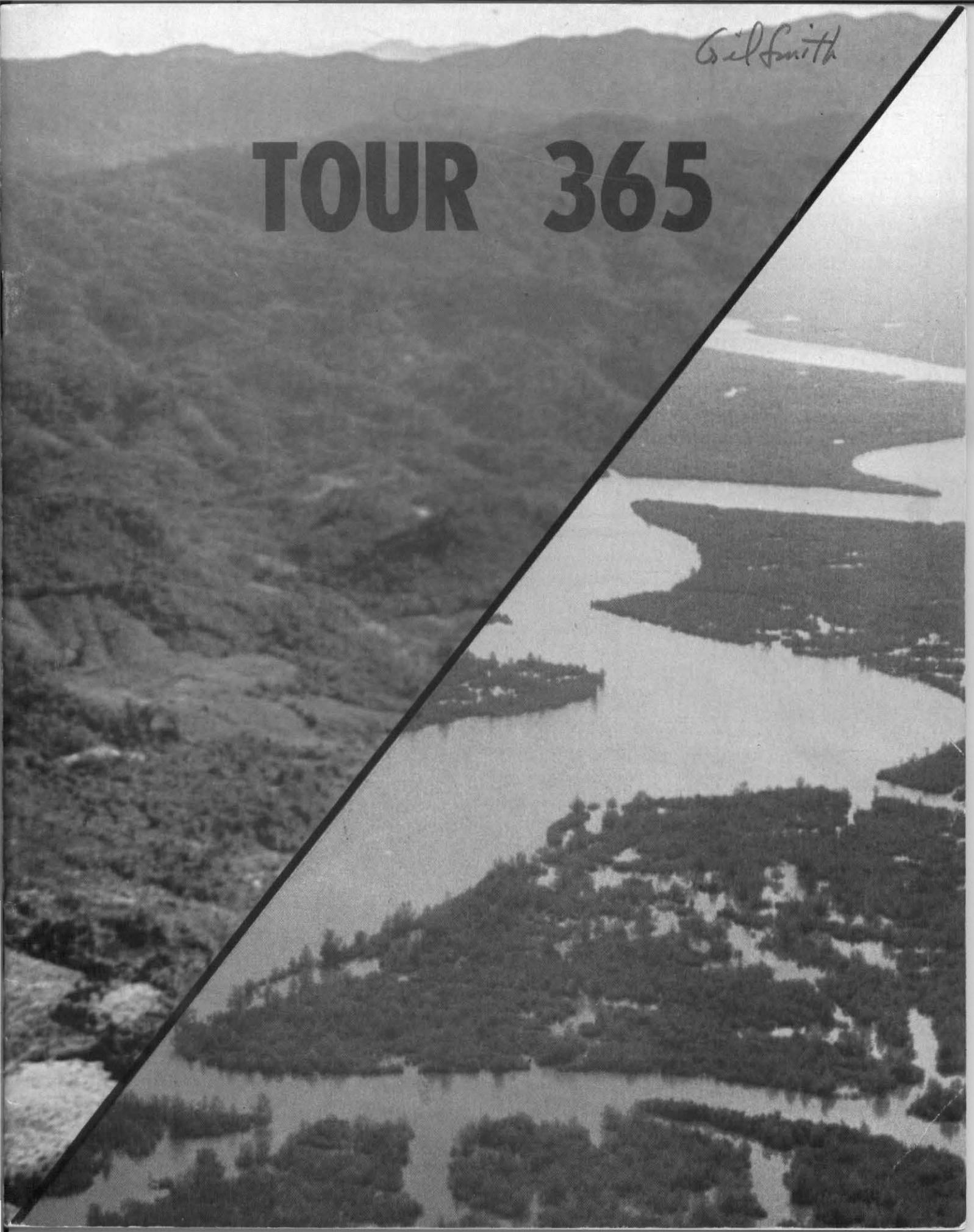


Gil Smith

# TOUR 365





Your tour of duty with the United States Army, Vietnam, is ended. May your trip home and reunion with family and friends be the pleasant, happy occasion you have anticipated. You go home with my best wishes.

As veterans of this war, you can now look back with perspective on your experiences and know the trying and difficult tasks inherent in fighting to protect the freedom of peace-loving people against Communist invaders. You know of the local Viet Cong terrorists who kill and maim their own neighbors, and appreciate the terror and destruction they spread. Having served here, you understand better than many of our countrymen the meaning of aggression against South Vietnam.

You have fought beside soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam and many other nations in a common struggle. You have been more than just a combat ally to the South Vietnamese soldier. Many of you have worked with his people in hamlet improvement and pacification programs and been looked upon as a teacher and builder, as well as a fighter.

People at home will want to hear your story of the war. Tell it. Whether you served in a combat or combat support role, part of your story is reflected in the pages of this magazine. I hope this publication will serve to assist you.

I extend my sincere appreciation for your help in accomplishing our task in Vietnam, and my thanks for a job well done. Good luck in the future.

  
W. C. WESTMORELAND  
General, United States Army  
Commanding

# TOUR 365

USARV Returnee Magazine

Spring-Summer 1968



The loss of South Vietnam would set in motion a crumbling process that could, as it progressed, have grave consequences for us and for freedom.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower  
1959

...the United States is determined to help Vietnam preserve its independence, protect its people against Communist assassins, and build a better life through economic growth.

President John F. Kennedy  
1961



The central issue of the conflict there is the aggression by North Vietnam against the brave and independent people of South Vietnam. If that aggression is stopped, the people and government of South Vietnam will be free to settle their own future—and get on with the great tasks of national development.

President Lyndon B. Johnson  
1965

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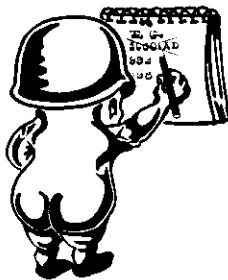
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# Vietnam In Retrospect

To understand thoroughly the war it is best to understand first Vietnam's past. The Vietnamese people have been waging a struggle for independence for nearly 2,000 years.

After centuries of Chinese domination, the invaders were driven from the Red River Delta in 938 A.D. at the battle of Bach Dang. Attempts to retake the area were repelled, and in 946, though by no means out of danger from the Chinese, the first independent Vietnam became a reality.

With the exception of a 20-year interlude of Chinese reoccupation in the early 15th Century, Vietnam remained independent for the next 900 years.

The Ly Dynasty, established in 1009, was the first great Vietnamese dynasty, and after an interval of confusion, ushered in a period of population growth, cultural development, territorial expansion, prosperity and stability. The Ly rulers gave the government the form it retained until the French conquest in the 19th Century.

The role of emperor became all-important. He was at once the father of the nation-family, the absolute temporal monarch in whom all power of state resided and finally, the religious head of the realm and intermediary between it and heaven. The work of administering the country was carried on by the civil bureaucracy—the so-called mandarinate.

In mid-13th Century the armies of Kublai Khan sought to invade Dai-Viet, as Vietnam was called then. Three times they were repelled, the last time in 1287 under General Tran Hung Dao.

The Vietnamese only enjoyed their independence by

realizing that their survival depended on their relationship with China. Knowing their own weakness and making the appropriate gestures to the Chinese, the Vietnamese were allowed to enjoy the maximum degree of independence, but always as a tributary state to China.

## THE EUROPEAN INFLUENCE

The European wave reached Vietnam in 1535 with the arrival in Da Nang Bay of the Portuguese Captain Antonio de Faria. For a century the Portuguese dominated European commerce in Vietnam. Confronting a strongly organized state power and a sophisticated officialdom, they could not impose their will on the Vietnamese, as they had the West Indians.

The first Catholic missionaries entered Vietnam in the 16th Century and with the halt in trade, they remained almost the only Europeans in the country. Confucian-oriented officials had their misgivings about the new religion. They suspected it as the forerunner of conquest, and they feared the effect upon the traditional order which had been the foundation of the state for centuries.

Missionary activities soon spread, despite a loosely enforced ban. Christianity was embraced by a substantial portion of the Vietnamese population over the years.

## THE FRENCH ARRIVE

Toward the middle of the 19th Century, pressure was



The cathedral at Tay Ninh is the Holy See of the Cao Dai church. Cao Daism, founded in 1926, is a blend of Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity, the major religions of Vietnam. Photo by JUSPAO.



### Rice Farming

mounting in influential French quarters for positive action to establish a position in Vietnam. This pressure resulted from an envy of the power other European nations were establishing in Asia and a desire to protect the missionaries who were, at times, being persecuted.

In 1858 the French captured the city of Da Nang. In July 1861 they took Saigon. The next June the Vietnamese court at Hue ceded Saigon and the adjacent area to the French and agreed to pay an indemnity. By 1867 the western part of the southern delta was annexed, and the area known as Cochin China (the extreme southern portion of Vietnam) was under French control.

For the next 30 years the French consolidated their control over Indochina, or what today is North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

The basic political structure of French Indochina was completed by 1900. Each of Vietnam's three regions were treated separately although basic policy decisions were made in Paris.

The emperor and the mandarinate remained in both central and north Vietnam; Cochin China was administered directly by the French. The old structure of government remained, but it was a front, for all major decisions were made by French authorities.

French rule was detrimental to Vietnamese society and culture. It demoralized the emperors and mandarinate, tending to turn them into self-seekers and yes-men.

French colonialism also had profound economic effects on the region. Large scale agricultural and rubber plantations soon appeared; absentee ownership grew. Prosperous Vietnamese moved into the cities, and more and more of the land was tilled by peasants who did not own it. Large-scale canal systems were dug in the Mekong Delta to exploit rice production. By early 20th Century the French had managed to produce a rice surplus. But the worst abuses of absentee ownership had also developed.

European ideas and culture permeated the country, especially among the mandarin classes. But Western thought also stimulated another movement—Vietnamese nationalism.

### THE RISE OF NATIONALISM

Early in the 20th Century nationalist movements began to develop, initially among urban intellectuals. Numerous anti-French secret societies developed, but most were loosely organized and had no well-defined political objectives.

The leadership of the clandestine nationalist movement

in Vietnam was eventually taken over by the Indochinese Communist Party (Dong Duong Cong San Dang). Formed in Hong Kong in 1930, it united several existing independent Communist groups under the leadership of Nguyen Ai Quoc — later known as Ho Chi Minh.

### JAPANESE OCCUPATION (1940—1945)

When France fell to Germany in June of 1940, the Vichy Government acceded to the demands of the Japanese. Eventually all of French Indochina came under Japanese control. The French administration was permitted to remain intact, and many lucrative agreements were made between wealthy French interests in Vietnam and the occupying forces.

Ho Chi Minh, in the meantime, had become the leading national political figure in Vietnam. To broaden the social and political base of its activities, his party adopted a policy of collaboration with all non-Communist nationalists. The united front organization was known as the Vietnam Independence League (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh), or the Viet Minh.

One of the first actions of the Viet Minh was to form guerrilla bands under the direction of Vo Nguyen Giap, to operate in Vietnamese territory against the Japanese and French. Although Ho was jailed in 1941, the activities of the Viet Minh continued. Working in nationalist guise, Ho Chi Minh effectively strengthened the organization of Communist cells throughout Vietnam.

In August 1945 Emperor Bao Dai, fearing the French would return once the Japanese collapsed, abdicated his throne and handed over power to Ho Chi Minh. In September of that year French troops were once again in Vietnam.

For a year Ho conducted negotiations with the French in an effort to assure some form of independence for Vietnam. But the French demands were so unacceptable that by December 1946, the Viet Minh decided that the only way to achieve an independent Vietnam was through a war of liberation.



The stern faces of victor and vanquished are shown in this photo, taken shortly after the fall of Dien Bien Phu. The French commander is turning over his garrison to the representative of the Viet Minh.



The Geneva conference opens in April, 1954. Negotiations on Indo-China began May 8, the participants including Communist China, Laos, Cambodia, South Vietnam and North Vietnam.

For the next eight years the French battled the nationalists. The Vietnamese people suffered greatly, but in the end the French were defeated. On May 7, 1954, the French army was decisively defeated at Dien Bien Phu.

## THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

The day after the battle of Dien Bien Phu the Geneva Conference turned its attention to the French-Indochina War. The conference had been called by the Big Four to discuss the Korean and Indochina problems.

The agreement reached for Vietnam fixed a provisional demarcation line roughly along the 17th parallel and provided for the total evacuation of French military forces, as well as the removal of Viet Minh forces from the South. Freedom of movement between the two sections was guaranteed for 300 days. An International Control Commission was formed to supervise the truce agreements, its members coming from Canada, India, and Poland. Finally a provision was made

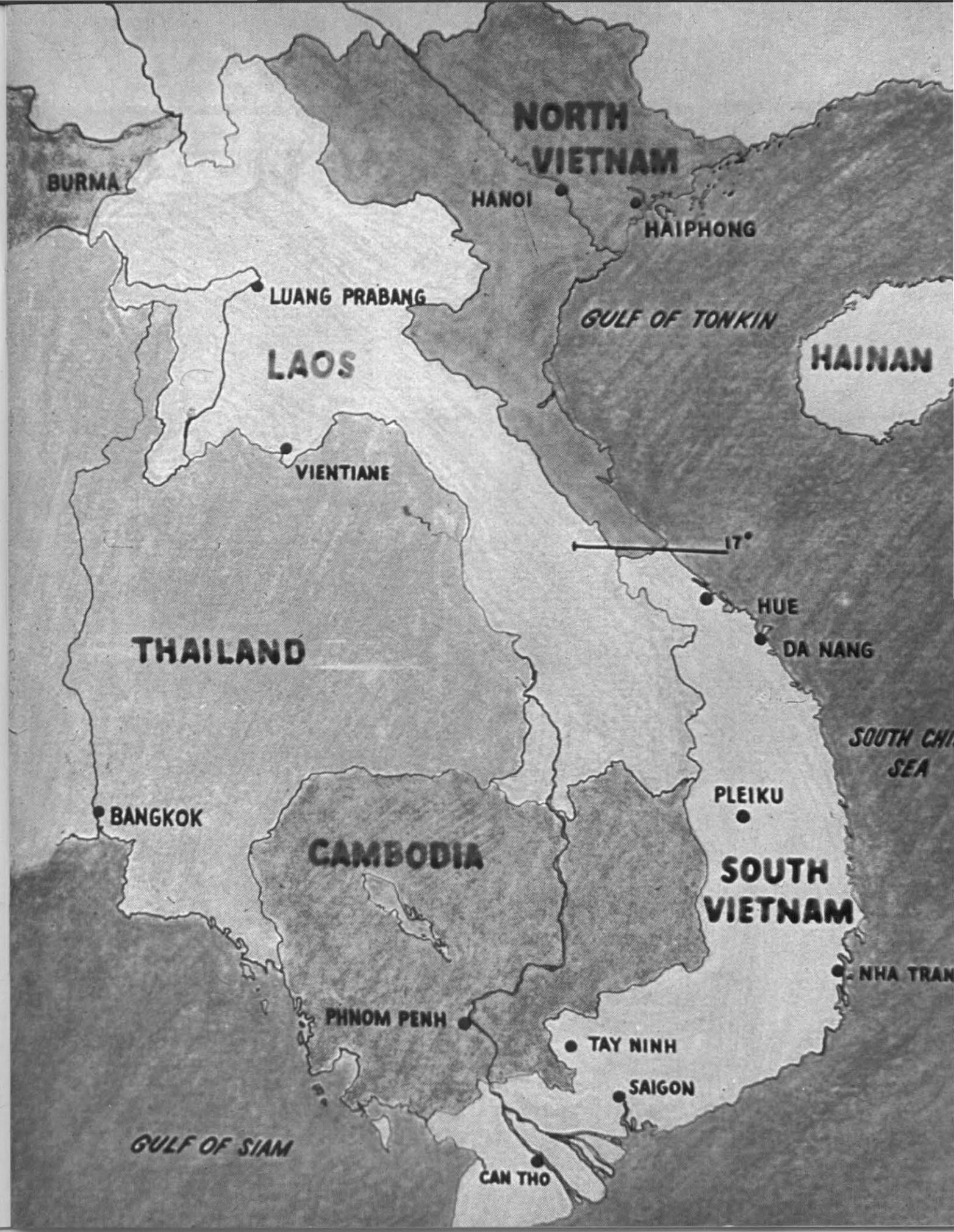
for the holding of general elections throughout Vietnam in July 1956.

Ho Chi Minh never acceded to this agreement. It was inconceivable to him that Vietnam should be divided.

The French proceeded to hand over the controls and administration to the non-Communist Vietnamese, forming the State of Vietnam, with its capital in Saigon. In Hanoi Ho began the total communization of the nation north of the 17th parallel. Later he was to turn his attention southward.

Despite the cease-fire agreement, a well-organized Viet Minh underground was deliberately left behind in the South. This underground network formed the nucleus of subsequent Communist insurgency originated in Hanoi and directed against the Saigon regime.

Vietnam was left divided; the South had a pro-Western government struggling to establish a non-Communist society and in the North, Ho Chi Minh busily was organizing a Communist state which would be the base for the realization of his ultimate dream of a unified Communist Vietnam.



# What Is A Soldier?



an Engineer constructing an artillery firing site...

He is an Infantryman or MP on patrol...



a helicopter crew member...



# What's a Soldier In USARV?



or he humps supplies from  
depot to the field...



asks you, "Are you working?"...



keeps his tank rolling...



or patches you up  
to keep you rolling.

**1954-1961**

# Years Of Trial—Years

The Geneva Accords of 1954 resulted in the creation of a North and South Vietnam. Although the United States was not signatory to the Accords, our government worked quietly behind the scenes.

At this same time the groundwork for the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was being laid. In September the treaty was signed in Manila. South Vietnam was included in the treaty as a "protocol state" with the signatories specifically accepting the obligation, if asked by the Government of South Vietnam, to take action in response to armed attack against South Vietnam and to consult on appropriate measures if South Vietnam were subjected to subversive activities.

In late 1954 President Eisenhower instituted economic aid for the new country. Thus began active American interest in South Vietnam.

To understand the events following we must look at the development of North Vietnam; the rise of the Viet Cong



President Ngo Dinh Diem



Ho Chi Minh

and their assistance from the North; and the increased economic and military aid to the South furnished by the United States.

North Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh began an immediate consolidation of forces. Many Communists moved north of the 17th parallel—an estimated 90,000—while thousands of carefully selected party members were ordered to remain behind. They were told to hide their weapons and wait for the call.

Hanoi presumed the South would fall under their control by subversion, and force would not be necessary. When the South became more and more prosperous, in spite of Communist penetration of South Vietnamese government agencies and attempts at agitation and propaganda, it came as a shock to the Communists.

Agitators and agents were being exposed for what they were, causing morale to drop in the Communist organization and many defections to occur. To worsen matters, the North per capita food output dropped by 10 percent, as the South's improved by 20 percent. Authorities in the North were admitting openly that food production goals were not being reached.

Despite North Vietnam's vastly larger industrial complex,

# s Of Decision



the South's per capita gross national product was more than 50 percent higher—\$110 per person versus \$70 per person in the North (1960 estimate). The North's failures coupled with the South's successes caused a major revision in overall strategy. Armed forces would have to be employed to take over the South!

## TERRORISM BEGINS

By 1958 the plan was obvious. Terrorism increased appreciably. The so-called wealthy peasant, school teachers and administrative officials were favorite targets of attack. In 1959 the pace of terrorism accelerated, and recruiting for the Viet Cong was stepped up.

Communist propaganda tried to exploit the confusion by stating the South was falling apart and was unable to protect its people. Even up to 1960 the entire campaign to take over South Vietnam was completely under the direction of the North.

Not until December 20, 1960, did the National Liberation Front appear. At that time the Front issued a manifesto announcing its foundation and program. It called for the overthrow of the disguised colonial regime of the United States imperialists and the dictatorial Diem Administration.

Communist propaganda tried to establish that the acts of terror were from popular discontent with Ngo Dinh Diem and his palace regime. It insisted the Viet Cong received its weapons from captured American and French sources.

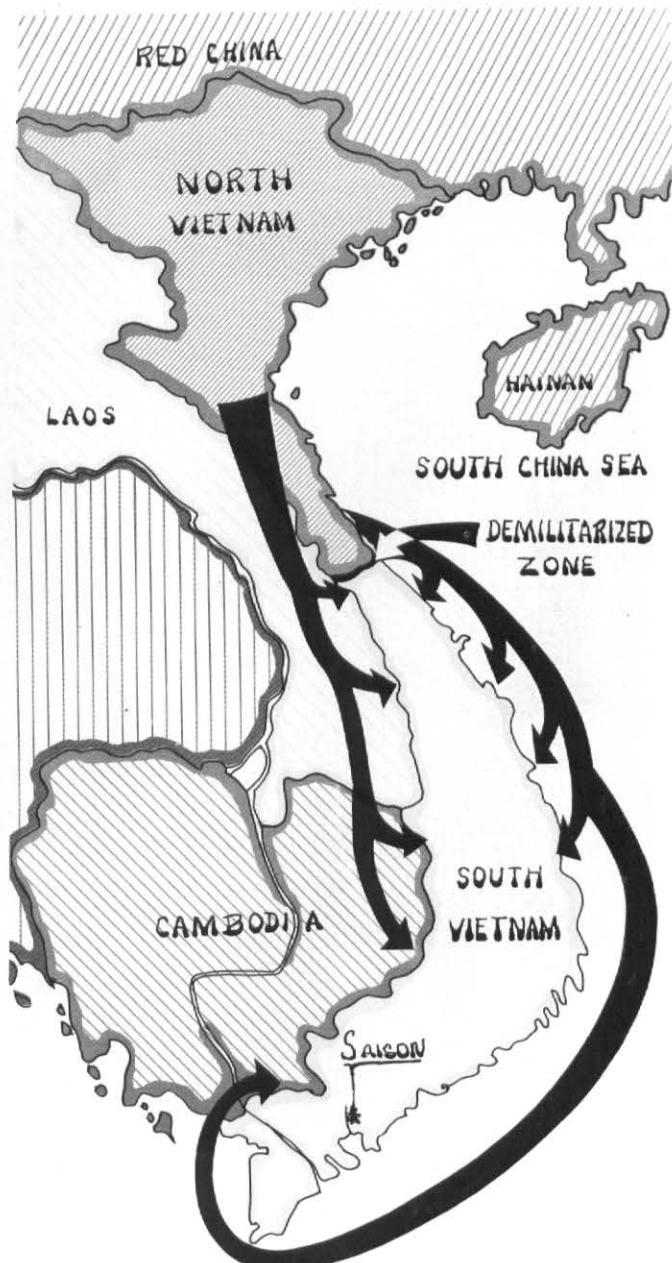
Elaborate precautions were taken to prevent discovery of North Vietnamese support of the southern Communist organization. Reliable sources estimate 40,000 trained military personnel infiltrated from North to South Vietnam through Laos in the five-year period of 1959-1964.

## HO CHI MINH TRAIL

When an infiltrator arrives at the Laotian border his North Vietnamese Army uniform is exchanged for a Lao "neutralist" uniform. He must give up all personal effects of an incriminating nature. A local guide takes him halfway to the first of a series of way stations along the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail. There he is met by the next guide until the process has led the infiltrator onto South Vietnamese soil.

Here he receives a set of black civilian pajama-like clothes, two unmarked uniforms, rubber sandals, a sweater, a hammock, mosquito netting and waterproof sheeting. After being issued a 3-5 day supply of food and medicines, he is assigned to a unit for operation.

The other infiltration route of this period was by sea.



Agents departed from ports just north of the 17th parallel with false identity paper of innocent-looking fishing vessels. This route has since become too risky with improved patrolling by the South Vietnamese with U.S. Navy assistance.

The Geneva Accords had called for a general election in 1956 to unite the two parts of Vietnam. In that year the South Vietnamese Government under Diem rejected the possibility of a free election. The North protested loudly, but without sincerity. After the Geneva Accords a high North Vietnamese official, Pham Van Dong, was asked who he thought would win such an election. He replied, "You know as well as I do that there won't be any elections."

## CLASSIC STRUGGLE

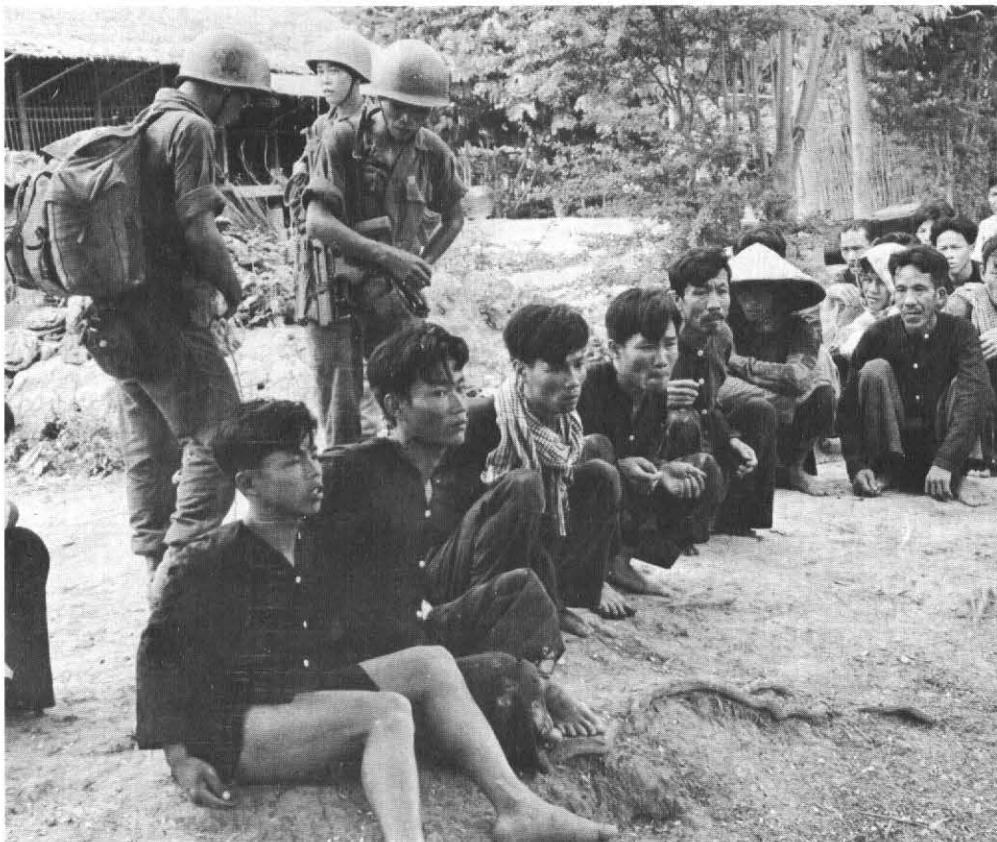
Hanoi was determined to militarily conquer the South with classic guerrilla tactics. The plan called for the three-phased warfare outlined in Mao Tse-Tung's early writings. One, the enemy is harassed and weakened by guerrilla tactics.

Two, he is engaged in mobile warfare by units up to battalion size. And finally, in all-out warfare by regular forces, the ultimate victory is won.

Phase one of the battle occurred from 1954 to roughly 1960. During this period the United States had first assisted the Diem Government with economic aid and, with ratification of the SEATO treaty in the U.S. Senate in early 1955, had added military advisors to assist the country's military and police forces.

Other countries of Europe and Asia and the Americas had economically helped the fledgling South. U.S. aid total roughly \$1.5 billion between 1954 and 1961. But the inroads of Viet Cong subversion and terror were slowly weakening the country.

In 1960 the guerrilla warfare intensified and by 1961 had reached a point of open warfare. By now the Viet Cong were reinforced by practically the entire 325th North Vietnamese Regular Army Division. Communist arms and equipment had standardized the supply system of the Viet Cong.



Troops from a South Vietnamese Division guard Viet Cong prisoners captured during a sweep of a hamlet. U.S. Army photo.

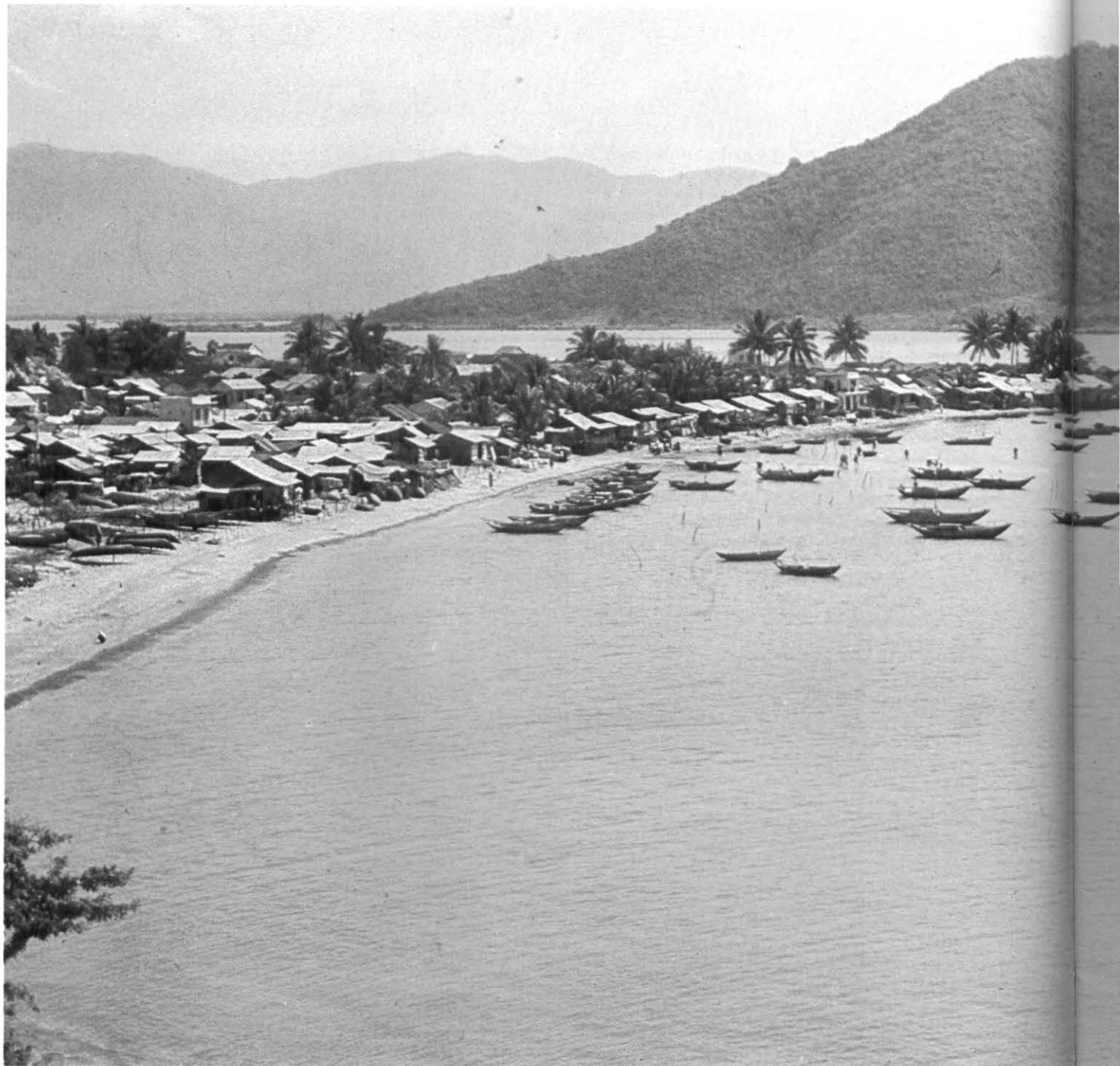
Meanwhile the American advisory had grown to approximately 700 men by 1961. It became apparent more assistance was needed to meet the expanded Communist military threat.

In that year President Kennedy made the decision to increase America's commitment to South Vietnam by increasing the number of advisers and by adding pilots and supporting military personnel. The President felt he could not abandon Vietnam without undesirable consequences throughout Asia and the world.

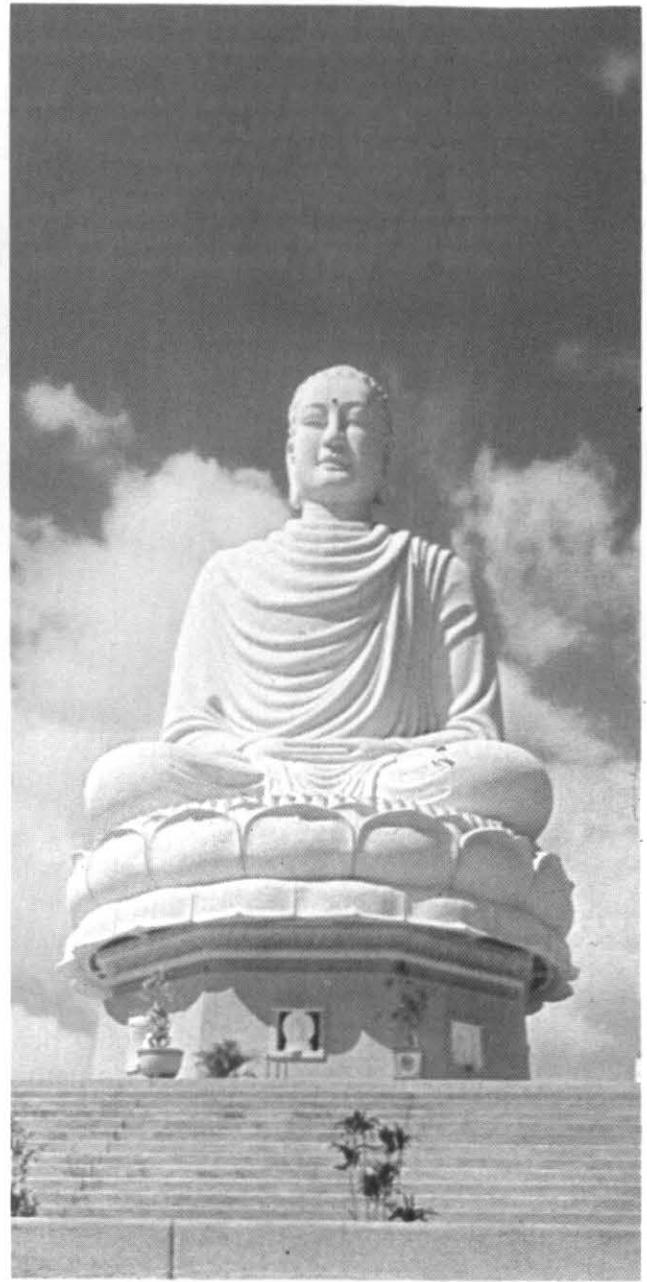
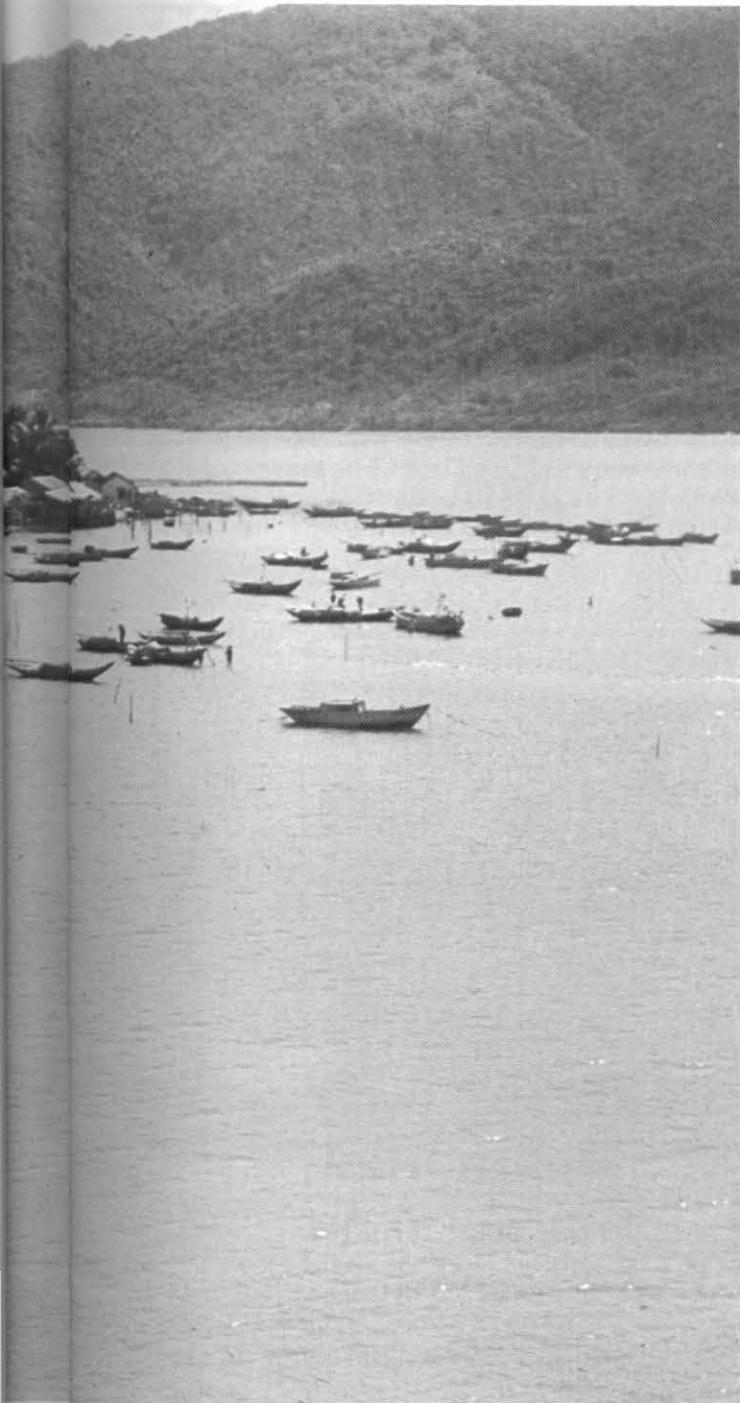
The decision was made. South Vietnam would not be abandoned. The United States would assist in stopping the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia. In the next three years more decisions would be made. Decisions that would prove America, indeed, was not allowing a "Red wave" to roll over Asia. A decision that would lead to your tour of 365 days in Vietnam.



A defiant hard core Viet Cong soldier stares at the camera as ARVN rangers prepare to take him back for interrogation. U.S. Army photo.



Along Vietnam's coast are serene hamlets and great beauty. Above is a hamlet north of Nha Trang and right is the statue of Buddha on a hill overlooking the city and harbor of Nha Trang. Right photo by Sp5 Gordon Gahan, top photo by SSgt Robert Peterson—USARV.





In 1961 South Vietnam was in serious danger of being overrun by Communist forces. Approximately 65 percent of the country was completely or partially in Viet Cong control.

Warfare was leaving the terrorist stage, although terror was still used as a psychological weapon against the people, and was now entering into the stage of small unit attacks on strategic hamlets and lightly defended villages. Terror attacks in Saigon and other cities were becoming more commonplace.

The Communist party in South Vietnam, called the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), claimed nearly 100,000 members. The PRP overtly asserted it was "the vanguard of the National Liberation Front (NLF), the soul of the NLF."

Although denying official ties with Hanoi, Peking or Moscow, beyond the "fraternal ties of Communism," Radio Hanoi announced the PRP's formation on January 18, 1962.



Vo Chi Cong

Born in 1921 in Quang Nam province, Vo Chi Cong joined the Communist revolutionaries in his teens. He is one of the major founders of the National Liberation Front (NLF) and probably a key figure in the People's Revolutionary Party, yet he is an unknown. The world only hears Ho Chi Minh speaking for the North Vietnamese and the NLF.

# The Darkest Era

Claims were being made that the NLF was the true government of South Vietnam. In the countryside, the PRP and its military arm, the Viet Cong, were extracting taxes from the peasants, forcefully impressing thousands into their military and requiring families to provide food, clothing and shelter for them. Whole villages were often required to build bunker and trench systems for guerrillas.

Goodwill delegates from the PRP were sent to 30 Asian and African nations and semi-official diplomatic relations were established with eight Communist countries and three non-Communist governments. (The legatees traveled on North Vietnamese passports and used northern currency, although they claimed to represent the South Vietnamese people.)

The situation was becoming critical in South Vietnam. The Diem Government asked for increased U.S. assistance in October 1961. The American government responded immediately.



Tran Nam Trung

Like Party Chairman Vo, Tran is a militant revolutionary. Born in North Vietnam in 1913, a former officer in the North Vietnamese Army, he now is secretary general of the party that claims to represent the South Vietnamese people, the People's Revolutionary Party.



Helicopters returning from lifting ARVN soldiers into battle during the early months of 1963.

Advisors were increased. Supply personnel and helicopter units were also sent to assist the struggling nation. A small logistical team arrived in December 1961, followed by two Army Aviation companies. The entire group numbered less than 500 men.

The first aviation company, the 57th Transportation Company (Light Helicopter), to arrive was put into operation immediately. Ten days after arrival the unit's Shawnee helicopters were flying Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) troops into combat.

The 57th was quickly followed by the 8th Transportation Company. Both units were later redesignated; the 57th became the 120th Aviation Company and the 8th was renamed the 117th Aviation Company.

The remaining new troops were assigned directly to ARVN units or the U.S. Army Support Group, Vietnam, the fore-

runner of the United States Army, Vietnam.

Each ARVN Corps had attached to it U.S. Army advisory teams of officers and noncommissioned officers. They brought their specialized knowledge in aviation, logistics, planning, ordnance, medical services, communications, artillery and use of paramilitary forces to assist in the battle.

Advisory teams and detachments were dispatched down to battalion level. The arrival of the first elements of the 5th Special Forces Group in 1962 saw special warfare detachments assigned to remote or primitive areas to teach Montagnards and similar groups how to defend themselves.

Despite American assistance, the terror attacks were taking an appalling number of casualties. During 1959 through 1964 about 20,000 South Vietnamese military had been killed, over 12,000 captured and 35,000 wounded.

On the civilian scene equally shocking devastation was

taking place. During 1963 alone 17,710 civilian casualties resulted from Communist terrorist activities. This figure breaks down as follows:

#### Assassinated

Civilian population .....	1,558
Local governmental officials.....	415
Civil servants .....	100
Injured .....	8,375
Kidnapped .....	7,262

Between January 1, 1961, and August 10, 1964, 181 Americans gave their lives in combat along side of the Vietnamese troops. Over 900 were wounded during the same period.

The situation militarily was gradually growing more serious. In November 1963 the political scene was disrupted by the overthrow of the South Vietnamese government and the death of President Diem. Almost two years of political unrest and turmoil followed before the crisis would be resolved.

The Viet Cong increased their attacks on the people. Refugees flowed into the cities in ever increasing numbers. Saigon's population increased spectacularly. With the refugees were Communist agents. Terror attacks became more frequent within the capital itself.

Emboldened by their success the North Vietnamese attack-

**The Vietnam People's Army is a true child of the people. The people, in return, give it unsparing affection and support. Therein lies the inexhaustible source of its power.**  
—General Vo Nguyen Giap, Commanding General, Viet Minh Forces.

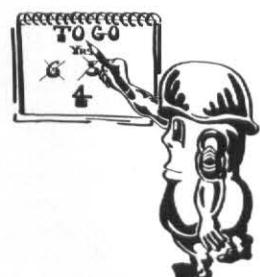
**Every Communist must grasp the truth, "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." —Mao Tse-Tung, Chairman, Chinese Communist Party.**

Savage VC terror attacks kill and maim innocent Vietnamese civilians. Here, an Army sergeant helps a child badly wounded in a Saigon attack. U.S. Army photo.





The U.S.S. Maddox was attacked twice off the coast of North Vietnam provoking the Tonkin Resolution and large-scale American assistance to South Vietnam. U.S. Navy Photo.



ed the 7th Fleet in the Tonkin Gulf. On August 2 and 4, 1964, U.S. destroyers were attacked in international waters off the Vietnamese coast by North Vietnamese torpedo boats.

No longer were the North Vietnamese denying their support of the Viet Cong. It was apparent the screen of "civil war" was being cast aside. The North smelled victory and, flushed with success, was striking out in all directions.

The attack in the Tonkin Gulf proved to be a major blunder on the part of Ho Chi Minh's forces. America was quick to react to the attack. President Johnson asked for and received from Congress approval to use all means available to assist and defeat the invasion of South Vietnam.

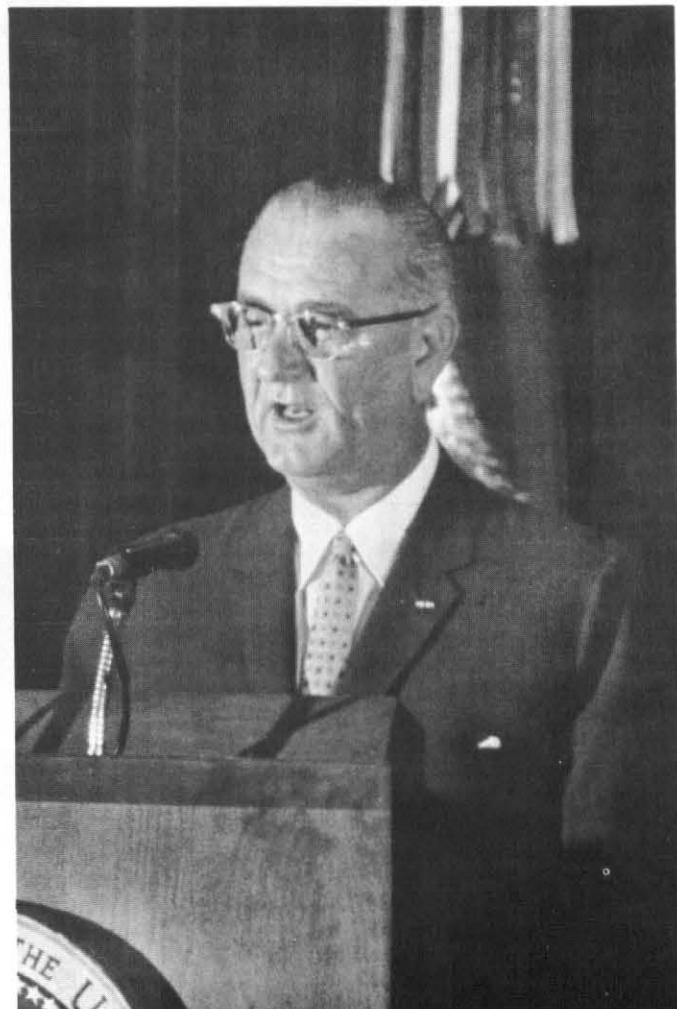
**The August 7 resolution reads:**

The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

Preparations were made in the United States for the buildup of U.S. forces in South Vietnam. It was apparent that to reverse the Communist threat ground combat troops would have to be deployed to Vietnam. The only question remaining was what unit would be first?

Thus, with new aggression met by resolve, the darkest era of South Vietnam's history drew to a close. America, joined by other SEATO countries, would respond to South Vietnam's call for assistance.

President Lyndon B. Johnson requested and received permission from Congress to use armed force in the protection of Southeast Asia. Photo by Sp4 Billy McBride—U. S. Army.



# For Valor,



Medal of Honor



Distinguished Service Cross



Distinguished Service Medal



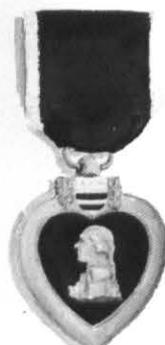
Soldiers Medal



Bronze Star



Army Commendation Medal



Purple Heart



Good Conduct Medal

# For Service



Silver Star



Legion of Merit



Distinguished Flying Cross



Air Medal



Joint Service  
Commendation Medal



National Defense  
Service Medal



Vietnam Service  
Medal



Vietnam Campaign  
Medal

1965



# The Buildup Begins

United States involvement in South Vietnam was sharply increased during 1965. Other Free World Forces joined the U.S. in the commitment of ground combat troops. Australia, New Zealand and Korea responded with the United States during the year in answer to the challenge of Communist aggression.

The South Vietnamese Army and the Communists were now engaging in battalion and larger force actions. The complexion of the warfare had developed from guerrilla warfare and terrorism to large unit actions on the part of the Viet Cong, reinforced by the North Vietnamese Regular Army units. Occasional guerrilla actions occurred from time to time and terror still played a prominent part in the Viet Cong strategy.

On February 7, the Viet Cong attacked a U.S. compound at Pleiku and Camp Holloway nearby. Later that same day U.S. aircraft struck the Dong Hai military barracks just north of the 17th parallel in North Vietnam. Americans were now definitely a Communist target and America was bombing North Vietnam for the first time.

With the war intensifying, President Johnson ordered immediate evacuation of all U.S. dependents in Vietnam. His concern for their safety was warranted, for two days later the VC blew up a hotel in Qui Nhon that was used for housing American enlisted men. Twenty-three died in the attack and 21 were injured. Fourteen Vietnamese were also injured from the attack.

The Viet Cong suffered a serious loss in February also. A supply ship attempting to smuggle 80 tons of arms and ammunition was sunk at Vung Ro Bay.

By mid-March Air Force and Navy aircraft were striking regularly at Communist targets in North and South Vietnam. March also saw the first ground offensive unit from the United States arrive. It was the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines of the 3rd Marine Division.

Little significant ground action took place during the two months of March and April; however, terror attacks on the Americans continued. A car filled with explosives was driven next to the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. When the explosives were detonated a few moments later two Americans and 11 Vietnamese lost their lives. There were 143 injured by the explosion.

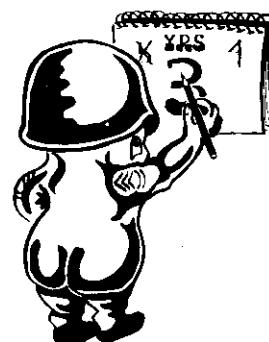
While killing and maiming scores of civilians, the Communists were keeping a steady barrage of propaganda flowing into the international press decrying the American bombing of North Vietnam, claiming hundreds of civilians were becoming casualties from American raids.

In May U.S. forces began to buildup in earnest. The Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade was landed in-country and immediately went into tactical operations around Bien Hoa. They were followed by additional Marines and Seabees landing at Chu Lai in the I Corps Tactical Zone (I CTZ).

The buildup continued in June with the arrival of Austra-



The old U.S. Embassy in downtown Saigon stands with many of its windows blown out after a car filled with explosives was detonated beside it. Thirteen died in the vicious enemy attack. Photo by U.S. Army Photo Detachment.





A buildup in American forces in South Vietnam means more supplies and equipment. Saigon Port is lined with ships unloading cargo. Saigon Support Command photo.

lia's first combat troops, the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. U.S. combat engineers arrived in force to begin the construction of a deep-draft port and airfield at Cam Ranh Bay. The port was needed to ease the congestion of supply ships at Saigon Port.

During this time the VC had been active. A week-long battle around Quang Ngai City resulted in about 500 ARVN casualties. A four-day battle at Dong Xoai, 55 miles northeast of Saigon, resulted in 650 friendly casualties. A bomb was exploded in Tan Son Nhut civilian air terminal injuring 46 persons.

Another terrorist incident occurred at the My Canh floating restaurant in the Saigon River. Two claymore mines cost 44 persons their lives and injured 81 others.

A multi-battalion attack on Duc Hoa proved the Communists were settling into conventional warfare in an attempt for complete victory in 1965. They thought they could overcome the Free World and South Vietnamese Forces before the buildup could be accomplished.

### BUILDUP CONTINUES

Yet American troops continued to arrive. In July the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and elements of the 1st Logistical Command added to the strength of military forces in the southern portion of the country. Two Marine battalions bolstered forces in the northern provinces.

Communist forces were increasing on a large scale also. The North Vietnamese Army's (NVA) 101st Regiment was definitely identified as being in South Vietnam and the 18th and 95th NVA Regiments were also believed to be completely within South Vietnam's borders.

In the central section of the country a tactical headquarters was placed at Nha Trang to control new units arriving in the II CTZ. Originally designated Task Force Alpha, the headquarters later became I Field Force, Vietnam (I FFV). The new airmobile division, the 1st Cavalry, was moved into An Khe while the 173rd Airborne Brigade protected the arrival with Operation Gibraltar in the immediate vicinity. The September operation resulted in 226 VC killed in three days.

A regimental force of Viet Cong attacked the Phu Co

outpost near Qui Nhon and before the battle was complete, ARVN troops took a staggering toll of the attackers. Seven hundred VC died in the encounter.

### KOREA CONTRIBUTES DIVISION

Another Free World Force entered Vietnam in October. The Republic of Korea sent its Capitol Division into South Vietnam to help aid a country invaded from the north by Communists as Korea was a decade and a half earlier. During the same period the remaining elements of the 1st Infantry Division arrived.

By November the 1st Cavalry was into action. The prelude to the largest-scale action of the war took place during the first 12 days of the month when the Cavalry tangled with a large force west of Plei Me. At the same time the 173rd Airborne battled VC units in War Zone D 30 miles northeast of Saigon. The two engagements resulted in over 600 enemy dead and nearly 200 captured.

### IA DRANG VALLEY

To the west of Plei Me Communist forces were moving into the Ia Drang Valley intent on colliding with the 1st Cavalry and winning a victory over their "green" troops. The enemy met the 3rd Brigade of the Cavalry and stood and fought, rather than melt into the jungle after initial contact. When the smoke of battle cleared 1,238 enemy soldiers had died while only one-fifth that number of Americans were killed. The "green" troops and the airmobile concept had proven themselves.

The Communists had suffered a shattering defeat against the Americans in the Ia Drang Valley, but they overran an ARVN unit at the Michelin Plantation in Binh Duong Province inflicting heavy casualties on the South Vietnamese. The VC also countered with terror by detonating a truck laden with explosives at the Metropole Bachelor Enlisted Quarters in Saigon. Eight Americans were killed and 137 injured as a result of the attack.

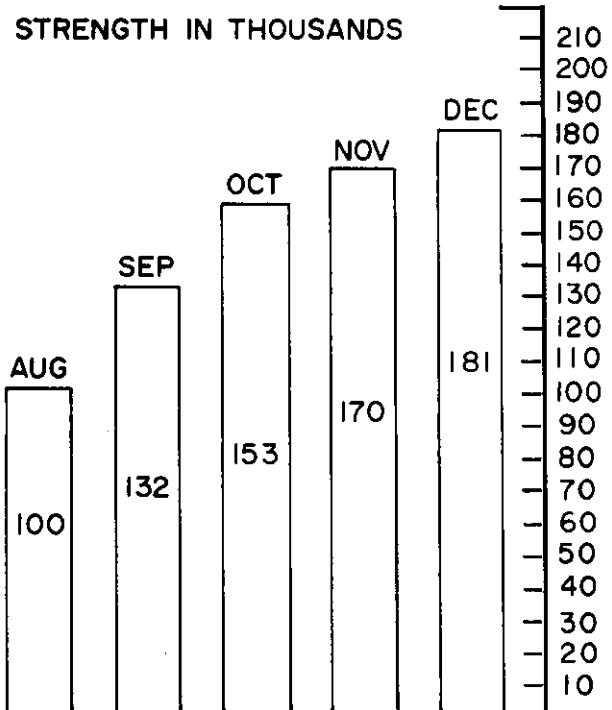
Before the year closed the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division deployed from Hawaii to Vietnam. This brought the total strength of U.S. and Free World Military Forces in Vietnam to 181,000 from a beginning figure of 24,000 men—

an increase of over seven times. Meanwhile enemy forces had increased from 103,000 at the beginning of the year to an estimated 230,000, or a little over double.

The year had seen U.S. troops penetrate into areas Communists had controlled for years. With the aid of saturation bombings by B-52 bombers, the 1965 monsoon offensive the VC had predicted was little more than a small splash. Superior firepower, rapid artillery and air power response, coupled with the helicopter's fantastic mobility, were proving that the Communists' attempt to wrap up the war by 1966 was not going to materialize.

On the diplomatic scene Hanoi scorned America's peace overture of a 37-day pause in air strikes over North Vietnam. On the Saigon political front the governmental turmoil was eliminated by the emergence of a military National Leadership Council taking over. The Air Force Commander, Brigadier General Nguyen Cao Ky, became premier, bringing long-needed calm to the government.

## Rise in Free World Military Force Strength



**PROVINCES  
AND  
CAPITALS**

- 1 QUANG TRI, Quang Tri
- 2 THUA THIEN, Hue
- 3 QUANG NAM, Da Nang, Hoi An
- 4 QUANG TIN, Tam Ky
- 5 QUANG NGAI, Quang Ngai
- 6 KONTUM, Kontum
- 7 BINH DINH, Bong Son, Qui Nhon
- 8 PLEIKU, Pleiku
- 9 PHU BON, Hau Bon
- 10 PHU YEN, Song Cau, Tuy Hoa
- 11 DAKLAK, Ban Me Thout
- 12 KINH HOA, Hha Trang
- 13 QUANG DUC, Gia Nghia
- 14 DALAT, Tuyen Duc
- 15 NINH THUAN, Phan Rang
- 16 PHUOC LONG, Phuoc Binh
- 17 LAM DONG, Bao Loc, Di Linh
- 18 BINH THUAN, Phan Thiet
- 19 BINH LONG, An Loc
- 20 PHUOC THANH, Phuoc Vinh
- 21 LONG KHANH, Xuan Loc
- 22 BINH THUY, Ham Tan
- 23 TAY NINH, Tay Ninh
- 24 BINH DUONG, Phu Cuong
- 25 BIEN HOA, Bien Hoa
- 26 PHUOC TUI, Baria
- 27 HAU NGHIA, Khien Cuong
- 28 CHAU DOC, Chau Doc
- 29 KIEN PHONG, Cao Lanh
- 30 KIEN TUONG, Moc Hoa

**CAPITAL ZONE**

**IV CORPS**

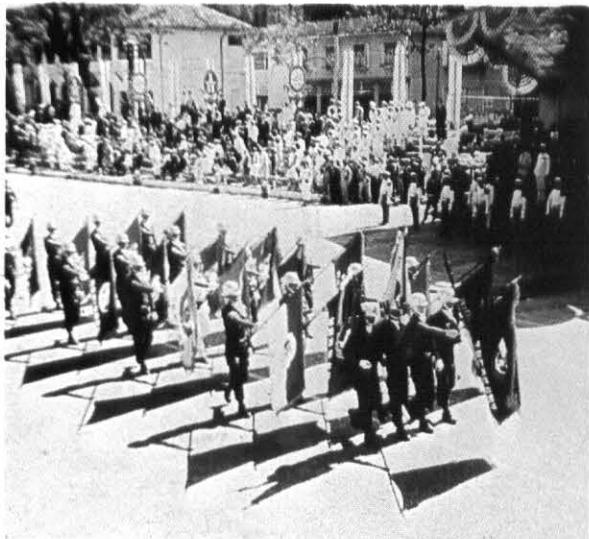
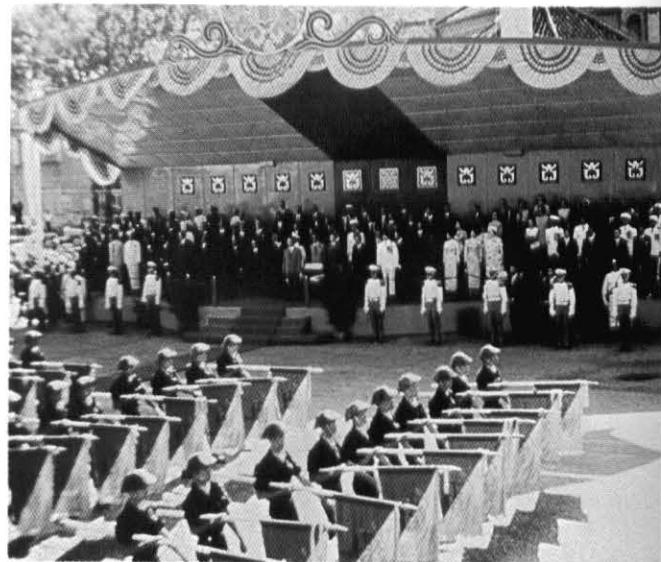
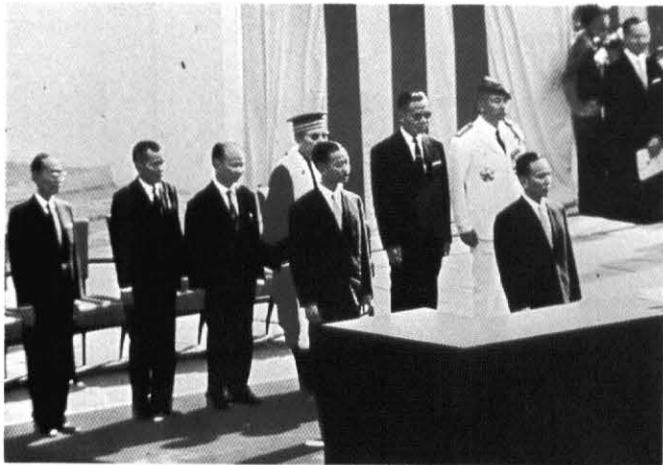
**I CORPS**

**II CORPS**

**III CORPS**

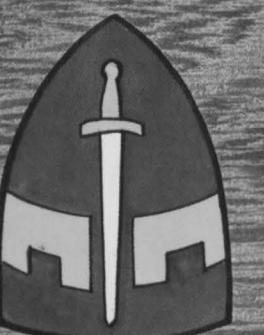
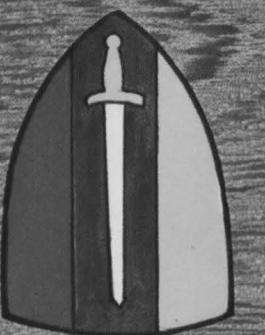
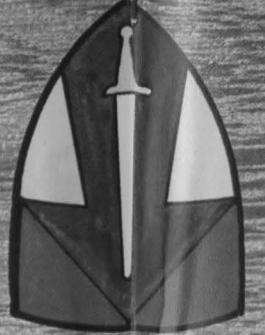
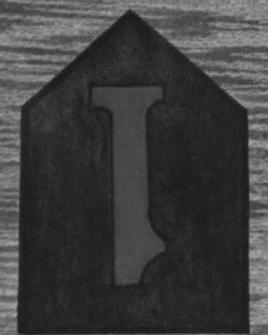
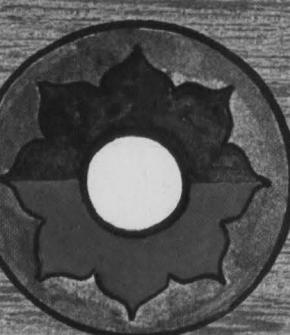
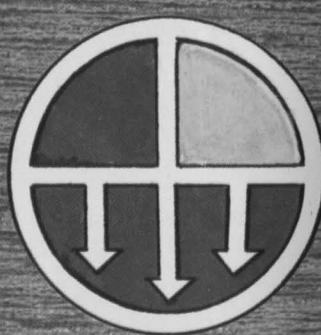
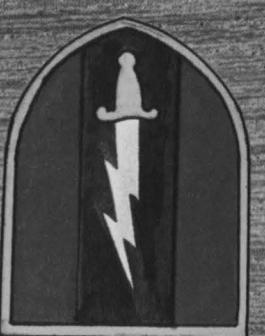
**LEGEND**

— CORPS BOUNDARIES  
 - - - PROVINCE BOUNDARIES  
 ● LOCATION, PROVINCE CAPITALS  
 ○ NATIONAL CAPITAL



The presidential inaugural ceremonies at the National Assembly building in Saigon included the oath-taking ceremonies of President Nguyen Van Thieu and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, speeches, and a parade celebrating both the inaugural and National Day. Photos by JUSPAO.





1966

# The Counter-Offensive

The year 1966 was characterized by a major change in conditions in South Vietnam, militarily, politically and diplomatically. For the first time Free World Military Forces (FWMF) of Vietnamese, American, Australian and Korean troops were actively entering Viet Cong strongholds, breaking the enemy's stranglehold on the people. He was losing his rice, ammunition and weapons caches, and his predicted monsoon offensive was broken up. The FWMF were beginning the first phase of the counter-offensive.

The diplomatic scene was one of harmony with several high-level meetings taking place during the year to smooth out strategy and policy for the year.

Politically the year saw some of the worst disorders of the new government's history. Armed forces were used on occasion to prevent anarchy. The turmoil was resolved by reform and resulted in much good for the Vietnamese people.

## VC SANCTUARIES CRACKED

During January the 173rd Airborne Brigade and the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment launched a seven-day sweep into an area near the Cambodian border in search of two VC battalions. The penetration of the one-time sanctuary resulted in over 400 enemy deaths.

The 25th Infantry Division teamed up with the 173rd and Australians to uncover an enemy headquarters complex with extensive tunnel systems. In the new operation large quantities of weapons and ammunition were captured.

Korean troops began an operation in Binh Dinh Province that was to result in 250 enemy killed.

In the past VC tax collectors had bled off large percentages of the rice harvest. The 101st Airborne's 1st Brigade and Korean Marines were sent into Phu Yen Province to secure the rice harvest. VC taxation of the 30,000-ton crop was prevented.

Prior to Tet's 84-hour truce the VC were busy attacking targets ranging from the airfield at Da Nang, a Special Forces camp, and a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) outpost to exploding a claymore mine outside the main gate of Tan Son Nhut. They detonated two charges at a U.S. BEQ in Dalat, the Vo Khia New Life Hamlet was attacked and USAID representative Douglas Ramsey was kidnapped in other action.

The truce itself was marred by over 100 violations by the Viet Cong.

Later the 1st Cavalry combined forces with Vietnamese and Korean units for a 42-day operation near Bong Son that resulted in nearly 2,400 enemy dead.

## OPERATIONS HURT CHARLIE

Military action in the next two months took a heavy toll of the enemy's ranks and base camps. The 1st Infantry Division's Operation Rolling Stone took 150 VC. The 101st's Operation Harrison for area security in Phu Yen Province, the 3rd Brigade, 25th Division's Operation Garfield in Darlac Province, and the combined force in the Song Be River operation all turned up enemy camps, weapons and ammunition.

At Bien Hoa II Field Force, Vietnam, was activated to control U.S. forces in the III Corps Tactical Zone.

The VC retaliated with an attack on the Cavalry's base camp at An Khe, resulting in seven deaths on each side. The supply ship SS Paloma was sprayed with machinegun and 57mm recoilless fire southeast of Nha Be as it entered the river system to Saigon. The ship was heavily damaged, but arrived at Saigon Port under its own power.

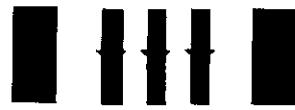
## CHIEU HOI PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL

A program designed to bring the Viet Cong back to the



**FIRE!**... A gun crew of Battery A, 319th Artillery, fires a 105 mm howitzer in support of the 173d Airborne Brigade's Operation Crimp. Photo by Sgt. Barnie Mungiboyat-593rd Pictorial Plat.

# e Phase I



The front of the Victoria Hotel in Saigon after a VC terrorist attack. Photo by Sfc. K.C. Uchima.

government, called the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) Program, met with spectacular success in March with a record setting 2,336 Hoi Chanhs (returnees) in the 31-day period.

With the increase of troops in the Saigon area it was necessary to activate Headquarters Area Command (HAC) to provide support functions for all services in the capital city environs. The 1st Signal Brigade was also activated in early April.

HAC's first chore was to increase security of Saigon's installations to protect against terrorist attack. The explosion of approximately 450 pounds of explosives at the Victoria BOQ, extensively damaging the first three floors and killing six and injuring 116, demonstrated the need for additional guards and security precautions.

## BUILDUP CONTINUES

The buildup of forces continued with the arrival of the USS Corpus Christi Bay at Cam Ranh Bay to provide a floating maintenance facility for Army helicopters, and the Royal Australian Task Force entered the country.

As mid-year approached, the threatened VC monsoon offensive was blunted by several operations. One found the 1st Division penetrating deep into War Zone C near Tay Ninh. No friendly troops had been in the area for five years. Large quantities of supplies were captured. In Pleiku Province along the Cambodian border ARVN and 25th Division troops wiped out 546 of the enemy.

In III CTZ a sweep through Binh Long Province by the

1st Division and 5th ARVN Division cost the Viet Cong 855 men in a little over a month. In Kontum Province the 101st and ARVN units accounted for 531 more enemy killed. This action was near a city to become famous 18 months later—Dak To.

Terror attacks of note included a mine exploded at the Brink Hotel in Saigon and attacks on Regional and Popular Force outposts and small CIDG units.

Over North Vietnam U.S. planes faced an increasing number of Russian-made surface-to-air (SAM) missiles. Twenty-five SAMs were launched against American planes during one day without recording a hit. In Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh announced partial mobilization of the country.

Units continued to arrive to support the counter-offensive. In August elements of the 4th Infantry Division landed at Qui Nhon, and the 196th Light Infantry Brigade and the first of a 2,000-man Philippine Civic Action Group (PHIL-CAG) arrived.

In September the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, a Spanish Medical Team and the German hospital ship Helgoland arrived, plus the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division.

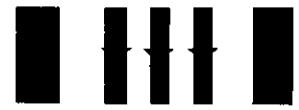
## ENEMY OFF BALANCE

Two U.S. operations kept the enemy off balance. The 1st Cavalry in Binh Dinh Province accounted for 230 VC, while



Members of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade trudge through a rice paddy during Operation Attleboro. Photo by 69th Signal Bn.

# The Counter-Offensive



the 196th Light Infantry Brigade and elements of the 1st, 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions and 173rd Airborne Brigade mauled the 9th VC Division, killing over 1,100 in the two-month Operation Attleboro. The force captured the largest rice haul at the time with a 1,121-ton find.

October action saw a combined force of the 1st Cavalry, Koreans and Vietnamese killing 681 Viet Cong in Operation Irving. To avoid superior firepower of the Americans the enemy tried to break contact as quickly as possible and kept their raids to the northern provinces, where their supply lines are shorter, and to scattered attacks on ARVN outposts.

Operation Paul Revere whittled another 1,000 from the enemy's ranks and cost them 300 weapons. Viet Cong losses were running high and the enemy brought in the North Vietnamese 5th Division to bolster their forces.

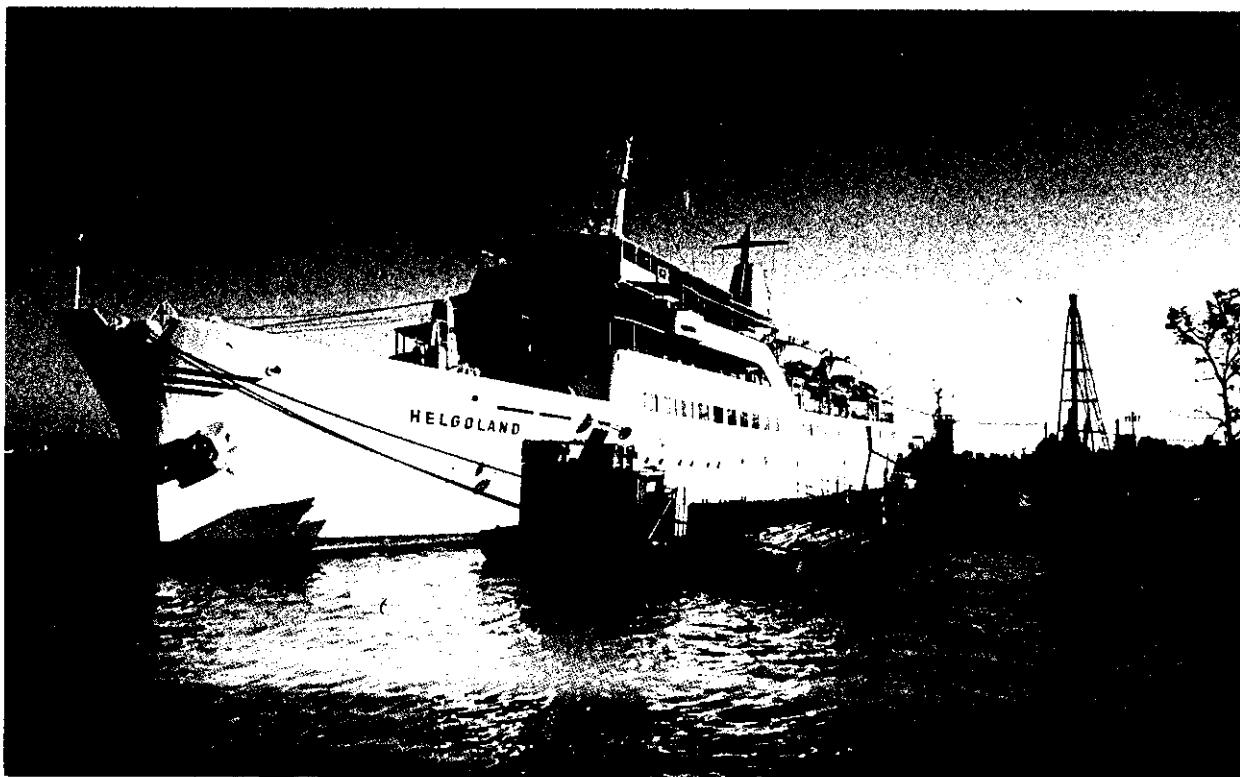
November was characterized by increased VC raiding. The 4th Infantry Division operating west of Plei Djereng withstood a mortar barrage of over 500 rounds; National

Day celebrations beginning in Saigon were interrupted by two dozen 57mm recoilless rounds; the 196th's base camp west of Tay Ninh was hit; and a portion of the Long Binh ammunition dump was blown up by satchel charges, causing over 11,000 rounds of 105mm ammunition to be destroyed.

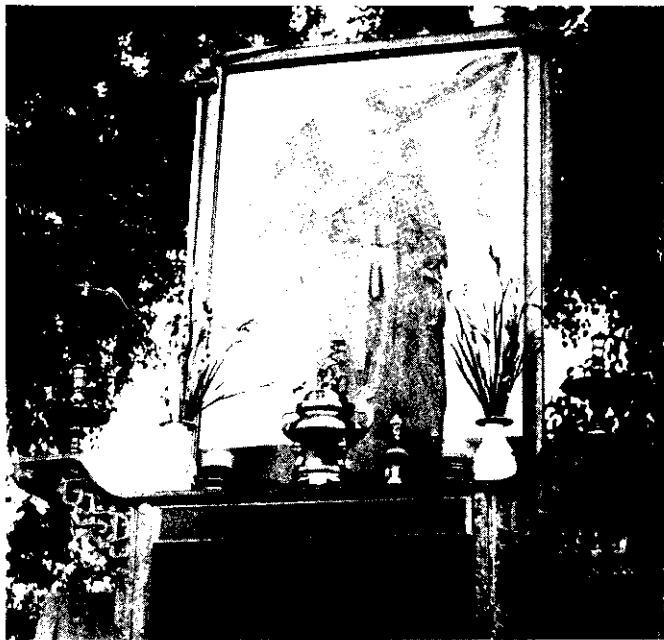
The dump was struck again in December and Tan Son Nhut airbase sustained a raid in which 30 guerrillas penetrated the perimeter. The airfield attack cost the VC 31 persons and the Americans 3.

The high ratio of enemy deaths to U.S. was exemplified by an ambush of a recon platoon of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. Rapid reaction of artillery, air strikes and relief troops turned the ambush into a defeat for the Viet Cong. Only one U.S. soldier lost his life while the enemy sacrificed 94 men.

At the close of the year the first elements of the 9th Infantry Division arrived to bring U.S. troop strength to 361,000.



The German hospital ship, Helgoland, arrived in September to provide floating medical and surgical facilities to care for sick and wounded Vietnamese. Photo by SSgt. Robert Peterson—USARV



In Saigon a Buddhist monk uses a loud speaker to talk to a crowd. U.S. Army photo.

◀ A picture of Buddhist leader Trich Tri Quang stands on an altar at the entrance to the main Buddhist pagoda in Hue. Photo by Sp5 Allan K. Holm—U.S. Army Photo Det.



## DIPLOMATIC HARMONY

The year was marked by harmony on the diplomatic front. To set the stage for high-level discussions, Secretary of State Dean Rusk visited the country in January. This was followed the next month by Premier Ky, Chief of State Thieu, and President Johnson meeting at Honolulu for a two-day conference on political, social and economic aspects of the war. Vice President Humphrey visited South Vietnam later in February.

Another conference for the heads of state was held in Manila in October. Secretary of Defense McNamara visited the country prior to the Philippine meeting of the U.S., Australian, Korean, New Zealand, Thailand, South Vietnam and Philippine chiefs. Following the conference President Johnson visited the war zone at Cam Ranh Bay.

## POLITICAL FRONT IN FLAMES

On the political front Premier Ky headed off a military coup with the arrest of several junior officers from the armed forces. He also announced general elections would be held in 1967, and a constitutional referendum in October 1966.

The political calm was shattered in April when I Corps commander, Lt. Gen. Nguyen Chanh Thi, considered a potential political rival of Premier Ky, was relieved from his command. A demonstration of 2,000 persons in Da Nang was followed by Buddhist protests in Hue, Saigon and Hoi An.

A call for a general strike closed the port of Da Nang and 20,000 Buddhists rallied to demonstrate in the old imperial capital city of Hue. The unrest continued into early April resulting in struggle groups forming in the major cities of the Republic. Government troops moved into Da Nang in a show of force while turmoil and demonstrations continued in Hue, Dalat, and Nha Trang. By April 12, the situation appeared resolved as anti-government struggle forces pledged to fight against Communism alongside the government.

The National Political Congress closed with the announcement that a constituent assembly would be elected in five months. An apparent calm settled over the country. It was soon to be broken by new unrest.

In late May the political waters were muddied again by Buddhist and anti-government forces rising again in Da Nang and Hue. A Buddhist nun burned herself to death in protest against the government. This was the first of several acts of self-immolation. In Hue the U.S. consulate was sacked and burned.

Marine operation in the I Corps were delayed by Buddhists placing altars in the streets of Hue. Government troops and riot police finally cleared the streets and arrested some of the dissident leaders to bring an end to the protests.

Things settled down for the remainder of the year, but the sour note of a Saigon dock strike broke the seeming serenity. On the positive side the new South Vietnamese constitution's first three articles were approved.



# *Does He Care? ▷*



*He cares enough to build for those  
in need, to help  
the young,  
the old,  
the apprehensive.*

*He will stop a moment and play*



*with the  
children,  
or  
play  
for  
them.*

# ? *You Bet He Does!*



## The Squeeze Period-1967

# The Counter-Offensive

The year 1967 saw the Free World Forces tighten the screw on the enemy. He was squeezed in many areas and many ways. His manpower was slowly whittled down by constant operations. His weapons and food caches were turned up with great regularity, blunting many planned raids and offensive actions. Increased bombing raids made his routes of supply difficult to use, curtailing his operations in the southern provinces because of lack of supplies. His cause was further weakened by thousands of Viet Cong, political cadre and North Vietnamese who could no longer believe in the things they were told and turned themselves into the government's Chieu Hoi Program.

During the latter months of 1967, the enemy made two spectacular tries at propaganda victories, at Loc Ninh and Dak To; both resulting in dismal failure and great losses of manpower from his ranks. These two battles alone accounted for nearly 3,000 enemy dead.

His losses for the year include 87,534 killed in action and over 31,000 weapons of all types captured. He lost almost 14,000 tons of rice and 162 tons of salt. His ammunition supply was almost 2.5 million rounds less because of discovery of his hiding places and units leaving them behind on the battlefield. His ranks were depleted by 27,178 to the Chieu

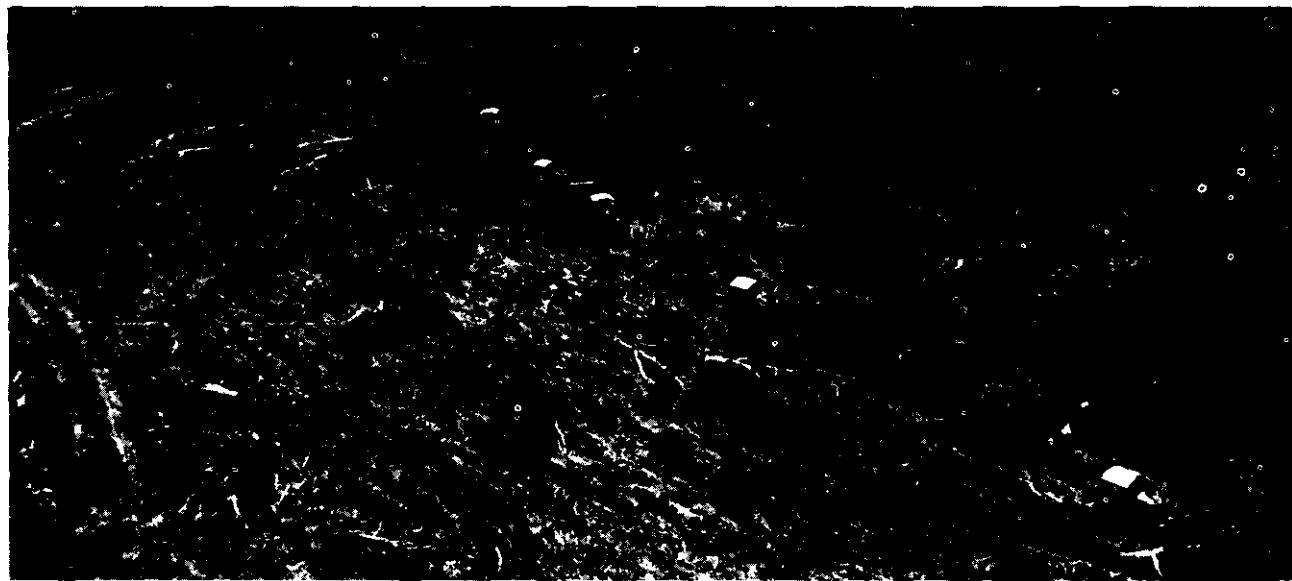
Hoi Program, 17,671 of whom were fighting men. He was found to be recruiting boys from 12-16 years old to fill his dwindling forces.

The Year of the Goat was a bad year for the Communists. He was feeling the pinch. Yet he continued to fight. Civilians in South Vietnam were his victims almost as often as the military. Communist terrorist slaughtered over 4,000 South Vietnamese and wounded over 8,000 in their attacks. Kidnapping accounted for another 5,454 persons, all in an attempt to control the people. Indications are, that although the Viet Cong caused the people to fear them, they won no allegiance by terror.

More people moved into government protected resettlement areas than ever before. The enemy's source of labor, recruits, food and shelter was slipping away. Military victories were rare and he received a heavy propaganda blow when civil elections were held throughout the land.

During the spring hamlet and village elections were conducted and in the fall months the upper and lower houses were filled and the president and vice president were chosen. Despite threats of death and destruction, the people defied the Communists and turned out in large numbers.

The Free World commitment to Vietnam increased in both



Rome plows, engaged in clearing operations, deny the enemy his jungle sanctuaries. Plows from the 168th Engineer Co., guarded by tanks and APCs of the 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, clear brush from the Iron Triangle while on Operation Atlanta. Photo by Sp4 J.R. Hesselgrave, 69th Sig. Bn.



# e Continues



A cargo ship prepares to unload at Newport, Saigon's newest harbor facility. Newport was designed to relieve congestion in the old port. (Photo by SSgt. Robert Petersen, USARV—IO)

quantity and quality. New troops arrived from the United States, Thailand, New Zealand and Australia. New equipment, like the HueyCobra gunships, improved the firepower and maneuverability of the Free World Forces. Truly the squeeze was on.

## ENEMY VIOLATES TRUCE

January began with U.S. military strength at 390,000 servicemen in the country. The New Years' truce was violated by 111 incidents of which 24 were considered serious. At the end of the truce elements of the 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions started Operation Paul Revere V Sam Houston, a search and destroy mission in the Central Highland's Provinces of Pleiku and Kontum. Before the operation was completed nearly 800 of the enemy no longer existed. Later in the year this area was to become famous for the greatest battle of the war.

In the same area Holloway Army Airfield, five miles east of Pleiku City, was hit with 200 300 rounds of mortar fire, causing considerable damage.

Farther south the Iron Triangle area northwest of Saigon was penetrated by elements of the 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, 11th Armored Cavalry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade and Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) 5th Infantry Division on operation Cedar Falls. In 18 days of action the enemy lost 720 soldiers and

numerous tunnel complexes that were discovered.

In the delta the 9th Infantry Division set up the first base camp in that Viet Cong stronghold. By the end of the month the last elements of the 9th's 2nd Brigade arrived at Vung Tau to occupy the new camp.

The 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne completed Operation Pickett and began Operation Farragut a week later in Binh Thuan Province. The enemy was going to get little rest during the year as pressure was to be relentless throughout the 12-month period, as one operation followed another.

## NEWPORT OPENS

In other friendly action during the month, air strikes against the Hanoi area were resumed after a peace bid failed to materialize from a suspension of the bombing. And in the Saigon area Newport was opened to relieve pressure on the Saigon docks. Newport is designed to receive military cargo for all Free World Forces. Meanwhile the December dock strike was settled in Saigon bringing that port back into full operation.

The significant enemy action during the month included a 57mm recoilless rifle attack on the United Kingdom ship SS Haustrum in the Long Tau River while it was enroute to Saigon. One crew member was killed. The dredge Jamaica Bay was hit by an underwater explosion near Dong Tam and later sank while being towed in for repairs. The Jamaica



Infantry troops move out on patrol in village in War Zone C.  
Photo by Sp5 Gordon Gahan, USARV—IO.

Bay was the fourth largest dredge in the world.

One VC terror attack failed. A bomb that was planted in the United States Information Service library at Can Tho was discovered and disarmed by explosive ordnance personnel. Also the enemy used tear gas against U.S. troops for the second time during the war.

On the political and diplomatic side of the war, the draft constitution for South Vietnam was put before the Constituent Assembly for debate; Thailand announced it would allow bases within its borders to be used for support of Vietnam operations; and Premier Ky visited Australia and New Zealand.

At the beginning of February the American military strength had risen by 20,000 men. The increased manpower permitted the U.S. Forces to enter the field for long periods of time and the month saw the termination and beginning of many operations. The four-day truce for the Lunar New Year, Tet, provided a stand-down period in which many operations were terminated.

The truce itself was marred by 272 violations and military authorities estimated that 36,000 tons of supplies were moved south from North Vietnam during the cease fire.

Operations Lam Son II in Binh Duong Province and Operation Thayer II were terminated with a combined kill of slightly over 2,000 enemy soldiers. About 250 were accounted for by the former operation and the bulk, 1,757 by the latter.

Communist terrorists attempting to hit MACV Headquarters, fired about a dozen 81mm mortar rounds in Saigon,

striking at the corner of Pasteur Street and Phan Thanh Gian. Most of the rounds detonated in the trees, one over a truck carrying Vietnamese paratroopers. Nine were killed and nine wounded. About 2,000 yards away the enemy mortarmen were blown up as one of their shells exploded prematurely.

By mid-month elements of the 9th Infantry Division started Operation Enterprise in Long An Province and other 9th units began operations in the Mekong Delta with U.S. Navy units. This marked the beginning of gradual U.S. and ARVN weakening of the Viet Cong's dominance of Delta waterways.

## LARGEST OPERATION BEGINS

Other 9th Division units joined elements of the 1st, 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions plus troops from the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, and 173rd Airborne Brigade in what was to be the largest operation of the year—Operation Junction City. The gigantic force was supported by the 11th Combat Aviation Group and 7th Air Force aircraft.

The armada of troops tangled with Communist units in War Zone C north and west of Saigon by forming a giant horseshoe enclosing 250 square miles of enemy-held territory. Heavy fighting characterized the operation with almost daily finds of tunnels and bunkers. Large stores of ammunition, weapons, clothing, food, documents and utensils were confiscated from the enemy. Air strikes, gunships and artillery were called in on a regular basis as the Communists fought in



battalion-sized strength, and sometimes in regimental groups, to prevent deep penetration into their sanctuary.

## WAR'S ONLY LARGE-SCALE COMBAT PARACHUTE ASSAULT

During one phase of Operation Junction City it was decided to employ paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade in a surprise combat assault along Highway 4 to block enemy escape routes from the battle area. On February 22, 1967 the only mass jump of the war took place at 9 a.m. when over 700 troopers from the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry and supporting elements parachuted into a drop zone north of Tay Ninh. Twenty-three Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft delivered the men and their equipment over the drop zone. The force not only effectively blocked the enemy, but released badly needed helicopters to 1st and 25th Division troops attacking the enemy.

Enemy mortar attacks rained on Junction City base camps in an effort to deter the American troops, but to no avail. Eighty-one days later 2,728 enemy lay dead from the operation and War Zone C was no longer a VC stronghold. Their bases were destroyed, many of their supplies were gone and the psychological advantage of being in complete control in



Parachutes gently lower supplies to troops as they are dropped from Air Force C-130s. Photo by Maj. John Shanahan.



Villagers get their identity checked prior to voting in the eight-week hamlet elections in Bien Hoa Province. About 77 percent of the eligible voter turned out. Photo by JUSPAO.

the region north of Tay Ninh was broken. The Free World Forces counter-offensive was making remarkable advances. Advances that would cause the enemy to have no single battlefield victory in the remainder of the year.

Farther north the 1st Cavalry Division had begun Operation Pershing and the Communist pounded the Da Nang Airbase with over 50 Russian-made 140mm rockets, killing 43 and wounding 137. A few days later in March Da Nang was hit by 10 more of the huge rockets.

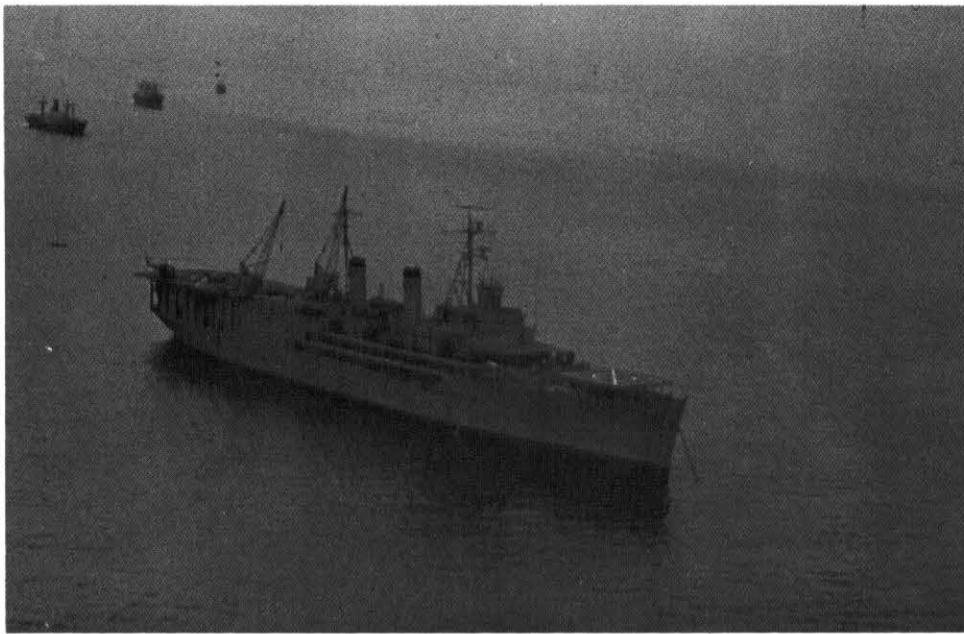
The February-March period was active diplomatically. The Manila Conference countries had their ambassadors meet in Saigon in preparation for a two-day conference on Guam among high Vietnamese leaders and President Johnson. The Constituent Assembly had approved the draft constitution for South Vietnam a few days prior to the meeting. Premier Ky presented President Johnson a copy of the new constitution that was to be ratified a few days later.

In Thailand, B-52s began to arrive at Thai bases in accordance with a previous agreement with the kingdom. The huge bombers were to be used mainly against enemy complexes in South Vietnam starting in early April. Previously they had flown from Guam to South Vietnam in a 5,000-mile round trip.

One major operation began in March, the 9th Division's Operation Kittyhawk. While the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese were trying to keep out of the way of the major operations, they continued to make small-scale harassing attacks on Vietnamese Popular Forces and surprise attacks on other installations. One ship, the SS Conqueror, was hit while in the Long Tau River by six 75mm recoilless rounds.

U.S. Forces climbed to a strength of 470,000, a few thousand from its year-end peak of 490,000 servicemen in-country.

In April the most significant event was the beginning of an eight-week election period for thousands of villages and



The USNS Corpus Christi Bay, home of part of the U.S. Army's 34th General Support Group, rides at anchor off Vung Tau. The ship is the world's only floating depot maintenance facility. Photo by 34th General Support Group—10.



Black Cat slicks from the 282nd Assault Helicopter Company pick up members of the 1st Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Division after a combat assault west of Da Nang. The painting is by Capt. Philip J. Hickok, 212th Aviation Battalion.

hamlets throughout the country. About 77 percent of the eligible voters turned out to elect their local leaders despite constant threats from the Viet Cong. Many of the threats were carried out as 12 candidates were slain by terrorists and 31 were kidnapped.

The government also announced Fall elections would take place to select the upper and lower houses of the new government and to choose a new president and vice president.

In Saigon Ellsworth P. Bunker assumed duties from Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge who was retiring from public life. Communist terrorist detonated an explosive charge in a bicycle at the Five Oceans BOQ in the Cholon section of the capital, wounding one.

Operation Adams was completed during the month by the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division in Phu Yen Province with an enemy death toll of 491. Elements of the 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions began Operation Francis Marion in Pleiku Province which result in 1,203 enemy deaths.

Enemy pressure was building in the I Corps Tactical Zone (I CTZ) in the vicinity of the DeMilitarized Zone (DMZ) and it was becoming apparent Marine units would have to be moved to counter the threat. To fill the gap the 196th Light Infantry Brigade was moved into the Chu Lai area to replace displaced Marine units. This was the first of many major ground combat units from USARV to operate in the northern provinces.

Other units joined the 196th in I CTZ. They were the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division and, in May, the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne. The Army troops in the zone were placed under the operational control of Task Force Oregon (TFO) which, in turn, was under operational control of the III Marine Amphibious Force.

Early in May a Hoi Chanh led men from the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division to a weapons cache which consisted of 2,000 mortar rounds, 1,200 grenades, 20 claymore mines, 1,000 small arms rounds and 400 rifles.

The 101st Airborne's brigade launched Operation Malheur in Quang Ngai Province which 28 days later accounted for 392 enemy killed and 150 weapons captured.

While elements of the 25th Infantry Division began Operation Kole Kole, the 2nd Brigade of the same unit terminated Operation Ala Moana in Hau Nghia Province, accounting for 382 enemy deaths.

The first New Zealand infantrymen arrived in-country during the month. They were assigned to work with the Australian Task Force.

During the month the enemy was up to their old tactics. Terrorists threw a hand grenade into a Cholon sidewalk cafe killing one and wounding 65 civilians and the Bien Hoa airfield was subjected to a mortar and rocket attack near mid-May among other hit-and-run attacks.

The Mobile Riverine Force clashed with the enemy for its first major engagement in the delta 15 miles west of My Tho. The action against local guerrillas proved the value of this force patterned after the American Civil War flotillas.

In Saigon Premier Ky announced his candidacy for president on May 12. Four days later the assembly approved the presidential election law.

The next day three new operations began: Operation Dallas by the 1st Brigade of the 1st Division and Operation Barking Sands and Diamond Head by elements of the 25th Division.

The one-day truce on May 23 for Buddha's birthday celebration passed without a serious incident reported. A few

A gunboat of the Mobile Riverine Force resembles the Monitor of Civil War fame. Photo by SSgt. Robert Peterson—USARV.



Mobile Riverine Force moves down the waterways of the Mekong Delta to action. Photo by SSgt. Robert Peterson—USARV.



days earlier the Communists planted a mine on the Vietnam Railway tracks just outside of Saigon. A train was derailed when the mine detonated. The enemy also struck the 25th Infantry Division with 100 rounds of mortar and recoilless rifle fire. However, most guerrilla attacks were concentrated against ARVN and Vietnamese irregular forces during this period.

Seven new operations began during June to keep the pressure on the Viet Cong. Just about every major American unit in USARV was involved in Operations Coronado, Bluefield, Malheur II, Akron, Kawela, Billings, and Greely. More than 1,500 enemy would die from U.S. action during the month.

Despite the many successes, Premier Ky, in a public statement, stated the need for 137,000 additional American troops.

In July Thailand announced that it would send a 2,200-man regiment to the Republic of Vietnam. This force would be the first ground combat unit contributed by the Thais who had already provided airlift of supplies on several occasions.

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara made a four-day visit to Saigon. He conducted high-level conferences at USARV's Tan Son Nhut headquarters. The day after the Secretary left the country, President Johnson announced the United States would increase its troop commitment to Vietnam.

Two major headquarters moved during the month; USARV moved to its new headquarters in the Long Binh complex and MACV to its new buildings opposite Tan Son Nhut civilian air terminal. The moves were part of an operation to reduce inflation and traffic congestion in the Saigon area. Other units moved out of the capital area during the following month including: 1st Logistical Command, 1st Aviation and 1st Signal Brigade headquarters,

Saigon Area Command and many subordinate units.

Other Saigon events in July were the validation of 18 slates of presidential candidates for the coming Fall elections. Also a terrorist attack was made on the Capitol BEQ.

Significant enemy attacks in July killed 37 civilians and wounded 29 when two civilian busses in the northern provinces were hit. The Viet Cong attacked the base camp of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry and the airfield at Phuoc Vinh. More than 150 mortar and rocket rounds struck the area. In Phu Loi a 1st Aviation Brigade unit was also hit by mortar and rocket fire later in the month.

The 1st Brigade, 9th Division began Operation Riley in Bien Hoa Province. Elements of the 9th and 25th Divisions along with ARVN units conducted a seven-day joint Operation Coronado II/Song Thang 3 that resulted in 441 enemy casualties.

A company from the 199th Light Infantry Brigade captured an enemy sampan which yielded 220 pounds of TNT and over 2,300 rounds of various types of ammunition.

At the beginning of August two Army brigades changed designations. The 3rd brigades of the 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions exchanged colors to maintain unit integrity. The 25th Brigade had been operating in the I CTZ far from its parent unit. The 4th Division brigade was operating under the control of the 25th.

Enemy action during the month was fairly heavy. An enemy company struck the Edap Enang Montagnard resettlement village in the Central Highlands. The tank farm at Nha Be City, 10 miles southeast of Saigon, was hit by Communist fire causing extensive damage. A Vietnamese child threw a hand grenade into a truck carrying U.S. civilians as it drove through the Cholon section of Saigon. Ten were wounded. And the Ban Me Thuot airfield in Darlac Province



A 175 mm gun speaks its piece to the enemy in I Corps Tactical Zone. The 2nd Battalion, 94th Artillery fires the big guns in support of operations along the DMZ. Photo by Sp5 Gordon Gahan—USARV.





was struck by mortars twice during the month.

One enemy action backfired on them. The North Vietnamese fired a surface-to-air missile at American bombers, but the missile very efficiently downed one of their own MIG-17s. The 7th Air Force sent their congratulations to the enemy gunners.

Two more American operations started in August. Both were completed early in September. The 21-day Operation Benton resulted in 397 enemy killed and over 150 weapons captured for the elements of the 101st Airborne and 196th Light Infantry Brigade that participated. A 20-day operation, dubbed Coronado IV, was launched by elements of the 9th Infantry Division. It accounted for 101 enemy deaths and 180 weapons subtracted from the Communist arsenals.

In the north in I CTZ the Marine bases at Gio Linh and Con Thien began to receive heavy artillery and mortar attacks. These attacks were to reach a peak during September before answering Marine and Army artillery plus Air Force bombers were to lift the siege from the DMZ bases.

On September 3 the presidential elections were held after a stormy campaign. Many doubts were raised about the conduct of the campaign, but when the smoke had cleared on election day, both Vietnamese and American observers declared it fair and impartial. About 83 percent of the voters turned out, the slate of Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky for president and vice president respectively receiving the voters' approval. The voting also chose an upper house for the new government. All the voters had been warned by the Viet Cong that there would be trouble if the people went to the polling places. Several sites were struck by terrorist attacks, but the people were not deterred.

New operations during the month included: Task Force Oregon's Wheeler in I CTZ accounting for nearly 2,000 enemy



killed; the Mobile Riverine Force's Operation Coronado V in the delta which cost the enemy 330 dead; Operation Bolling conducted by the 173rd Airborne Brigade and elements of the 1st Cavalry Division; and the 1st Infantry Division's Operation Shenandoah II in Binh Duong Province which took 956 enemy lives and 100 of his weapons.

Secretary of Defense McNamara announced in Washington D.C. that a barrier would be constructed along the southern edge of the DMZ to slow the infiltration of North Vietnamese across the zone into the northern provinces.

In Nha Trang a satchel charge exploded in the Neptune NCO Club killing one civilian employee and wounding several civilian and military personnel. Terrorists struck the Republic of China Embassy in the capital with explosives and sniper fire. Extensive damage was done to the building and many casualties resulted.

At the 9th Division's base camp at Bear Cat, Thailand's Queen Cobra Regiment settled into their new home and readied themselves for future operations.

## AMERICAL DIVISION FORMED

And at Chu Lai Task Force Oregon was redesignated the Americal Division, becoming the only named division on active duty in the U.S. Army. The original Americal had been organized in the South Pacific, now the blue patch with the white stars of the Southern Cross was to be seen in the Pacific area once more.

Russia made a late September announcement that promised no rest for war-weary Southeast Asia when it was released that a new military assistance agreement had been signed by the U.S.S.R. and North Vietnam whereby the Russians would furnish "airplanes, antiaircraft and rocket equipment, artillery and small arms ammunition and other military equipment..."

Early in October the Vietnamese National Assembly validated the election results. This was followed by the installation of the 60 newly elected members of the upper house of the government. Later in the month the lower house elections were held with 73 percent of the electorate turning out to complete the last round of elections. On the last day of the month the inauguration ceremonies were conducted in downtown Saigon. The new president, Nguyen Van Thieu, raised his right hand before a crowd, estimated at 50,000 persons, to repeat the oath of office. In the front of the National Assembly Building diplomats from 22 foreign nations, including Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, then watched Nguyen Cao Ky take the oath as vice president.

Following the inauguration a parade of civic and military

What the Viet Cong knock down the engineers build up, bigger and better. Photo by Capt. Charles Beres—USAECV(P).



A HueyCobra gunship introduced in October 1967 flies alongside an older UH-1D. The chin turret is directed toward its target by the pilot turning his head. Photo by 1st Aviation Brigade-IO.

forces marched to celebrate the South Vietnamese National Day. Flags of seven nations, representing the Free World Assistance forces in Vietnam, led the march order. The two-hour parade featured ARVN units of all types, floats depicting progress under the Revolutionary Development Program and ARVN aircraft buzzing overhead.

In the I CTZ Army forces were increased as the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Cavalry joined the Americal Division. The Brigade immediately began Operation Wallowa, which was later combined with Americal's Operation Wheeler.

### HUEYCOBRA ARRIVES

October also saw the introduction of a helicopter especially designed for ground support—the HueyCobra. This gunship with advanced weapons systems, slim silhouette and high speed and maneuverability began combat operations in 1st Aviation Brigade units.

The 4th Infantry Division started Operation MacArthur in Pleiku Province and the 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry joined the Ivy men in the Central Highlands during the month. Also the 3rd Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry arrived at Qui Nhon to further increase U.S. strength in Vietnam.

Communist activity included a North Vietnam Army regiment's attack on an ARVN regiment at Song Be with the North Vietnamese coming out on the short end of the battle. ARVN losses were only 10 killed to the Communists' 130.

### VC DEFEATED AT LOC NINH

At Loc Ninh, near the Cambodian border, two battalions

of the 273rd VC Regiment attacked the perimeter where CIDG and ARVN troops were lodged. The Viet Cong broke through the perimeter and entered the village. The 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry was one of the first of the 1st Infantry Division units rushed to help push the enemy force from the area. This was accomplished after difficult street fighting and digging the enemy out of the perimeter bunkers they had occupied. When the ARVN, Special Forces and 1st Division troops finally forced the enemy to break contact, other troops of the 18th Infantry were waiting as a blocking force to cut them down.

The enemy retreated to a rubber plantation five miles south of the Cambodian border to avoid air strikes and artillery that harassed their move to high ground. On the third day of the battle the enemy began to return the artillery fire. Air strikes soon reduced the VC's fire.

Fighting broke out again when the Viet Cong attacked across the landing strip at the district headquarters. This was broken up, but not before the VC had tried to scale the walls of the outpost. Enemy forces made sporadic attempts to get back into Loc Ninh, but they were met by American and ARVN patrols that hounded them until they withdrew.

The slim silhouette makes the HueyCobra a tough target to hit from the ground. Its pods can deliver devastating firepower in support of ground troops. Photo by 1st Aviation Brigade—IO.





from the area, losing over 1,000 men killed in the overall action.

## LARGEST WEAPONS CACHE UNCOVERED

Thirty miles east of Saigon in Phuoc Tuy Province, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry and Company B, 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry were searching the area during the 9th Division's Operation Akron III. A concrete slab with wire hinges and handles was discovered. When it was opened, the troops found an entrance to a tunnel complete with steps cut into the side. Upon examination a large supply of weapons, ammunition and medical supplies were found. Further tunnel discoveries were made in the immediate area. More arms, ammunition and supplies were uncovered as each tunnel was searched. The list of equipment brought out grew to tremendous size and included such weapons as 75mm pack howitzers and .50 caliber machine-guns.

Final count made this find the largest ever discovered. Besides other types of equipment and medical supplies, there were 1,140 weapons of all types, 95,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 3,634 grenades and 452 mortar rounds. Many of the weapons were still packed in grease, cosmoline and plastic.

November began quietly with the 9th Infantry Division units starting Operation Coronado IX and joining with the 11th Armored Cavalry, Australian and Vietnamese troops

in Operation Santa Fe I in the delta. Vietnamese Marines joined the 9th in Coronado IX after the exercise began, causing the 502nd Local Force Battalion to slowly get ground up in the operation 65 miles southwest of Saigon.

## BIGGEST BATTLE TAKES SHAPE

However, in the Central Highlands the rumblings of the biggest battle of the war were resounding in the hills around Dak To. For several weeks intelligence reports showed increased enemy activity in the vicinity of Dak To, astride the natural infiltration route along Route 312 north of Pleiku and close to the Laotian-Cambodian border. The town is normally garrisoned by ARVN troops and elements of a U.S. Special Forces-trained Civilian Irregular Defense Group.

When it became apparent the enemy was preparing battlefield positions for an assault on the town, the 4th Infantry Division's 1st Brigade was deployed into the area. Two companies from the 3rd Battalion, 12th Infantry made initial contact with a strong North Vietnamese Army force. The hill soon resounded to the sounds of the battle which grew in ferocity. The NVA Regulars pinned the Americans down. The 3rd Battalion commander called in air support against positions astride the steep hill. Artillery and mortar fire combined with the bombs to stem the enemy fire. Morning recon patrols found the enemy so well entrenched he was barely hurt by the tremendous pounding. It was apparent the enemy was not going to give up easily or melt away into the jungle.

Additional American and South Vietnamese troops were called in to reinforce those presently locked in combat. The

Part of the largest weapons cache ever found. Two Viet Cong antiaircraft .50 caliber machineguns are in the foreground. Total count of weapons is 1,140 of all types. Photo by Sp4 John Olson—Stars and Stripes.



173rd Airborne Brigade and later elements of the 1st Cavalry were brought in to assist the 4th Division troops. Besides artillery and helicopter gunship fire support, C-47 Dragonships and giant B-52 bombers flew supporting missions for the ground troops. Artillery and airstrikes pounded the hills for hours before infantry assaults on the enemy positions. The soldiers found the enemy still capable of delivering murderous fire to slow their advance. Casualties mounted on both sides, but gradually the NVA troops were forced back toward the Cambodian border and sanctuary. One of the bloodiest battles was fought for Hill 875. The remnants of the 24th, 32nd, 66th and 174th NVA Regiments stood and fought off American and ARVN soldiers for four days in the area. When Thanksgiving Day arrived, Americans had claimed the hilltop and their turkey dinner was served them amidst the shattered bunkers and trees.

The enemy had paid a terrible price for the Dak To battle. His known losses were 1,641 men killed; how many more had been killed or seriously wounded and dragged from the battle area would be impossible to estimate. He had been subjected to fantastic bombardments during the 26 days of battle. Almost 138,000 rounds of artillery had been fired; 1,101 Army helicopter gunship sorties were flown against him, combined with 1,869 Air Force sorties and 32 strikes by B-52 bombers. Many hills looked like jumbled piles of

huge match sticks and splinters as great trees had been felled by the battle.

The battle was the largest in the war to date—exceeding the Ia Drang Valley battle of 1966 and the Loc Ninh battle of the preceding month.

Other November action: the enemy's shelling of the base camp of the 2nd Brigade of the 25th Division and division base camp at Cu Chi, plus the start of Operation Strike/Uniontown in Bien Hoa Province by the 199th Light Infantry Brigade. The operation was to account for 100 enemy losses.

## WAR DOES NOT STOP TURKEY

Despite battles raging from the North to the South of this war-torn nation, the 1st Logistical Command delivered 57,000 whole turkeys and 325 tons of boneless turkey meat plus all the fixings of the traditional Thanksgiving feast. The impressive figures included 28 tons of cranberry sauce, 15 tons of nuts, eight tons of candy, 11 of olives, and 33 of fruit cake. Grateful troops paused in battle to give thanks to God for their blessings and enjoy the bounty of a free nation.

The new "Three C Concept" of speeding supplies to the user was introduced during the month. The Cs stand for



A trooper from the 173rd Airborne Brigade calls for a medic to aid his wounded buddy during fighting on Hill 882 near Dak To. Photo by Sp5 Gordon Gahan—USARV.



Trailers are stacked high on the deck of a Sea Land transport ship that is ready to unload at Cam Ranh Bay Port. Photo by Cam Ranh Bay Support Command—IO.

one container, one customer and one commodity. The operation begins at a factory where a truck trailer is loaded with, for example, weapons. The trailer is then sealed and driven to port where the trailer is placed on a ship for the voyage to Vietnam. Here it is unloaded at Cam Ranh Bay and delivered, still sealed, to the using combat unit. The system virtually eliminates pilferage and speed the vital supplies to units in less time. Once unloaded the empty 35-foot trailer is returned to port for another round trip.

## DAK SON TERROR

Year end saw one of the most atrocious terror attacks in Vietnam's bloody history. In the village of Dak Son, populated by about 2,000 Montagnards who had fled from VC-controlled areas to avoid being used as forced labor, two battalions of Communist struck on December 5, in a revenge attack. The VC Regulars quickly pushed the local defense force into a small area, then rampaged up and down the hamlet streets systematically burning down more than half the 150 thatched homes. With flame throwers and grenades the Communists slaughtered people in their primitive homes and bunkers. Seven out of every 10 of the 252 victims were either woman or children, some burned beyond recognition. An unknown number of men were kidnapped and led away by the 300-member Communist force.

At Saigon the Constituent Assembly disbanded as its activities were completed. The newly elected National Legislative Assembly convened to begin functioning as the lawmakers under the new Constitution.

New troops continued to arrive in the country in December, mostly from the 101st Airborne Division. The 3rd Brigade arrived at Bien Hoa on December 8; the command group on December 13; and the 2nd Brigade, five days later to complete the huge airlift by giant C-141 Starlifters from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to South Vietnam.

Just before Christmas the 11th Light Infantry Brigade

A lone woman sits in the debris of her town following the Viet Cong terror attack on Dak Son where 252 Montagnards were slaughtered by flame throwers and hand grenades. Thirty thatched huts once stood on this site. Photo by JUSPAO.

completed its movement from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, to join the Americal Division at Chu Lai. The 11th brought the total U.S. troop strength in-country to a point higher than that committed to the Korean War.

The Communists again showed their disdain for truces by violating both the Christmas and New Years truce periods. The Christmas truce was marred by 40 major incidents and the New Years by 63 major and 107 minor incidents, closing out the year on a dismal note.



*January 1968*

# Prelude To Attack

The year 1968 opened with a strange quiet because of the New Years Truce. Only isolated groups of less than squad-sized VC units were involved in any fire fights. Army units found several rice caches. A company from the 173rd Airborne Brigade's 503rd Infantry found one cache of slightly over 1,000 pounds hidden in bushes near its perimeter.

The truce was no sooner ended than the VC mortared and then attempted to overrun the base camp of the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division in Tay Ninh Province. Shortly before midnight on New Years Day human wave attacks from three sides struck the base's perimeter. The attacks broke off before the morning of January 2. The defenders discovered 347 bodies strewn about the defensive area. The attackers had been beaten back with every type of weapon from hand grenades to howitzers and helicopter gunships. It was later determined that the attackers were from two battalions of the 271st and 272nd VC Regiments.

Action elsewhere picked up. In the north both the Americal and 1st Cavalry Divisions reported increased contact with the insurgents. In the highlands the 4th Division made contact with guerrillas near Pleiku and Dak To, and the 101st Airborne Division troops discovered several VC tunnel

complexes west of Cu Chi in III CTZ.

During the next few days heavy contacts were made in the Americal's Operation Wheeler/Wallowa area of action in southern I CTZ and along the Saigon River, 15 miles northwest of Saigon, in the 25th Division's Operation Yellowstone area.

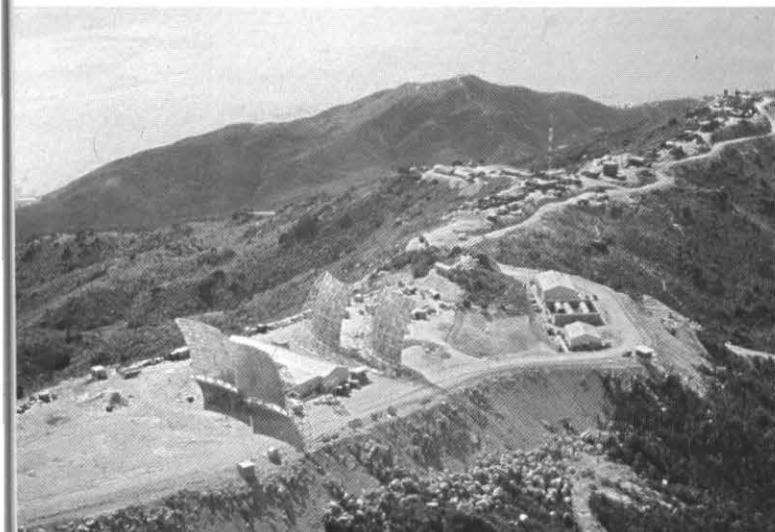
On January 7, a new \$500,000 Phu Bai Dial Central Office was opened to provide a 1,000-line exchange for Marine and Army elements in the area. The 1st Signal Brigade project, 12 miles south of Hue, was to be of great value in the next month because of its strategic location.

## PROVINCE CAPITAL HIT

The next day a guerrilla force made a terror attack on Hau Nghia's province capital of Bao Tri during the early morning hours. In three hours, following a mortar and rocket barrage, the VC penetrated to the center of the town. Vietnamese National Police, Regional Forces, and American Army advisors broke the attack at the market place. One policeman, alone at his post, was credited with killing five insurgents with hand grenades.

Two battalions of the ARVN 49th Regiment rushed to the aid of the defenders of the city. By dawn 20 enemy bodies lay in a row in the center of town and four enemy suspects were detained. American casualties were three killed and 15 wounded. The Vietnamese police and Regional Forces casualties were described as light; however, the cost to the civilian populace was severe. Eighty civilians were wounded and 150 families were homeless from the surprise assault, the first ground attack on Bao Tri in over a year.

Heavy action continued through the next week centered in the Americal's battle area of southern I CTZ and the 25th's area of operation northwest of Saigon. Many other units reported enemy activity of resupplying and recently vacated tunnels and bunkers. Throughout the country the complexes were discovered, but there were only sporadic contacts.



The Vung Chua Mountain signal site, located near Qui Nhon is a major communications relay link between the northern and southern commands of United States Army, Vietnam. Photo by 1st Signal Brigade—IO.



INNOCENT OR...? Sampans are one of the main means of transportation and commerce in Vietnam. And they are also the means of Communist delivery of large quantities of arms and ammunition. Sampans make a placid setting on the waterways of the capital city of Saigon. Photos by SSGt. Robert Peterson, USARV—IO.

The 9th Division launched sweep operations 25 miles southwest of Saigon against a reported buildup of enemy forces; however, only light enemy contact was made.

Through the month large and small enemy rice caches were discovered from one end of the country to the other. And in the north North Vietnamese Army forces were building up in the vicinity of the Marine base at Khe Sanh. The strategic base sits astride the main infiltration route that skirts the DMZ and funnels insurgents toward Quang Ngai City and Hue. Army artillery from Camp Carroll, units of the 108th Artillery Group, were firing constant support for the bastion, 18 miles away.

Rice and weapons caches turned up in reports so regularly that soldiers were always on the alert for signs of caches. The most unusual capture was made by the 11th Armored Cavalry near the Cambodian border, 70 miles north of Saigon. A North Vietnamese Regular was spotted carrying 60-pound bags of rice on a bicycle. He tried to out-pedal an Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicle (ACAV), but he was no match for the ACAV's speed. He told of pedalling six hours to their camp with the rice and two hours back. The Black Horse troops ended the NVA soldier's rice smuggling days.

Sporadic action continued through the third week of January with small engagements reported and many more caches being turned up. On several occasions base camps

were mortared with harassing fire, but none caused anything but light damage at best. The 1st Cavalry Division did run across an enemy force estimated at two battalions near Bong Son in Binh Dinh Province. The 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry was moving into the area when a lone enemy soldier was sighted. When the armored vehicles moved into an attacking position, heavy resistance was met. Gunships and airstrikes were called in and a blocking force moved in on the other side of the enemy. After a day of fighting 128 enemy lay dead on the field of battle. The cavalry lost four men.

In the closing week of January gunship crews from the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion spotted large sampan flotillas 31 miles southwest of Saigon in Dinh Tuong Province. Thirty-one of the sampans were sunk. Other crews reported sinking 51 sampans in their delta operations in support of ARVN infantry action in IV CTZ. Enemy sampan activity seemed to have suddenly increased as gunships reported sinking 47 more of the boats the next day.

The Viet Cong attacked the town of Trang Bang, 28 miles northwest of Saigon, attempting to overrun the district headquarters. In typical VC fashion the insurgents struck from three sides with recoilless rifle and rocket fire at the building. The Viet Cong soldiers were caught in a crossfire from a Popular Forces bunker across the street when they assaulted. One guerrilla did cross the barbed wire, but

The 1st Logistical Command and USARV headquarters buildings at Long Binh Post form a geometric pattern in what a year earlier was jungle. Photo by Sp4 James Lynch—1st Log. Cmd.

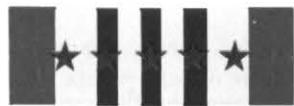


*February 1968*

# The Attacks: The War



Military policemen lead away a Viet Cong who was captured in the immediate vicinity of the American Embassy during the Communist's early morning attack on January 31st. Corporal George Moyer (left), and Sp4 James M. Singer, both of the 527th Military Police Company, were rushed to the Embassy to assist guards in repelling the attack. Photo by Sp5 Donald A. Hirst, HAC—IO.



# War Reaches The Cities

was gunned down before reaching the building. Six enemy soldiers were killed in the fighting, as were a policeman and woman. Thirty-five civilians including 16 women and eight children, were victims of wounds from the attack. The enemy was forced to withdraw from the town without ever achieving their objective.

For the next two days action was very sporadic. Although weapons and food caches continued to be turned up by searching troops, enemy contact was rare. The planned 36-hour Tet Truce was approaching. In I CTZ the Communists were so severe a threat the entire truce period was cancelled there. North Vietnamese troops were closing in on three sides of the Marine base at Khe Sanh and it was receiving heavy shellings daily from heavy artillery and rocket positions in the surrounding hills.

## FAMILIES GATHER FOR TET

Across the rest of the nation civilians and military were planning family reunions and celebrations for the three-day holiday starting the last day of the month. Already fire crackers were being shot off in happy anticipation of the Buddhist New Year. Tet, being a time of family gatherings, made movement of large amounts of people possible without suspicion. This was exactly what the Communist guerrillas needed. During the days preceding Tet large numbers of insurgents moved into the major cities of the country.

Arms and ammunition were smuggled in inside produce and materials carried on trucks and in sampans. They were then smuggled to cemeteries inside coffins in mock funerals. Even the flower pots were used to hide magazines of ammunition and hand grenades. By evening of January 30, most cemeteries in the major cities were VC arsenals.

## FIRST ATTACK: NHA TRANG

The first of the Tet attacks occurred at Nha Trang at 1:15 a.m. on January 30. The assault was apparently aimed at the U.S. Military Assistance Compound in downtown Nha Trang. That night the attacks took place in 27 province capitals of the 44 in the Republic. The U.S. Embassy was one the first objectives in Saigon. Strikes were also made at Da Nang, Hue, Quang Tri, Qui Nhon, An Khe, Pleiku, Kontum, Dalat, Ban Me Thuot, Hoi An, Tuy Hoa, Bien Hoa, My Tho, Tan Phu Trung, Hoc Mon, Tay Ninh, Ben Tre and Soc Trang. Military airbases were also prime targets. Hit were airfields at Da Nang, Chu Lai, Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, Pleiku and Tuy Hoa. Major military installations were also subject to ground and mortar and rocket attacks, including the huge ammunition dump and the II

Field Force Headquarters at Long Binh.

Many of the cities overrun were quickly cleared of the guerrillas within 24 hours; however, several cities still contained the enemy longer. These included Saigon, Hue and a few other scattered locations, such as Dalat.

## ATTACKS ANGER PEOPLE

The Communists had hoped to rouse the people to a popular uprising with the attacks. The NVA and VC troops had been told the people would greet them with open arms. Nothing of the sort occurred. In fact, by violating the sacred family celebration of Tet by bombing, burning and disrupting city life, and by executing civilians, the Communists angered the people. Slow rage grew in the populace because of the devastation. Later when a call to arms came from President Thieu for the drafting of 18- and 19-year olds, many volunteers were immediately waiting in line to join the RVN military forces.

## U.S. EMBASSY SURVIVES ASSAULT

In Saigon 19 Viet Cong blasted a hole in the compound wall of the U.S. Embassy at about 3 a.m. on the last day in January. Although several attempts were made to penetrate the embassy, it was not entered by the terrorists. The thick cherry wood door at the main entrance took a rocket grenade hit and stood fast. Insurgents entering the compound through the shattered wall and by scaling the rear wall were gunned down in a 6½-hour battle with Marine guards reinforced by military police from Headquarters Area Command's 716th MP Battalion. To insure no VC had entered the embassy proper, a helicopter full of 101st Airborne paratroopers were landed on the roof to cautiously search the building from the top down. No guerrillas were found. The last insurgent died in a civilian aide's quarters in the rear of the compound, finished off by the civilian himself with a pistol thrown to him by the MPs.

The attackers attempted to enter the Independence Palace grounds, but were driven into an uncompleted hotel where they held out for two days. Other guerrillas struck military and government installations all over the Saigon-Cholon-Tan Son Nhut area. The MACV compound was struck by sniper bullets and the sprawling Tan Son Nhut Airbase was invaded by about 700 guerrillas. Tropic Lightning troops of the 25th Infantry Division were called to help drive the enemy out of the base. Other American and ARVN soldiers supported by helicopter gunships were rushed to the city.

Communist political cadre paraded the streets in an

attempt to rally the people to assist them; they found few takers.

Throughout the country superior firepower and logistics turned the tide against the Communists rather dramatically. The 1st Cavalry in the north secured Quang Tri, 4th Division troops had secured Pleiku and Kontum and so it went to the south where 9th Division troops freed My Tho from the VC. Through all the fighting the oft criticized ARVN troops displayed fantastic bravery, along side their American counterparts or alone. They proved that this is their country and they are willing to fight for it.

The fierceness of the fighting was attested to by the casualty figures. In three days the Communist death toll was estimated at over 10,000. Some 3,000 suspects were being detained. South Vietnamese losses reached 632 killed and 1,588 wounded. American deaths were 281 and 1,195 wounded. Other Free World Forces lost 34 men. At least 3,000 civilians died and another 350,000 were made homeless.

Destruction of property was high also. In Pleiku, 50 percent of the homes were destroyed by the fighting. But the worst catastrophe struck Hue, which was completely

taken over by the Communists for several days. By the time the fighting to retake the city was completed near the end of February, 80 percent of the city was destroyed including many irreplaceable art treasures of the Citadel, the home of Vietnam's kings many years ago.

Free World Forces quickly moved to block off escaping Communist soldiers on the outskirts of cities and to destroy guerrilla mortar and rocket crews harassing military installations.

After 10 days from the first attacks the brunt of Communist effort was broken everywhere except in Hue where the 1st Cavalry Division blocked additional North Vietnamese from trying to reinforce the insurgents in the city, who were slowly being dug out block by block by Marine and ARVN forces.

It was feared in many quarters a second wave of attacks would take place by mid-month. Vietnamese and American forces conducted sweeps in the vicinity of large cities to break up the possibility. One delta city was attacked, Bac Lieu, but the invaders were turned back by ARVN soldiers in a day-long battle.



In the Saigon-Bien Hoa area, the 25th, and 9th Divisions, coupled with the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and 11th Armored Cavalry, clashed with Viet Cong guerrillas frequently. The decisive artillery and gunship supporting fires caused the Communist death toll to mount at an incredible rate. During early portions of the Tet attacks the only available aerial gun support was provided by the 1st Aviation Brigade and 1st Cavalry gunships, because of the attacks on all major airbases.

## 82ND AIRBORNE ARRIVES

By mid-month President Johnson decided to speed 10,500 more U.S. troops to Vietnam. The first major unit to answer the call was the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division. The brigade was rapidly deployed to the I CTZ to alleviate pressure on Marine forces which were liberating Hue and facing an estimated four to five North Vietnamese Divisions already in the corps zone.

On February 18, the second wave of attacks was launched by the Communists. This time they were not as severe as the initial attacks as no major ground assaults were launched. All attacks were basically mortar and rocket barrages. Nearly every military installation hit at Tet was struck again, including the ammunition dump at Long Binh and the airfields at Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa. Sixteen provincial capitals were also shelled.

On the next day a huge 122mm rocket struck the civilian passenger terminal at Tan Son Nhut killing one and seriously wounding 21 military personnel, most of whom were preparing to return to the United States after the completion of their tour here.

Heavy fighting broke out on Saigon's northern perimeter as the Viet Cong bombarded Tan Son Nhut and General

Westmoreland's headquarters again. The Aviation Brigade gunships reported sinking sampans attempting to resupply Communist forces surrounding Saigon. Enemy antiaircraft guns were located  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles south of the Tan Son Nhut airbase.

During the last week in February the attacks on Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa began to taper off. The Marine and ARVN troops were digging the last enemy soldiers out of Hue. Throughout the countryside reconstruction was beginning. Curfews were still in effect, but the people were getting back to work. Prices in the major cities were slowly returning to normal.

The cost to both sides of the Tet attacks was heavy. U.S. losses were 2,371 killed during the period of slightly over 30 days. Also 11,664 were wounded with some 5,500 being returned to duty without hospitalization. One hundred fifty-five soldiers were reported missing in action. The enemy paid even more dearly for their attempts to take over the country. For the same period the enemy lost an estimated 25,000 soldiers killed. (No statistics are kept on enemy wounded.) They lost over 16,000 weapons and a half million rounds of ammunition. They also lost their biggest bid to win the war.

To the soldiers of the United States Army, Vietnam, there was much work left to be done. New sand bag emplacements were strengthening defenses at base camps. More operations would be conducted. But we had withstood the enemy's best effort and won. Our Vietnamese comrades-in-arms had fought well and bravely with us. A new respect had grown through the blood letting that had occurred. The living would continue the struggle, the dead and severely wounded were done fighting, but the Republic of Vietnam is still free.



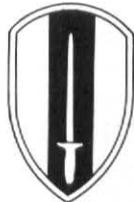
◀ Their homes destroyed by the Viet Cong attack on Saigon, Vietnamese citizens search through the rubble for salvable material with which to rebuild. Photo by JUSPAO.

Infantrymen trudge by the smouldering ruins in Kontum after ridding the city of Viet Cong attackers. The 4th Infantry Division soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry appear amazed by the havoc. Photo by Sp4 Jim Doyle-4th INF-10.





DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96375



DCG'S RETURNEE MESSAGE

Your tour in Vietnam is now behind you. It has been a year of hard fighting--certainly a period in which the American soldier has performed in the best traditions of the US Army. You may leave this land of Vietnam--the jungles, mountains, and coastal plains--with that inner satisfaction of knowing you have served the cause of free men everywhere. The Republic of Vietnam and, indeed, our own nation, are greatly in your debt for your efforts.

Now you are going home to rejoin your family and friends. They are proud of you and are anxiously awaiting your return. With you goes a world of knowledge and impressions based on the experiences you have had in Vietnam. Your friends, neighbors, and the people with whom you will work will look to you as an authority on what is happening in the Republic of Vietnam. This magazine, a history of this country and the year you spent here, may help you to tell your story.

I commend you and thank you for the job you have done in Vietnam. My warmest wishes for success in what lies before you.

*Bruce Palmer*  
BRUCE PALMER, JR.  
Lieutenant General, US Army  
Deputy Commanding General



## Cam Ranh Bay

*Front Cover : From the highlands to the delta the soldiers of USARV have served.*

*They man the guns along the DMZ and unload boats on the coast.*

*The cover is symbolic of service in the Republic of Vietnam.*

*The title, TOUR 365, signifies the normal tour of one year, 365 days.*

*Back Cover : In memory of the soldiers of USARV who have given their lives here.*

*They were our buddies, our friends and our comrades-in-arms.*

*They shall not be forgotten. Their memory will live forever.*

