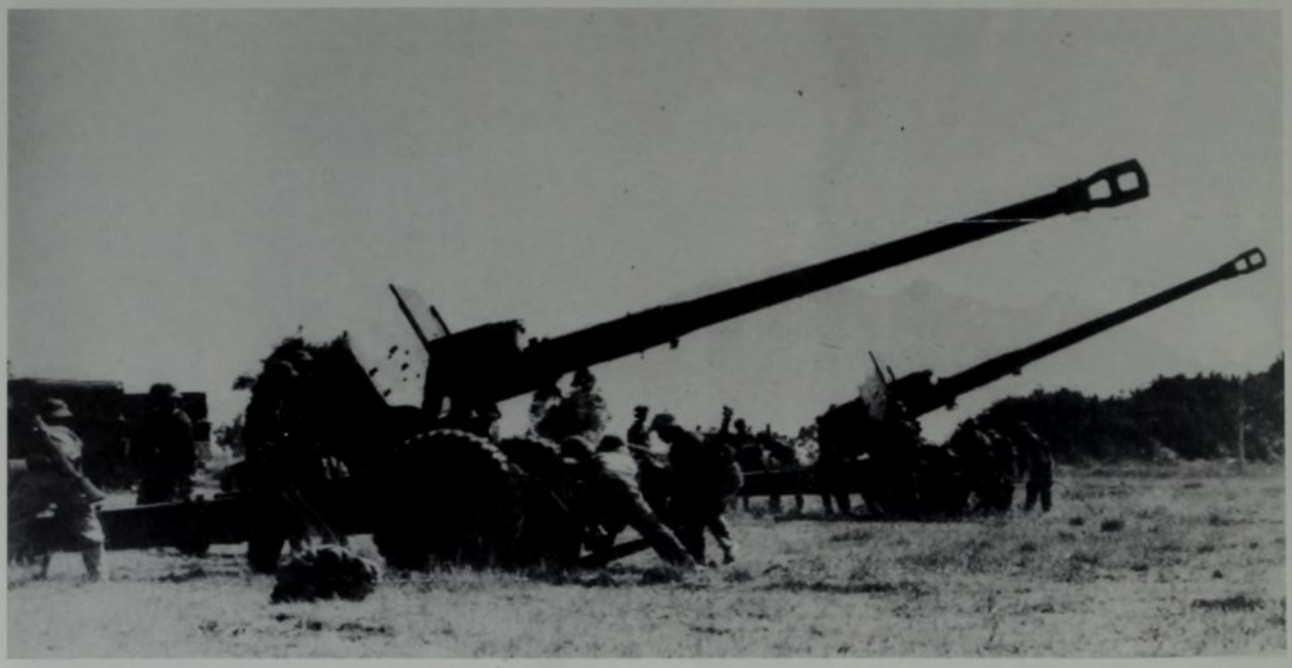


General Giap was no stranger to holiday offensives. On Christmas Eve 1944, his tiny liberation army attacked French outposts in northern Vietnam. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



A South Vietnamese medic repacks his bag after treating two members of the Airborne Division wounded during an assault on a fortified village. The combat capability of the South Vietnamese Army was a major question mark for planners in Hanoi. *(Center of Military History)*

Shoot-out on the Borders



Soviet-made artillery, like this 122-mm. field gun, took a heavy toll of American lives during Giap's campaign to pull U.S. forces to the borders. (*Center of Military History*)



The autumn 1967 fighting along the Demilitarized Zone opened at the Marine base at Con Thien, a natural observation point of the line between the two Vietnams. During a lull in North Vietnamese shelling, an air strike raises a smoke cloud near the base perimeter. (*Courtesy of David Douglas Duncan*)



When North Vietnamese units massed near Dak To in November, Westmoreland rushed allied forces to the western highlands. Air Force C-130's, including these on the Tuy Hoa flight line, moved the bulk of the troops into battle. (*U.S. Air Force*)



A paratrooper from the 173d Airborne Brigade calls for a medic on Hill 882 near Dak To. (*U.S. Army*)



The 22-day-long battle for Dak To climaxed with a costly assault by the 173d Airborne against well-entrenched North Vietnamese on Hill 875. (*U.S. Army*)



Khe Sanh proved the most riveting of the border battles. For seventy-seven days, newspapers and television bannered the siege of the 6,000 U.S. marines. A barrage of enemy rockets and artillery flings up geysers east of the airstrip. (*U.S. Marine Corps*)



By mid-January President Johnson's war room in the basement of the White House included a terrain model of the Khe Sanh battle area. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)



Marines wait in the fog at Khe Sanh for the big ground attack that never came. (*Courtesy of David Douglas Duncan*)

The Drift to the Cities



While the border campaign distracted the allied forces, the enemy moved supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail toward stockage points in Laos and Cambodia. (*Center of Military History*)



Shipments of weapons through the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville went directly to Viet Cong forces in South Vietnam. (*Center of Military History*)



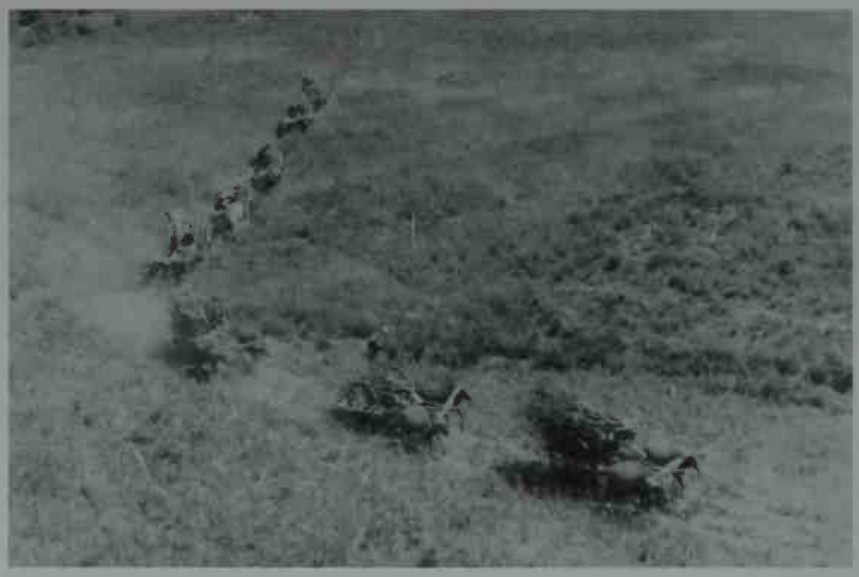
In hidden base camps, the Viet Cong equipped themselves with AK47's and U.S.-type radios. (*Center of Military History*)



The enemy prepared satchel charges and other explosives, often by cannibalizing allied artillery shells. (*Center of Military History*)



Training was stepped up in the capture of allied armor, which would be used to support the attacks and confuse the defenses. (*Center of Military History*)



Oxcarts transported supplies into the war zones north of Saigon. (*Center of Military History*)



Boats such as these were used to smuggle weapons and ammunition into the cities. (*Center of Military History*)



On the eve of Tet, enemy forces were more difficult to find than usual. Soldiers of the 4th Division patrol through the lowlands south of Chu Lai on 22 January. (*U.S. Army*)



Sometime after mid-January, enemy troops and cadre drifted into the cities with the throngs of preholiday travelers. (*Center of Military History*)

In the last days before Tet, crowds flocked to Saigon's main arteries to buy clothing and gifts to usher in the Year of the Monkey. About half the South Vietnamese Army was on furlough. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Bitter New Year Battles



A rocket attack on Da Nang Air Base on 30 January 1968 announces the start of the Tet offensive in the northern provinces. (*U.S. Marine Corps*)

Fire in the Delta



A tree-lined river snakes through the Mekong Delta, the rice-rich heartland of South Vietnam containing half the nation's population. The Viet Cong attacked thirteen of the delta's sixteen province capitals. (*U.S. Navy*)

A mobile riverine task force of U.S. Navy boats and U.S. 9th Division soldiers moves down a canal in Dinh Thuong Province two months before the eruption of Tet. Riverine units first arrived in the delta in 1967 for use against previously inaccessible enemy bases. (*U.S. Navy*)





The American counteroffensive in the delta began in the city of My Tho, where President Thieu was on holiday with his family. (*U.S. Army*)



Navy monitors and assault boats pick up 9th Division troops to ferry them to a new location during the Tet fighting. (*U.S. Army*)



Ambushed during the counteroffensive in Kien Hoa Province, a riverine force company commander calls in artillery and air strikes on Viet Cong automatic weapons positions. (*U.S. Army*)



Fired from barges in direct support of riverine forces, 105-mm. howitzers (M102) helped cripple the enemy offensive by the second week of February. (*U.S. Army*)



My Tho suffered extensive damage from enemy mortars and rockets and allied firepower. (*Agency for International Development*)

Saigon Besieged



Northeast of Saigon, Long Binh post, headquarters of U.S. Army, Vietnam, and U.S. II Field Force, came under rocket and ground attack from a Viet Cong division. In all, thirty-five enemy battalions marched on the capital, its suburbs, and its military installations. Metropolitan Saigon provided a most inviting target. (*U.S. Army*)



An MP manning an M60 machine gun watches the U.S. embassy from across the street on the morning of the enemy attack. The Viet Cong commandos of Sapper Battalion C–10 who penetrated the embassy compound on 31 January scored a huge propaganda victory. (*Courtesy of Lt. Col. Ernest I. Gruber, USA*)



When the fight for the embassy ended, sixteen Viet Cong attackers lay dead in the chancery compound. Five American soldiers also died. (*U.S. Army*)



Commander of American troops in III Corps, Lt. Gen. Frederick C. Weyand had grown suspicious of enemy intentions two weeks earlier and pulled some of his troops from the border areas to positions nearer Saigon. For the first two days of the offensive, nonetheless, his forces were stretched to the limit. (*U.S. Army*)

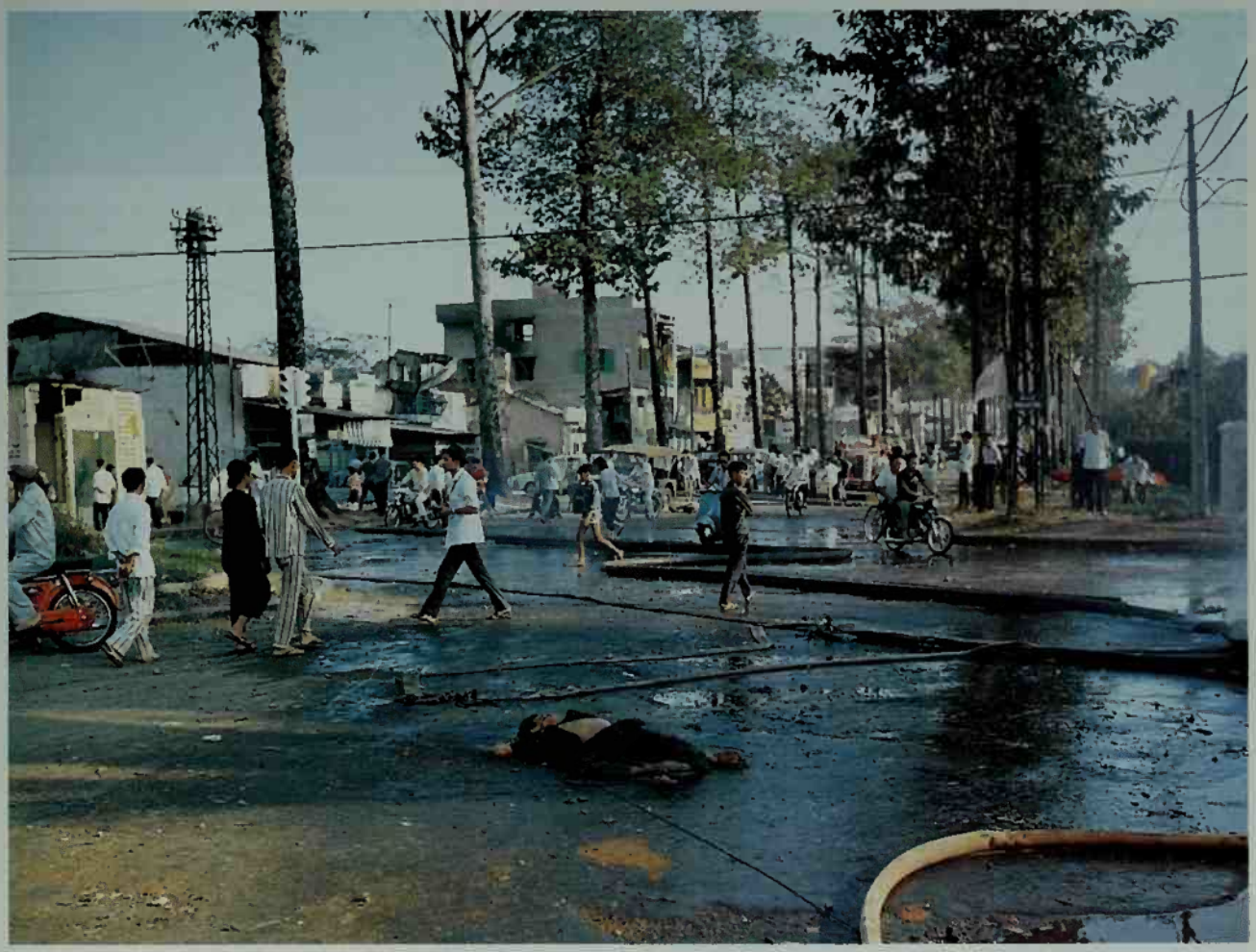


An enemy ambush at U.S. BOQ (Bachelor Officers Quarters) No. 3, a few blocks from South Vietnamese armed forces headquarters, left sixteen American MP's dead in a Saigon alley. (*Courtesy of Lt. Col. Ernest I. Gruber, USA*)

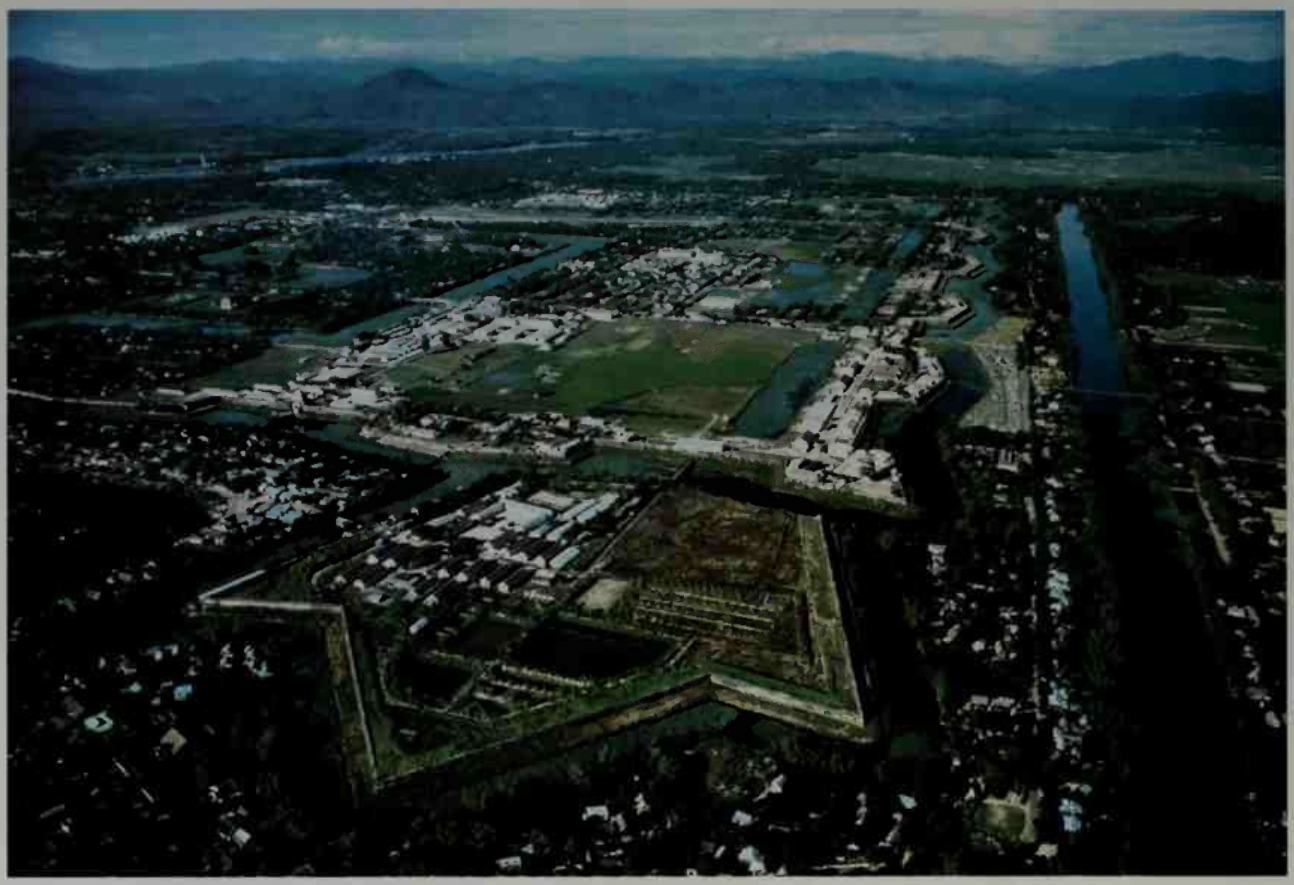


Two Viet Cong battalions attempting to overrun Tan Son Nhut Airport were destroyed by a 25th Division armored force that made a rapid night march from Cu Chi. (*Courtesy of Lt. Col. Ernest I. Gruber, USA*)

Despite heavy fighting in downtown Saigon, life went on. (*U.S. Army*)



The Destruction of Hue



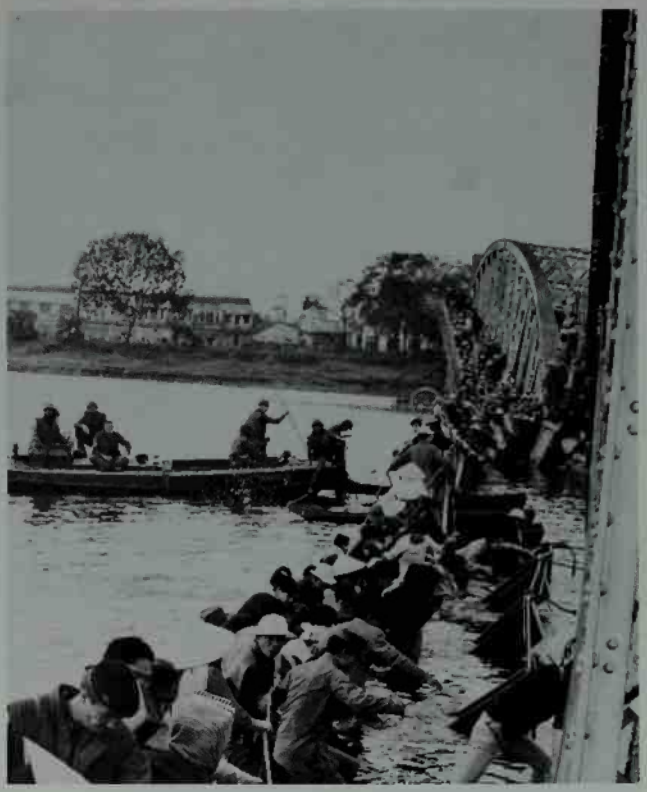
The most disruptive Communist attack during Tet took place at Hue, the imperial capital, a city that embodied the charm and traditions of Vietnam. (*Copyright National Geographic Society*)



During fierce house-to-house fighting, marines take cover behind a tank. (*United Press International*)



A rifleman from the 1st Marines advances under heavy machine gun fire through a residential quarter south of the Perfume River. (*U.S. Marine Corps*)



Assisted by allied soldiers, city dwellers flee to comparative safety across the Perfume River. (*Newsweek*)



Hampered by foul weather, strong North Vietnamese blocking positions, and snipers in villages such as this one, troops of the 1st Cavalry Division took three weeks to complete the encirclement of the occupied city. (*U.S. Army*)

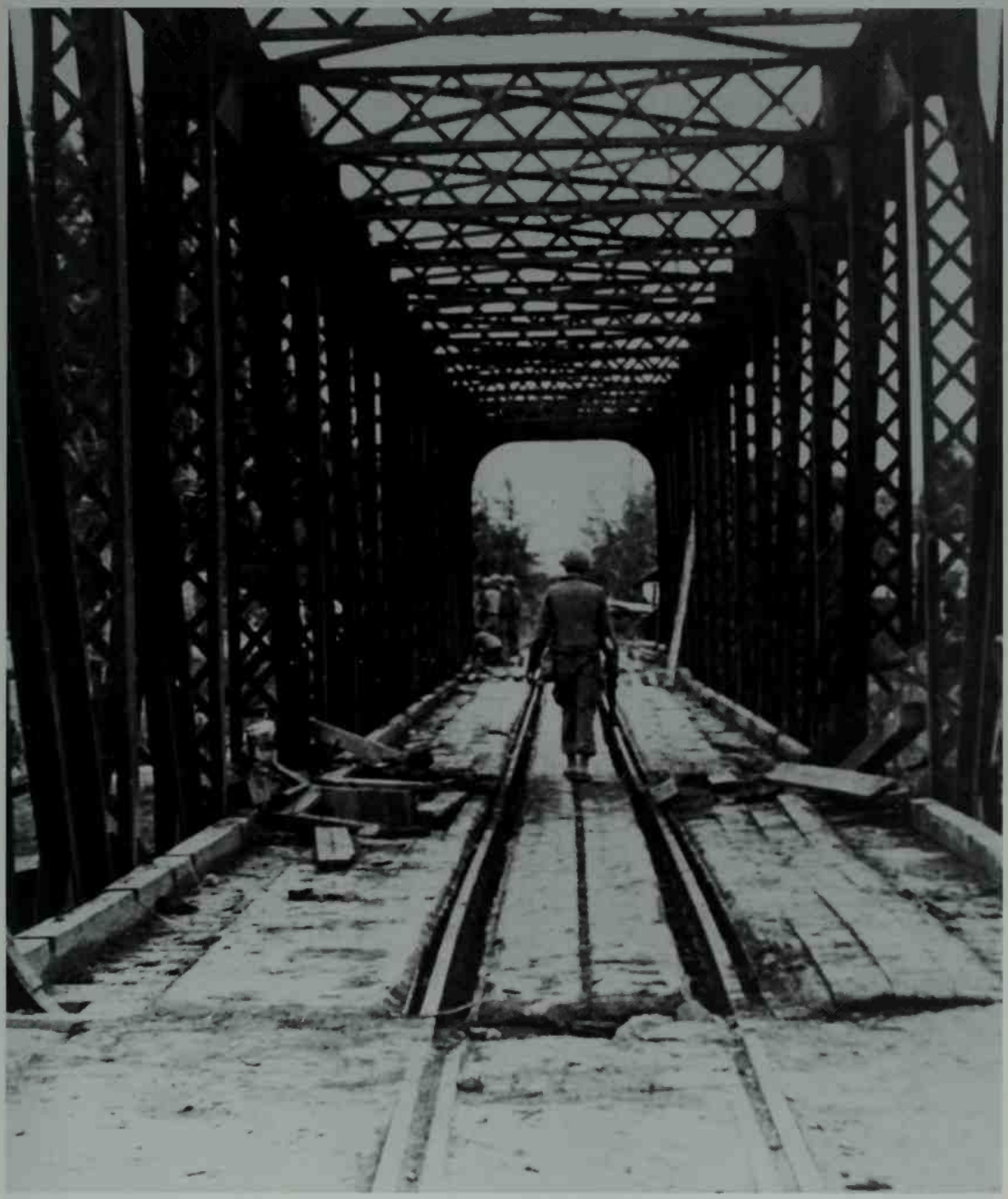


A worker pulls a wire from one of the many bodies found in mass trench graves northwest of Hue. Many victims of the Communist massacre were lined up with their arms bound and either shot, bludgeoned to death, or buried alive. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

Skulls and bones of Tet massacre victims are laid out in a small village schoolhouse on the outskirts of Hue. (*Center of Military History*)



America at Bay



A skytrooper from the 1st Cavalry Division crosses the heavily damaged Ba Long Railroad Bridge leading into Hue. For some Americans at home, the scenes of Tet evoked memories of ruined European cities during World War II. (*U.S. Army*)

Shock and Uncertainty



Westmoreland visited the American embassy on the morning of the commando attack. His insistence that very day that Tet represented a defeat for the enemy was greeted with disbelief by many in the press. (*U.S. Army*)

As Vietnam reeled, General Wheeler briefed administration officials and congressional leaders at the White House on 31 January. Gloom pervaded official Washington. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)





The people of Cholon sift through the wreckage of their homes after the fighting. The destruction in the cities seemed to belie administration claims that the war in Vietnam was being won. (*U.S. Army*)



A dead U.S. soldier is removed from the BOQ No. 3 battle area. American casualties during Tet soared to their highest levels of the Vietnam War. (*U.S. Army*)



Beginning on 12 February, paratroopers from the 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, part of the U.S. Army's stateside reserve, were sent to I Corps to reinforce the allied effort. Well into the month, Westmoreland was convinced that the main enemy push would come at Khe Sanh. (*U.S. Air Force*)



In Hue, Walter Cronkite (*holding the microphone*) of CBS News interviews a battalion commander of the 1st Marines on 20 February. Upon returning to the United States, the dean of American newscasters declared in a televised report that the Vietnam War was a stalemate. (*U.S. Marine Corps*)



General Wheeler's arrival in Saigon on 23 February set the stage for the military's request for over 200,000 more men. U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker is on the right. (*U.S. Air Force*)

The End of the Line

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

LATE CITY EDITION

Weather: Partly sunny, mild today; cloudy tonight. Showers tomorrow. Temp. range: today 59-45; Sat. 50-41. Full U.S. report on Page 91.

SECTION ONE

VOL. CXVII . No. 40,223 © 1968 The New York Times Company NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 1968 40 CENTS

ROCKEFELLER CALLS LEADERS OF PARTY TO PARLEY TODAY

Will Meet to Exchange Views on Situation Following Withdrawal of Romney

COULD ASSESS SUPPORT

Most of Those Invited Have Indicated Their Support of Governor for President

By THOMAS P. RONAN

Governor Rockefeller will meet here today with top-ranking Republicans from many parts of the country "to exchange views on the situation in the party" following Gov. George Romney's withdrawal from the Presidential race.

This was the reason for the meeting given yesterday by Leslie Slote, the Governor's press secretary. But informed Republicans said they believed Mr. Rockefeller would explore with the leaders the amount of support he could expect if he declared his active candidacy for the party nomination.

They also expected him to seek the leaders' advice on the best tactics to pursue if he did declare.

Lending strength to this speculation was the fact that virtually all those known to have been invited have publicly or privately declared their backing of Mr. Rockefeller for the nomination.



NATURAL DEFENSE IN NORTH VIETNAM: One of the many caves in the country being used as cover against U.S. bombing raids. This one, photographed by a Japanese newsman, shelters small factory. Sign expresses determination.

Johnson and Nixon Given Big New Hampshire Edge

By WARREN WEAVER Jr.

Special to The New York Times

CONCORD, N. H., March 8—President Johnson and Richard M. Nixon are prohibitive favorites in their separate contests in the first 1968 Presidential primary here on Tuesday. The only real question is whether the Democrat and his would-be Republican opponent can be seriously embarrassed by the respective challenges of Senator Eugene J. McCarthy and Governor Rockefeller of New York.

ALBANY IS PRESSED ON TEACHING PACT

700 CONVICTS RIOT AT OREGON PRISON

11 Are Held as Hostages Under Threat of Death—Buildings Set Afire

Special to The New York Times

SALEM, Ore., March 9—About 700 inmates at the Oregon State Penitentiary here rioted today. They barricaded themselves in a recreation area

Warsaw Students Battle Policemen 2d Day in a Row

By JONATHAN RANDAL

Special to The New York Times

WARSAW, March 9—Polish students shouting "Long live Czechoslovakia!" fought policemen here today for a second day.

The fighting began when students threw bricks and bottles. The policemen replied by throwing tear-gas shells. Some students were beaten with rubber

WESTMORELAND REQUESTS 206,000 MORE MEN, STIRRING DEBATE IN ADMINISTRATION

Enemy Hammers 7 Sites On the Outskirts of Saigon

By TOM BUCKLEY

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Sunday, March 10—The Vietcong made coordinated attacks early yesterday against seven targets on the southern edge of Saigon.

The district police headquarters and the militia post at Caykho, about three miles from the capital, repelled ground assaults. Two police substations, a housing compound for the families of policemen about a mile and a half from the United States Embassy, and military outposts at Nhabe and Longthanh were struck in the 30-minute mortar and rocket barrage.

Nhabe, on the Saigon River about four miles southeast of the city, is an important petroleum storage area where oceangoing tankers pump out their cargoes. The South Viet-

Continued on Page 2, Column 5

Saigon General Says Foe Has Replaced His Losses

By GENE ROBERTS

Special to The New York Times

CANTHO, South Vietnam, March 9—One of South Viet-

FORCE NOW 510,000

Some in Defense and State Departments Oppose Increase

The following dispatch was written by Hedrick Smith and Neil Sheehan, assisted by Max Frankel and Edwin L. Dale Jr.

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 9 — Gen. William C. Westmoreland has asked for 206,000 more American troops for Vietnam, and the request has touched off a divisive internal debate within high levels of the Johnson Administration.

A number of sub-Cabinet civilian officials in the Defense Department, supported by some senior officials in the State Department, have argued against General Westmoreland's plea for a 40 per cent increase in his forces "to regain the initiative" from the enemy.

There are now about 510,000 American troops in Vietnam, and the President has authorized a level of 525,000 by next fall. Many of the civilian officials are arguing that there should be no increase beyond the movement of troops now

The *New York Times* front-page disclosure that Westmoreland was asking for more troops was incontrovertible proof to many that Tet represented a military setback. (*New York Times*)



Disenchantment with President Johnson's handling of the war was reflected in Senator Eugene McCarthy's strong showing in the New Hampshire presidential primary on 12 March. (*Wide World Photos*)



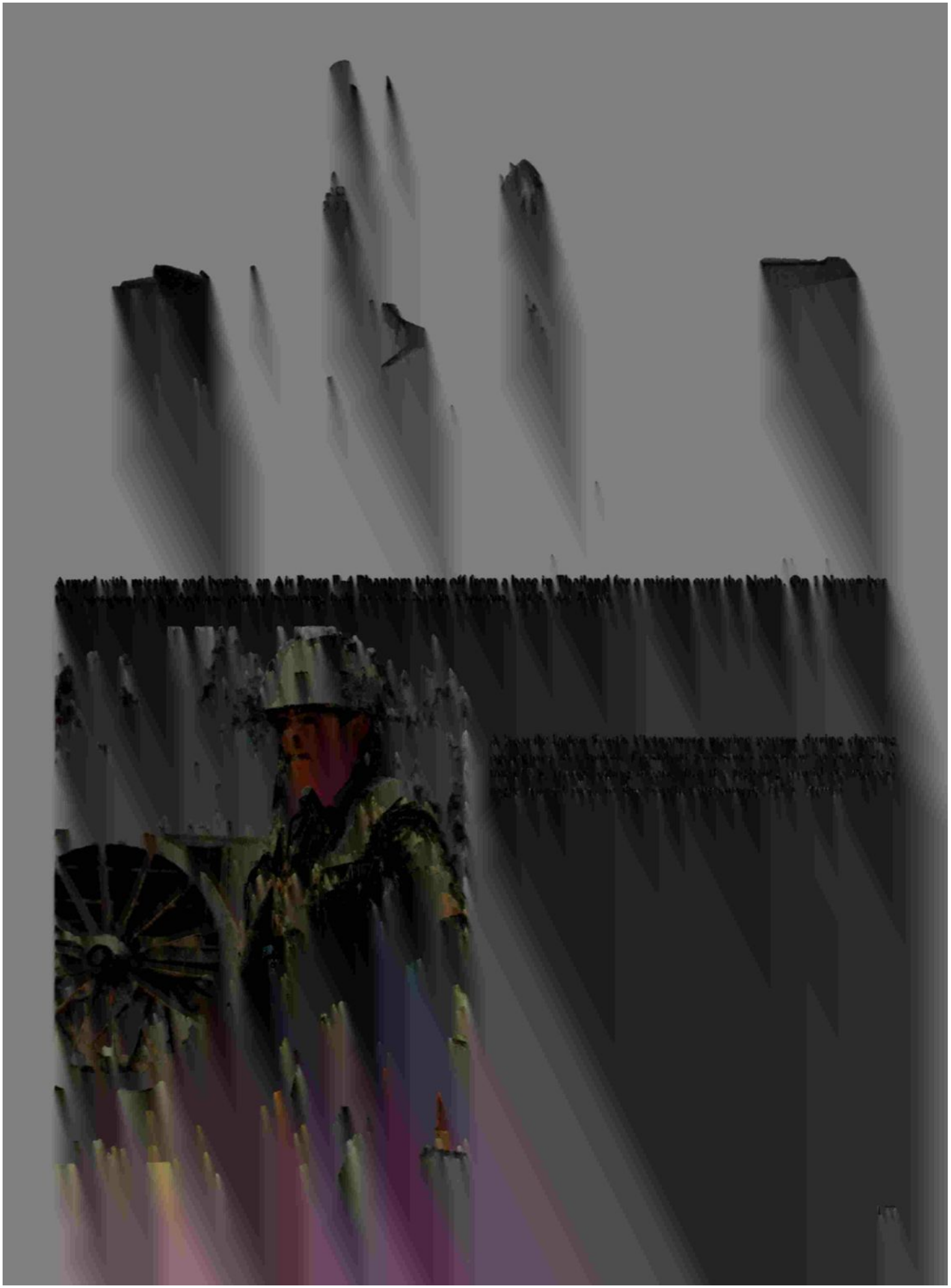
Secretary of Defense Clark M. Clifford (*right*), shown with presidential adviser Walt W. Rostow, opposed the request for more troops when he could find no military plan for victory consistent with the president's tactical restrictions. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)



The "Wise Men," a group of former high officials which included Dean Acheson, McGeorge Bundy, and Generals Ridgway and Taylor, informed the president that the nation would not support an escalation of the Vietnam War. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)



President Johnson and Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey talk military strategy at the White House with General Creighton W. Abrams, Westmoreland's military deputy. Four days later, on 31 March, the president made the speech that ended his political career. (*Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*)



6

Last Battles 1969–1973

A year after the Tet offensive ended, President Richard M. Nixon unveiled his policy of Vietnamization and began disengaging U.S. forces in phases from the battle zone. His policy took shape following months of reappraisal and was conceived of as the one workable middle course available between President Johnson's war of attrition and precipitous withdrawal. The president was not opposed to a settlement if his negotiators could achieve a fair one. Serious peace talks with North Vietnam had finally begun in November 1968 after military concessions by both sides, and Nixon had offered new proposals after taking office. But unlike several of his State Department advisers who looked forward to a diplomatic solution, the president viewed the peace talks as a form of Communist political warfare and believed that an early breakthrough was unlikely. Not until the military balance shifted sufficiently to persuade Hanoi that a military victory was improbable, he said, would the Communists drop their demands for an unconditional U.S. withdrawal and the dismantling of the Saigon government. By the summer of 1969, accordingly, the main elements of President Nixon's strategy were visible: a buildup of South Vietnamese strength to new levels; gradual troop withdrawals to satisfy American opinion; heavy pressure, including strategic bombing, against the North Vietnamese. He expected to have U.S. forces out of Vietnam by June 1972. By that time, he believed, the South Vietnamese government would be able to stand on its own.

At first the outlook for the South showed considerable promise after the shock of the Tet offensive, for the war, according to most observers, went well in 1969. Nixon's announcement of the initial reduction in U.S. forces came during a meeting with President Thieu at Midway Island in June, but because that drawdown of 25,000 represented less than 5 percent of the American total in South Vietnam, it did not seriously affect the mission of the American commander. That mission for General Creighton W. Abrams,

Westmoreland's successor in Saigon, had been changing since the previous summer. Determined to take advantage of the absence of large enemy units after Tet, and also under orders to reduce his casualties and strengthen pacification, Abrams began a preemptive campaign to destroy the enemy's remaining base system in the South and prevent a recurrence of the offensives of 1968. It was a time of small unit actions for the American forces—ambushes, surveillance, and mobile spoiling attacks. In III Corps the 1st and 25th Divisions and other units patrolled the Cambodian border to cut the enemy's supply trails into the Saigon corridor. In the heavily populated coastal lowlands, U.S. forces conducted search-and-clear operations to ferret out enemy caches, supply units, and guerrillas.

Behind this increasingly effective screen of American forces, pacification sharply reduced enemy control in the rural areas. The Regional, Popular, and National Police Forces proved their worth against the local guerrillas. The counter-terrorist Phoenix program made important strides in rooting out the Viet Cong underground. Village life everywhere, noted U.S. officials, had improved from recent advances in health care, education, and scientific management of agriculture. Village elections and a new land reform program appeared to be forging links between the peasantry and the central government.

The one serious unanswered question was the ability of the South Vietnamese Army to step into the breach created by the departing



Troops of the 3d Battalion, 60th Infantry, 9th Division, withdraw from their base camp in July 1969, beginning the phased departure of U.S. forces from South Vietnam. (*U.S. Army*)

Americans. Most U.S. advisers working in the field to upgrade the Vietnamese forces under the Vietnamization program reported improvement across the board in 1970. Abrams, however, who had been studying the South Vietnamese Army since 1967 when he served as Westmoreland's deputy, worried that progress was not fast enough.

The trouble, according to the MACV staff, was less tangible than numbers or weapons. Thanks to the Thieu government's mobilization law and American aid and assistance, South Vietnam's forces had become among the largest and most heavily equipped in the world. The regular and territorial troop level, some 850,000 when Nixon took office, had increased to over a million in less than two years. In a massive rearmament, the newest weapons in the American inventory had been turned over to the South Vietnamese, from M16 rifles and M60 machine guns to medium tanks, Huey gunships, jeeps, and jet fighters. But as MACV headquarters acknowledged, the South Vietnamese Army continued to suffer from poor leadership. In the delta the South Vietnamese 7th Infantry Division, which had fought a defensive war while the U.S. 9th Division was operating aggressively out of Dong Tam, virtually collapsed under an ineffective commander when the 9th went home. Around Saigon poor leadership in the 5th and 18th Divisions so concerned General Abrams that he delayed thinning out U.S. forces in the area until the summer of 1970. In general, the problems that had been present at the army's creation in the mid-1950s—poor morale and high desertion rates, disdain for the rural population, timidity on the field of battle, dependence on American assistance, and favoritism in the promotion system—continued into the 1970s. Whereas the civil side of the American mission reached agreement with President Thieu on a procedure to remove incompetent province and district chiefs, no such system was developed on the military side. All too often the rare commander relieved at American insistence turned up quickly in another position of responsibility. So long as Thieu depended on his commanders for his political safety in Saigon, weaknesses in military leadership in the field, MACV officers indicated, would remain uncorrected.

By early 1970 some of the difficulties with Vietnamization had become clear. The troop withdrawals and a campaign in the United States to publicize Vietnamization had quieted domestic critics, providing some breathing room for White House policy; but the withdrawals had also underscored the dilemma facing the president, that of balancing domestic pressures against those of Hanoi. When the president announced, in March 1970, a troop reduction for the following year of 150,000, which would drop the U.S. force level in South Vietnam to 275,000, Abrams warned of serious consequences for the allied military effort. Hanoi, he said, would now simply persevere until U.S. forces were no longer capable of influencing the fighting.

The delicacy of the American position was underlined in the spring of 1970 when President Nixon decided to send U.S. troops across the border into Cambodia. The catalyst for this action was the overthrow of Prince Norodom Sihanouk by a pro-Western faction in Phnom Penh led by General Lon Nol and the crisis that followed when North Vietnamese forces began pushing westward into the country in order to protect their suddenly imperiled fron-



President Richard M. Nixon points to the Fishhook in Cambodia during his televised speech on 30 April 1970 announcing the allied attack on the enemy's sanctuaries. (*Wide World Photos*)

tier sanctuaries. Hanoi's use of Cambodian territory as a refitting area had concerned U.S. commanders for many years. In 1969, in order to forestall enemy offensives against Saigon and the highlands, General Abrams had received the president's permission to launch secret B-52 bombing raids across the border. The Lon Nol coup and the ensuing fighting, in President Nixon's view, offered an opportunity to end the Communist presence in the border area. On 30 April division-size South Vietnamese armored forces, with fifty American advisers in the initial wave, advanced into the Parrot's Beak, the Communist base area in Cambodia closest to Saigon. One day later a U.S. attack opened on the Fishhook, the staging area for the North Vietnamese 7th Division and reportedly the location of COSVN, the Communist Party's southern headquarters. In all, twelve enemy base areas were assaulted during a two-month offensive. Many observers later agreed that the incursion from a military standpoint achieved success, disrupting Communist plans to launch offensives in III and IV Corps and obtaining another year or more for Vietnamization. Total enemy losses included enough rifles and ammunition to arm fifty-five battalions of main force infantry. But



Demonstrations at Kent State University against the incursion into Cambodia left four students dead when Ohio National Guardsmen opened fire. Domestic discord over the war increased to new levels of intensity during the fighting in Cambodia. (*Valley News Dispatch*)

the cost to the administration was also high, for the incursion triggered massive protests in the United States. On 9 May, 100,000 demonstrators in Washington denounced the apparent widening of the Vietnam conflict. Congress demanded the removal of U.S. forces from Cambodia by the end of June. The Army itself became a target of protest for waging a war that an increasing number of Americans could not understand.

Unsettled by the furor over Cambodia and worried about growing morale problems among the soldiers, the administration in the summer of 1970 stepped up the pace of withdrawals. In the next six months, U.S. Army strength in the South fell to a quarter-million. The 4th Division redeployed from the highlands, and the 1st and 25th Divisions (except for a brigade) pulled out of the III Corps area. One year later the Army's strength had dwindled to residual level: one brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division, which was defending the complex at Bien Hoa, and one brigade of the Americal Division, which was guarding the air base at Da Nang. Advisers still accompanied allied units into combat, and logistical, armored, and artillery elements offered support where the Vietnamese remained weak. But

the main burden of the American effort had now shifted to the air arm. B-52 sorties became increasingly a factor in the administration's attempt to provide time for Vietnamization.

The test of Saigon's ability to fight on with residual American air support began in early 1971 when South Vietnamese forces pushed westward into Laos in a campaign to sever the Ho Chi Minh Trail near Tchepone. At first the advance was uneventful, raising hopes in Saigon that several large enemy bases in the area could be destroyed before the end of winter. A heavy counterattack, however, by four North Vietnamese divisions, supported by Soviet-built tanks and rocket artillery, brought an end to LAM SON 719 two months ahead of schedule. Many South Vietnamese units performed with courage, but serious weaknesses in command and control and the deployment of the armored forces without adequate infantry disturbed MACV observers. When the retreat ended, nearly half the invading troops were dead or wounded, and only the intervention of U.S. Navy and Air Force fighters and bombers and Army Cobra gunships prevented a more serious defeat. The South Vietnamese Army did not disintegrate under pressure as Hanoi apparently had hoped, but its uneven performance was an important factor in the politburo's decision to strike south in 1972.

The target of the 1972 Easter offensive was the South Vietnamese regular army. Giap and his staff paid deference in their planning to the importance of guerrilla forces and urban uprisings in cementing a victory, and the offensive was timed to coincide with the



An F-4J Phantom (*left*) and an A-7E Corsair are launched from the USS *Constellation* for attacks against North Vietnam during the Easter offensive. American air power took a heavy toll of the enemy's war-making capacity, closing the North's ports, blocking the routes from China, disrupting major highways, and destroying many factories. *(U.S. Navy)*

start of the American presidential campaign. But the primary objective of the Easter attack was a decisive military triumph on the field of battle, one which would give the United States no choice but to accept a negotiated withdrawal. For the first time in the war, Giap proposed to attack in the open, massing tanks and artillery and nearly all of his divisions to smash through the southern defenses and race to victory. Everything hinged on maintaining momentum and offering few static targets to allied air power. The offensive was launched in three successive phases, beginning with a tank surge across the Demilitarized Zone on 30 March. The heaviest fighting took place in Quang Tri Province, though Kontum in the highlands and An Loc farther south were also put under siege. Observers judged the destructiveness of the offensive to be the severest of the Vietnam War. President Nixon, however, refused to accept defeat and ordered resumption of full-scale bombings of North Vietnam. In all, North Vietnamese losses may have reached 100,000, eight times those of the South Vietnamese. Both sides in important respects were weakened, a fact that now led to movement at the peace talks in Paris.

Progress toward a settlement picked up late in the summer when the results of the offensive came into focus. Heavy fighting continued in Quang Tri Province, and spokesmen in Hanoi and Saigon claimed victory. But the private feeling among officials on both sides was that the military balance was unaltered and that the battle could continue for many more months, on the ground and in the skies, without weakening the will of the North or South. This assessment,

Henry A. Kissinger, the president's assistant for national security and leader of the U.S. negotiating team at the Paris peace talks, initials the peace agreement for the United States on 23 January 1973. Le Duc Tho (*opposite Kissinger*), Hanoi's chief negotiator, initials for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



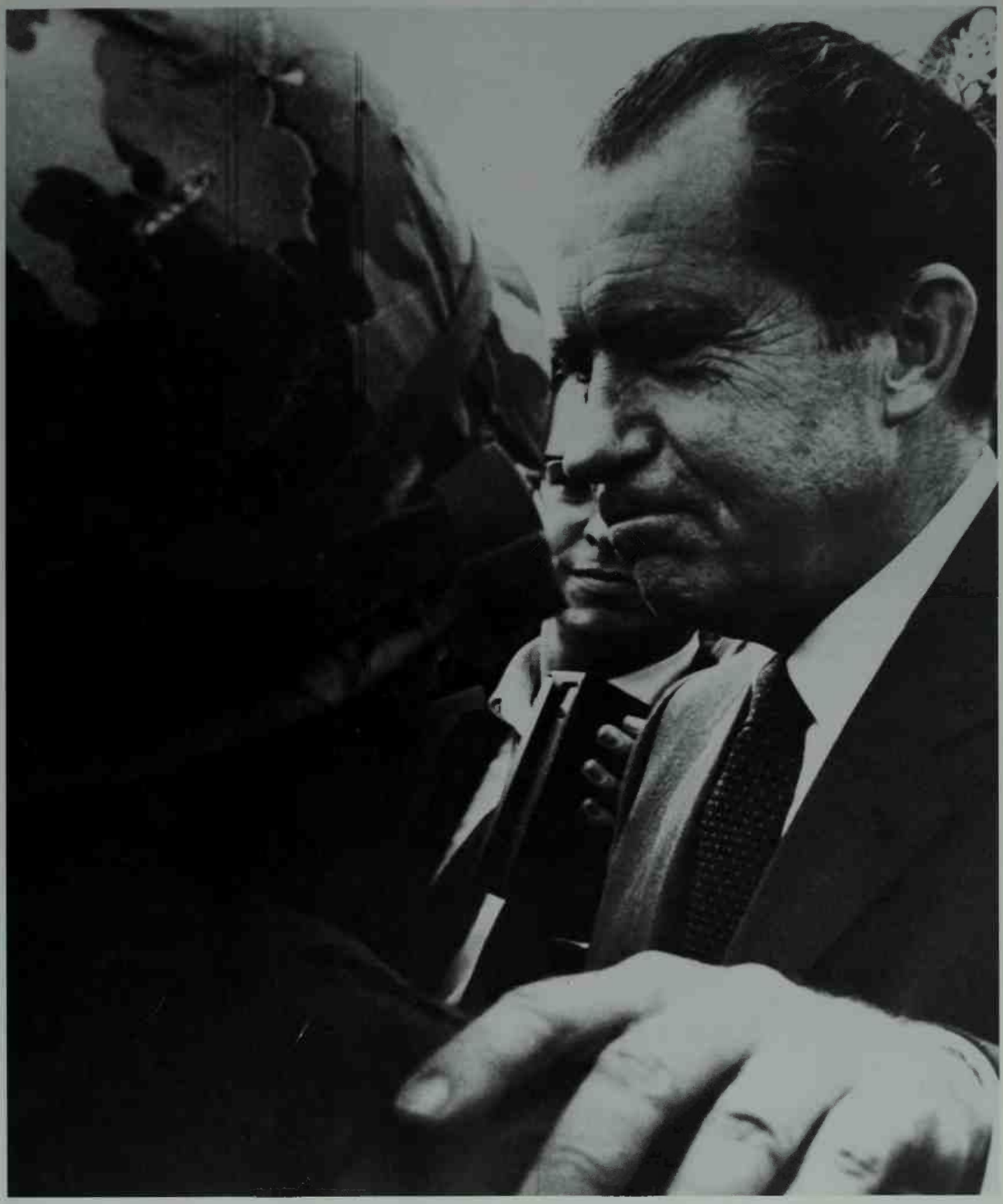
coupled with Soviet pressure for an early solution, led to a decision by the politburo in August to break the diplomatic deadlock. One month later Hanoï offered an important concession: it would drop its demand for the removal of President Thieu in return for an agreement from the United States not to insist on the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese forces. With that concession the talks hastened to a conclusion, spurred by Washington's pressure on President Thieu and by heavy bombing of the cities in the North in December after Hanoi appeared to stiffen. On 27 January 1973, after two decades of civil war in Vietnam, all four parties to the conflict signed a peace treaty in Paris. Immediately afterward, efforts were undertaken to speed the departure of U.S. forces and to return American prisoners of war held by the Communists. President Nixon pronounced himself satisfied with the terms of the American withdrawal from Vietnam. Thieu, his country still partly occupied by enemy soldiers, withheld his personal endorsement.

Thieu believed that very little had been decided. Although his regime in Saigon was intact for the moment and backed by the promise of American assistance, he now had to face a legally recognized Viet Cong still supported by North Vietnamese power. The central issue for which the war had been fought, the future of South Vietnam, had been left by the treaty to a four-party political commission with little real authority. The fragility of the agreement had been foreshadowed in early January when both sides had waged a bitter struggle for control of territory in advance of the expected cease-fire. Even as the agreement was being signed in Paris and celebrated in many world capitals as a significant achievement, the Saigon government and its Communist opponents were making plans for the next round of war.

The form that the next phase of the struggle would take and the role that America would play were questions left to the future. The immediate aim of the Nixon administration was to finish the American withdrawal, a process that in fact was largely complete before the signing of the treaty. Already American troop strength had dropped to 24,000, and the last U.S. Army infantry battalion had stood down, at Da Nang, in August. General Frederick C. Weyand had replaced General Abrams, and the American combat effort had faded out. Many questions remained concerning the years of American involvement—questions about the strategy and objectives pursued and about what America had accomplished. President Nixon said he had obtained peace with honor, and General Westmoreland in a letter to the American armed forces praised them for bringing the enemy to the conference table in Paris. Others spoke of the American effort coming full circle in seeking to preserve the independence of South Vietnam. The only certainty in 1973 was that America was no longer at war but that the fighting had not stopped. How long it would continue depended on factors that were less than ever America's to control.

* * * * * *

Shaping the Withdrawal



President Nixon visits American troops in Vietnam in July 1969, shortly after announcing his intention to recall U.S. forces from the war zone. (*U.S. Army*)

Preemptive Battles



Members of the South Vietnamese Airborne Division, accompanied by two Americans, search a village on the outskirts of Saigon during the Communist offensive in May 1968. Later, the U.S. command received orders from Washington to prevent further attacks on the cities and to protect pacification. (*U.S. Army*)



In Phuoc Vinh, General Creighton W. Abrams, commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam (*right*), confers with Maj. Gen. George I. Forsythe, commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division. In late 1968 Abrams redeployed the 1st Cavalry from I Corps to the approaches northwest of Saigon to strengthen the defense of the capital. (*U.S. Army*)



Fire Support Base COLORADO, manned by artillery and infantry units of the 25th Division, helped block enemy movement toward Tay Ninh City and the populations southward. (*U.S. Army*)



West of Saigon, an M48 tank of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment pauses while an Air Force Phantom strikes a tree line. Armored forces operating in small groups to take advantage of their mobility were successful in drying up enemy supply operations in the capital corridor. (*U.S. Army*)



A "tunnel rat" serving with the Americal Division emerges from an enemy underground complex south of Chu Lai. By mid-1969, pressure against the enemy's logistics system in the South forced large enemy units to retire to their sanctuaries across the border. (*U.S. Army*)



1st Cavalry troops remove an enemy rice cache from the jungle near Tay Ninh City in 1970. (*U.S. Army*)

A stretch of Highway 1 near Long Binh was cleared of potential ambush sites by the 46th Engineer Battalion. (*U.S. Army*)



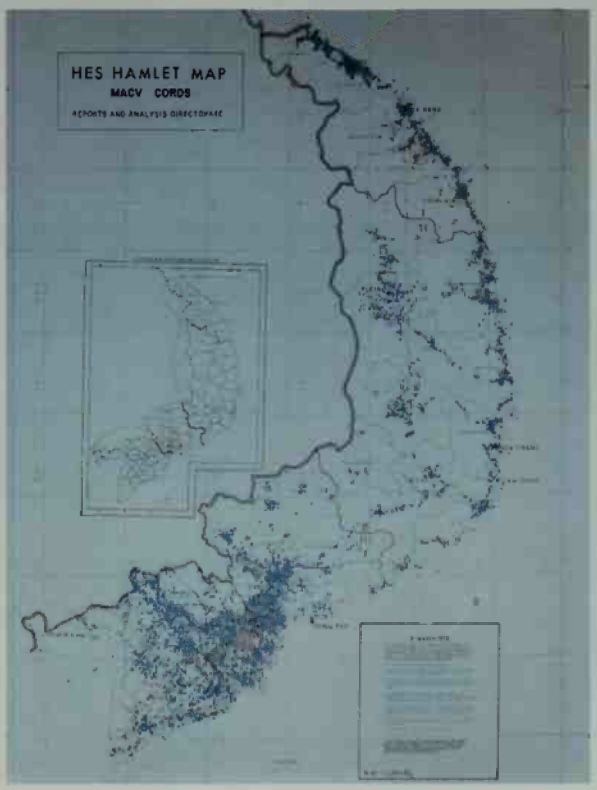
Troops from the 25th Division return to Fire Support Base JAMIE after a search-and-clear mission in September 1970. Large enemy forces were hard to find and security in the countryside was growing. (*U.S. Army*)



The Pacification Campaign



William E. Colby, the MACV deputy for pacification, inspects a revolutionary development team before its night posting in Kien Hoa Province. Traditional peasant black pajamas were the uniform of the pacification cadres. (*Courtesy of William E. Colby*)



Hamlet Evaluation Survey maps, color-coded to reflect security, were one means of measuring progress in pacification. In March 1970 the survey rated some 90 percent of the people in the South as living in blue areas, which signified "secure" or "relatively secure." (*Center of Military History*)



A small paramilitary team operating under the aegis of the *Phung Hoang*, or "Phoenix," program enters a contested village in Tay Ninh Province. Despite inefficiencies, the counterespionage Phoenix effort took a heavy toll of the Communist political underground. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



A Viet Cong guerrilla lies dead in a Cu Chi intersection, a warning to the people of the perils of supporting the insurrection. (*Courtesy of Lt. Col. Joseph R. Bobbitt, USA*)



Viet Cong who rallied to the government under the *Chieu Hoi* ("open arms") amnesty program receive training in gasoline engine repair. In 1969 and 1970, some 80,000 enemy defected to the South Vietnamese government. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



President Thieu presents a property title to a villager during a land redistribution ceremony. Enacted in 1970, the government's land-to-the-tiller program was one of the most successful undertaken anywhere in the developing world. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



Traffic on Highway 1 near Hue includes long-haul trucks and three-wheeled scooter-jitneys. Increasingly safe highways created strong commercial links between town and countryside. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

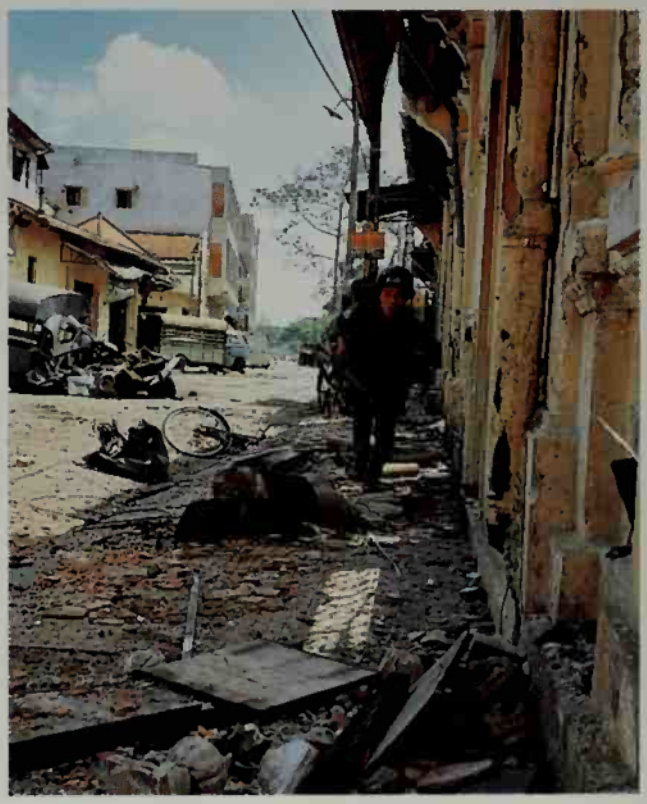


Behind the allied shield, Saigon in 1970 was secure and prospering. (*Courtesy of Richard A. Hunt*)

Rebuilding the Southern Army



Vietnamese UH-1D Hueys pick up troops of the South Vietnamese 9th Division during operations in the Mekong Delta. The enemy's battering at Tet gave the South Vietnamese Army some time to refit and retrain. (*U.S. Army*)



A member of the South Vietnamese 35th Ranger Battalion moves down a street in Cholon during the enemy offensive in May 1968. The South Vietnamese performance during the fight for the cities pleased most American observers. (*U.S. Army*)



Training was a major component of Vietnamization. An American adviser listens in during a class in radio code at the South Vietnamese Armed Forces Signal School, Vung Tau. (*U.S. Army*)



Men of the South Vietnamese Airborne Division receive training on the 105-mm. howitzer. Many American advisers expressed confidence in the South Vietnamese Army. Senior officers at MACV headquarters were less hopeful. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)



A platoon of trainees under the watchful eye of a U.S. adviser passes through village during a course in combat tactics. By late 1969 South Vietnamese units were doing most of the fighting. (*U.S. Army*)



Elements of the South Vietnamese 1st Division move along a battered mountain trail near Fire Support Base O'Reilly. The 1st Division, the best led of the South Vietnamese forces, was responsible for the defense of northern I Corps. (*U.S. Army*)

Despite strong demurrals from General Wheeler and General Abrams, who were worried about Vietnamization, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird (*right*) pressed for rapid U.S. troop withdrawals to satisfy the home front. (*U.S. Army*)

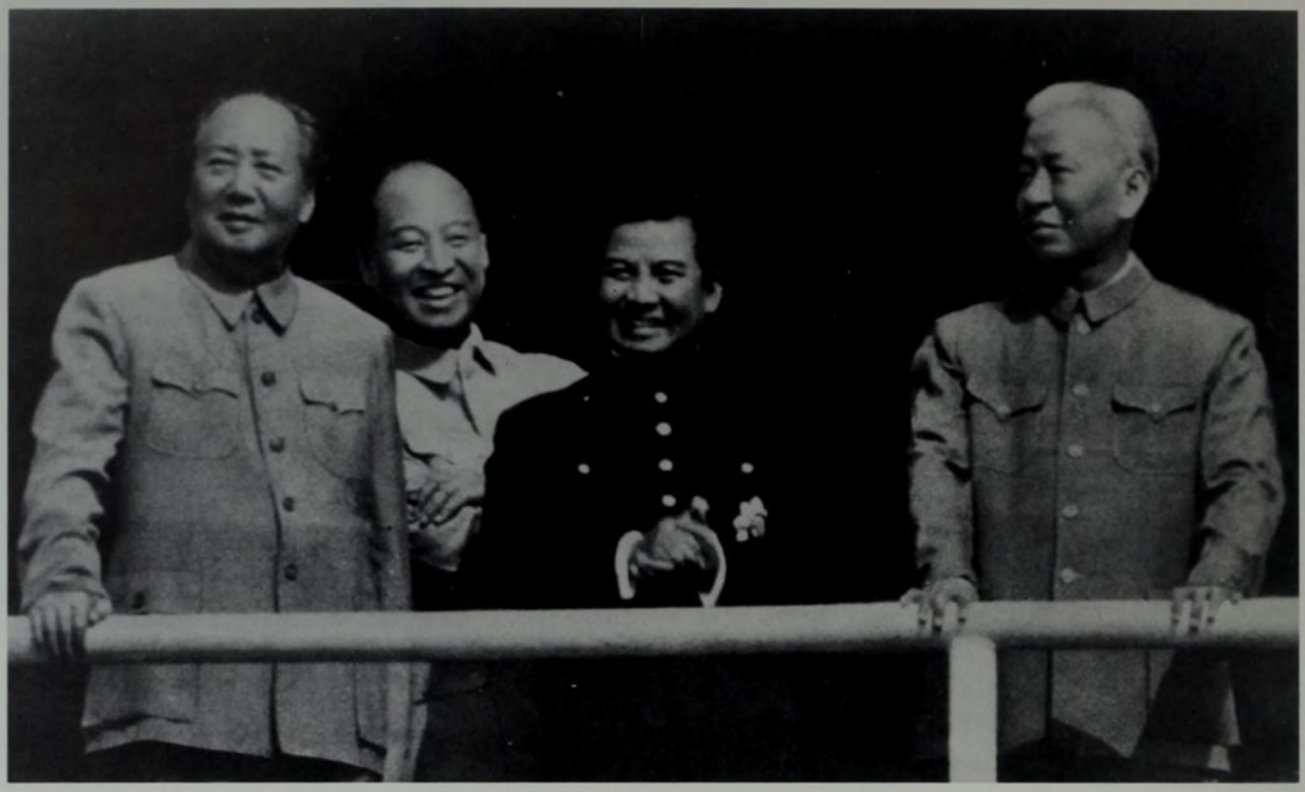


Turmoil and Hope



In November 1969, demonstrators gathered in Washington to protest the seemingly endless war. (*New York Times*)

The War Widens



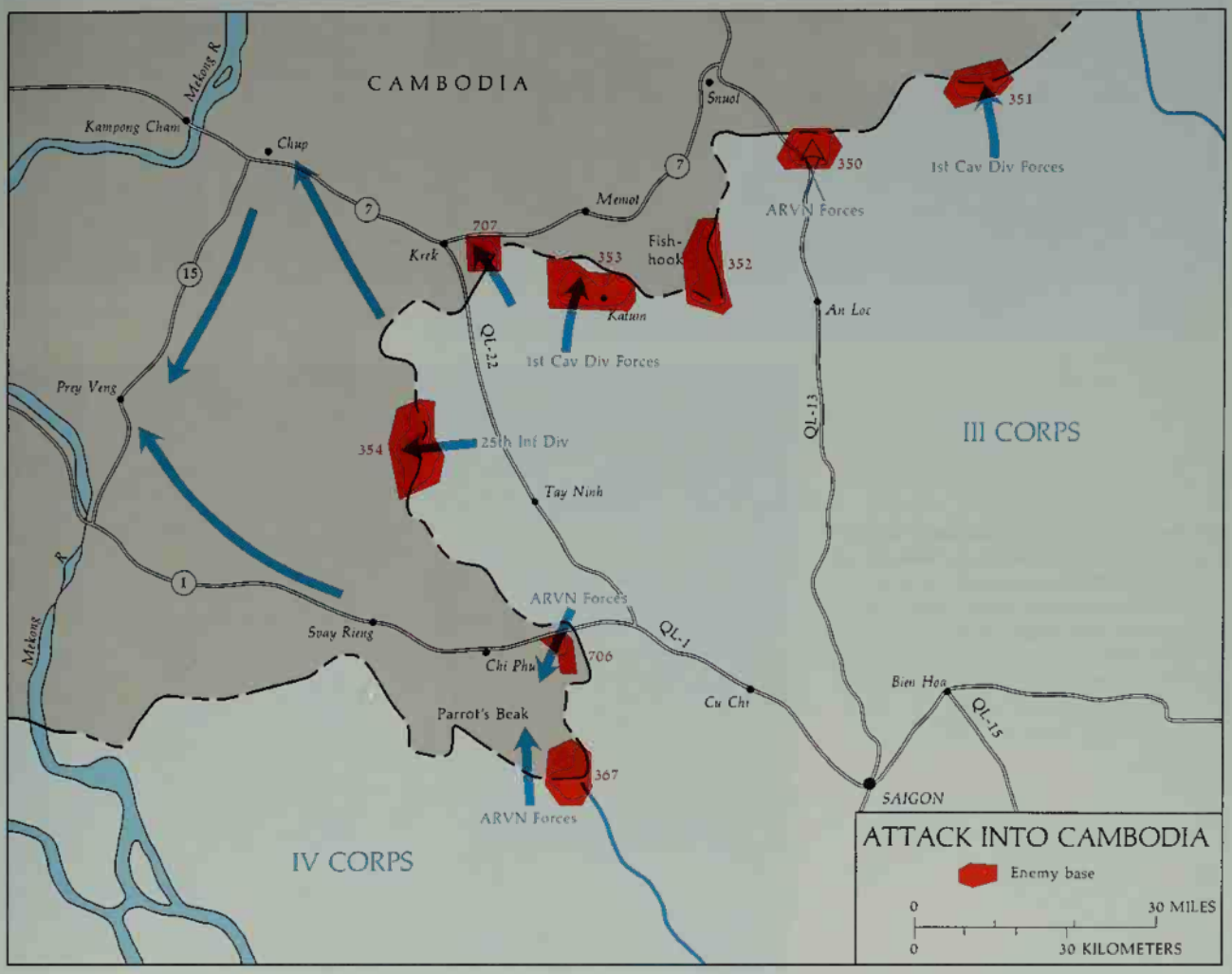
Judging that relations with China were important to Cambodia's fragile neutrality, Prince Norodom Sihanouk (*in the dark tunic*) went to Peking in 1965 for discussions with Chairman Mao Tse-tung (*left*). (*Center of Military History*)



Operation MENU, the secret bombing of enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia, began in March 1969. Over the next fourteen months, some 3,600 B-52 sorties were flown against Communist bases. (*U.S. Air Force*)

Troops from the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment enter Snuol, Cambodia, as an OH-6A light observation helicopter passes overhead. President Nixon's announcement on 7 May 1970 that U.S. forces would leave Cambodia by 30 June intensified the effort to clear the enemy sanctuaries. (*U.S. Army*)





MAP 8



"The City," an enemy base of three square kilometers hidden in the Fishhook, contained this large classroom, as well as mess halls, a livestock farm, a supply compound organized into issuing and receiving stations, and over 200 caches of weapons and other materiel, most of it new. (*U.S. Army*)



South Vietnamese 25th Division armor prepares to push deeper into the Parrot's Beak after three weeks of rapid advance. The South Vietnamese phase of the operation into the sanctuaries was conducted for lengthy periods without U.S. assistance. (*U.S. Army*)



Troops of the 1st Cavalry Division and Vietnamese civilian irregular forces transport captured ammunition to a nearby landing zone. The enemy's materiel losses were so severe that combat near Saigon and in the Mekong Delta declined to insurgency levels over the next two years. (*U.S. Army*)

Vietnam and the Soldier



While this 9th Division soldier fought in Cambodia, students back home protested the expanded war. (*U.S. Army*)



South Vietnamese civilians, mainly women and children, lie in a ditch at My Lai 4 where they were shot on 16 March 1968 by members of the Americal Division. The scandal over the massacre of the nearly 200 villagers and over the division's cover-up of the war crime for more than a year was one more element that soured the American people on Vietnam. *(Copyright 1969 Time Inc.)*



Two troops from the Americal Division make their way to safety after a firefight in southern I Corps in 1969. With public support for the war dwindling rapidly, soldiers questioned their sacrifices. (*U.S. Army*)

A soldier in Saigon lights a cigarette laced with heroin. By 1970 the use of drugs had become serious in many units. (*Wide World Photos*)



Headquarters responded to rising drug use among soldiers with testing, amnesty or punishment, and medical care. Detoxification centers were set up at major commands. (*Center of Military History*)





Marines at Con Thien display a black power banner and give clenched fist salutes. Every soldier needed methods to make the war tolerable. Some black troops emphasized racial separateness and pride. (*Wide World Photos*)



"Soul Alley" in Saigon, an off-duty enclave, catered almost exclusively to black soldiers. (*Copyright 1970 Time Inc.*)



A marine sends a heartfelt message to the enemy, announcing that his thirteen-month tour of duty is about to end. (*U.S. Marine Corps*)

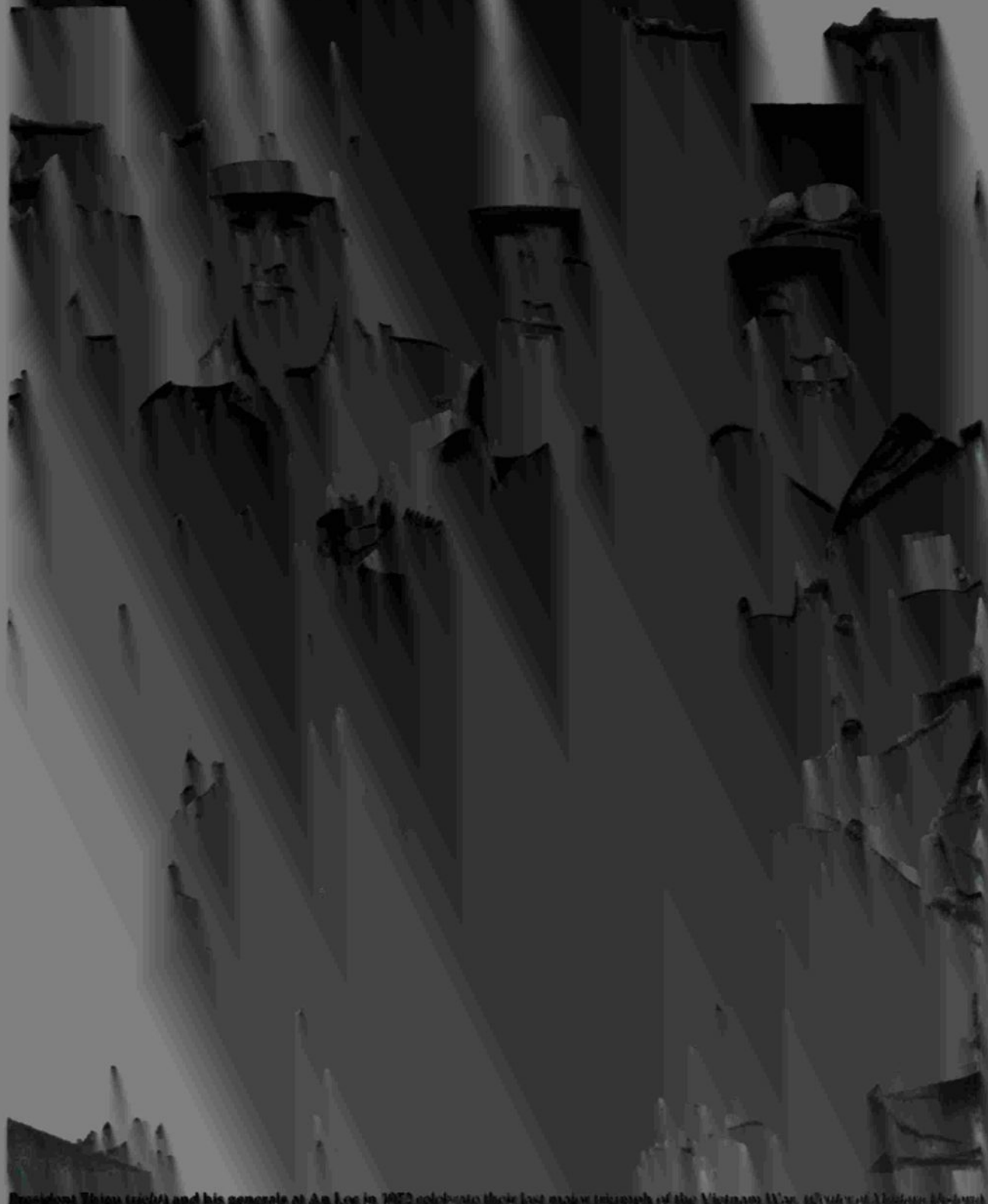


As troop withdrawals accelerated, disciplinary problems lessened. Soldiers from a 1st Division armor unit clean their weapons at Di An base camp in preparation for their departure from Vietnam. (*U.S. Army*)



At Da Nang, tanks and armored personnel carriers await loading onto a freighter for shipment to U.S. bases elsewhere in the Pacific. (*U.S. Army*)

Toward a Tenuous Cease-fire

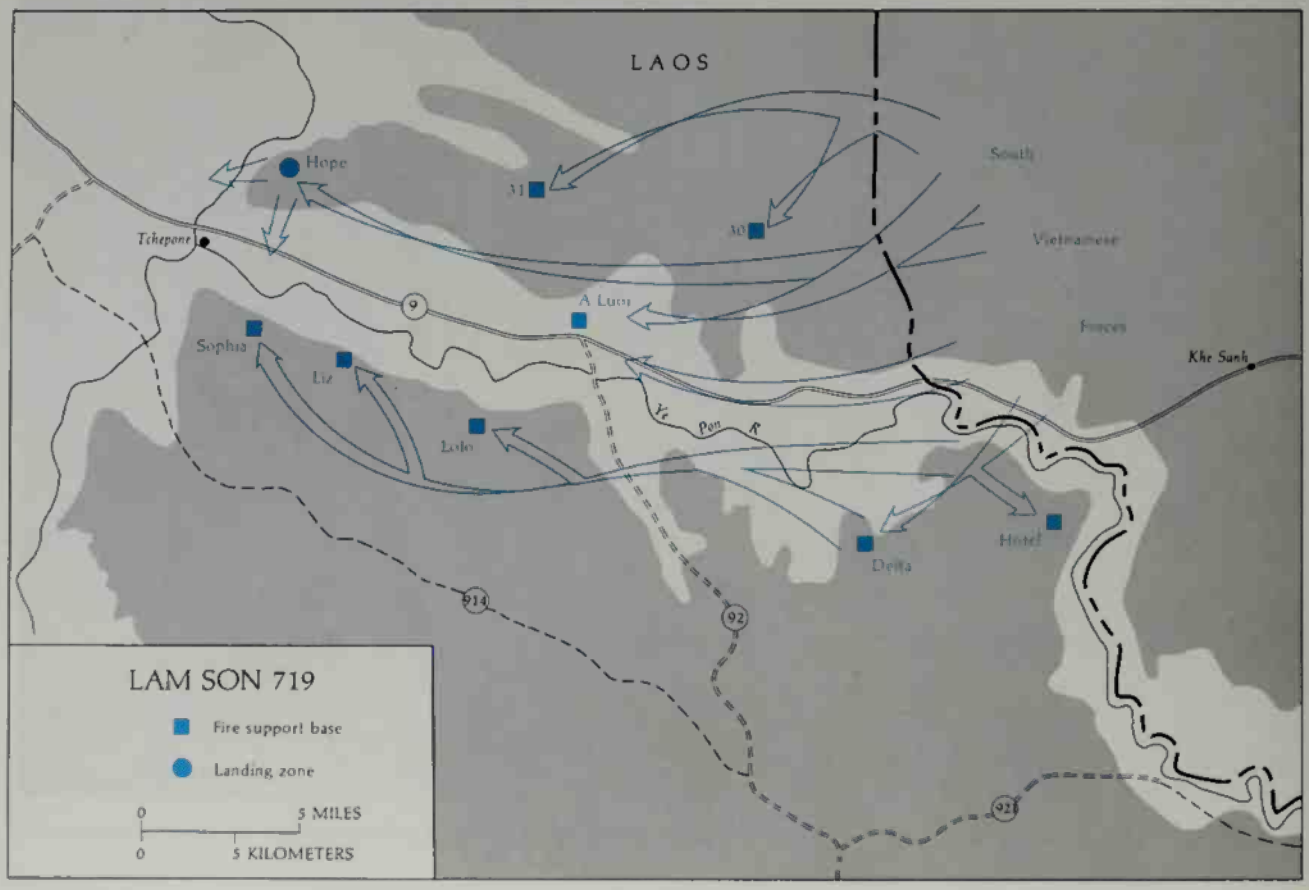


President Thieu (right) and his generals at Ang Lee in 1972 celebrate their last major triumph of the Vietnam War, a Viet Cong defeat

Test in Laos



In Laos a Studies and Observations Group (SOG) team reconnoiters the Ho Chi Minh Trail for installations and pipelines. Trail interdiction was the main objective of the 1971 operation. LAM SON 719. *(Center of Military History)*





South Vietnamese forces cross into Laos on Highway 9 early in the operation. American troops and advisers were ordered to remain on the South Vietnamese side of the border. (*U.S. Army*)



A 175-mm. gun from the U.S. Army's XXIV Corps fires into Laos from a base near Lang Vei. (*U.S. Army*)



South Vietnamese troops in Laos captured enormous quantities of materiel, including this Soviet 37-mm. antiaircraft gun. Some 5,000 individual weapons and 2,000 crew-served weapons were accounted for by the operation. (*U.S. Army*)



AH-1G Cobras from the U.S. 17th Cavalry made thousands of high-speed runs against targets across the border. In all, 107 U.S. helicopters were lost to heavy North Vietnamese fire. (*Field Artillery Journal*)



South Vietnamese Fire Support Base LOLO in the salient falls to Communist forces. By late February enemy units were counterattacking effectively. (*Center of Military History*)



South Vietnamese soldiers, captured during the retreat from Laos, are led away to a North Vietnamese detention camp. (*Center of Military History*)

The South Invaded



President Nixon confers with Henry Kissinger in 1971. The intelligence community warned the White House to anticipate an enemy offensive in early 1972. (*Indochina Archives, Berkeley*)

North Vietnamese artillery goes into action on the Kontum front in April 1972. Heralded by massive artillery attacks, North Vietnamese forces advanced straight across the Demilitarized Zone, eastward into the Central Highlands, and toward An Loc in the Saigon corridor. (*Center of Military History*)





By late April, Highway 1 south of Quang Tri was choked with damaged allied vehicles. (*Wide World Photos*)



Both in the north and in the highlands, the flight of refugees hampered allied operations. (*Center of Military History*)



Guerrillas meet with villagers in a newly liberated area of Quang Tri Province. (*Center of Military History*)



A bridge in North Vietnam shows the effects of a U.S. air attack made in late April. "Smart bombs" guided to their targets by cameras and computers took out bridges that had withstood four years of ROLLING THUNDER raids. (*U.S. Navy*)



A South Vietnamese A-1E Skyraider conducts an air strike in Kontum Province. Hanoi's inability to control a three-front offensive enabled the South to meet each attack as it developed. (*Center of Military History*)

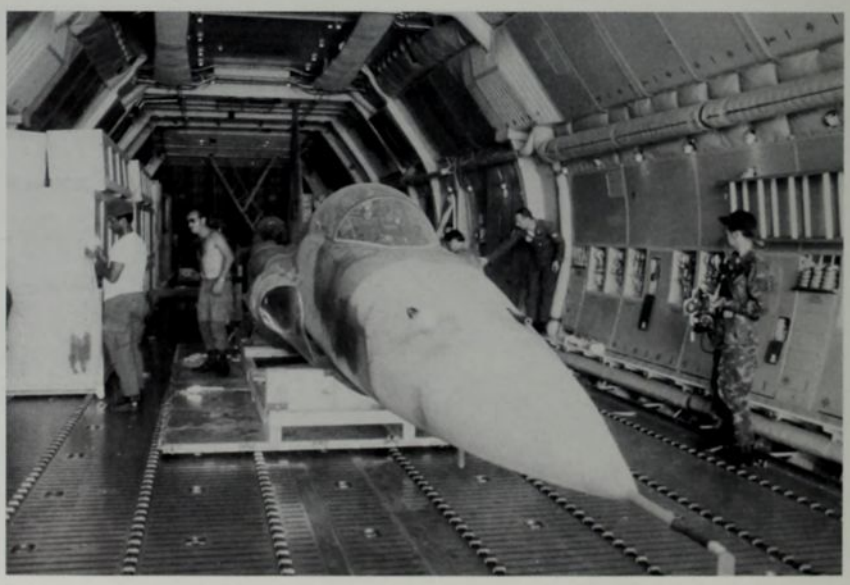


During the summer, South Vietnamese forces regrouped and began to counterattack. In September elements of the Marine and Airborne Divisions recaptured Quang Tri City and put this Russian-built T54 tank on display. (*Center of Military History*)

America Bows Out



President Thieu addresses South Vietnamese legislators in October 1972. Though South Vietnamese counterattacks put the allies in a strong bargaining position, Thieu refused to be rushed into a peace agreement without American assurances. (*United Press International*)



At Bien Hoa, airmen prepare to unload an F–5 Freedom Fighter fuselage from a large cargo aircraft. With a cease-fire possible at any time, the United States began to speed supplies to South Vietnam. (*U.S. Air Force*)



When negotiations stalled in Paris, President Nixon intensified the bombing of North Vietnam. An F-4 Phantom goes down over Quang Binh Province, just north of the Demilitarized Zone. (*Center of Military History*)



On Guam, B-52 crews attend a LINEBACKER II briefing before a mission. The December raids against the North were the heaviest of the Vietnam War. (*U.S. Air Force*)



The Kinh No Railroad Yard, seven miles from Hanoi, was left a shambles by the U.S. Air Force on 27 December. (*U.S. Air Force*)



Kissinger and Le Duc Tho confer after initialing the Paris peace agreement on 23 January. (*Center of Military History*)



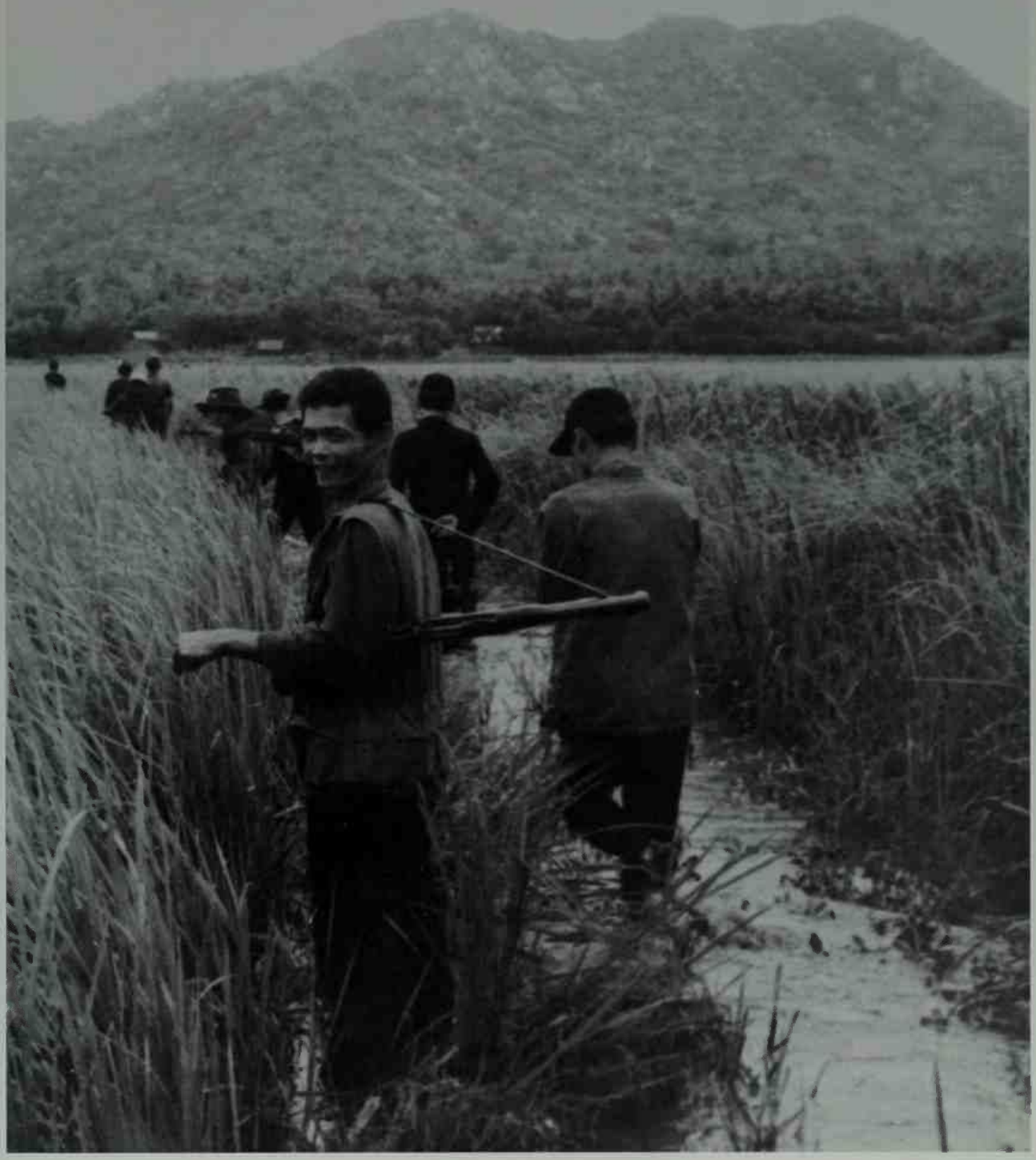
American prisoners of war begin the long journey home from North Vietnam. (*U.S. Navy*)



A U.S. Navy special minesweeper cruises in Haiphong Harbor to demonstrate that the channel has been cleared of American mines. (*U.S. Navy*)

"The enemy still controls the jungle over there. . . . Our orders are to keep vigilant, to keep our men here and our supplies full so we will be ready for anything."

—a South Vietnamese militia sergeant, 1973



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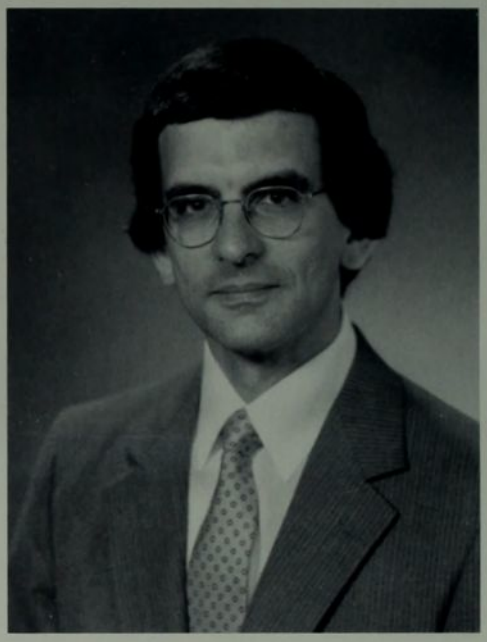
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