

TOUR 365



SCRAP
RUSSELL

HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96222

TOUR 365 is a magazine for you the soldiers who have served with the United States Army in the Republic of Vietnam. As soldiers all of you have had many different but necessary jobs.

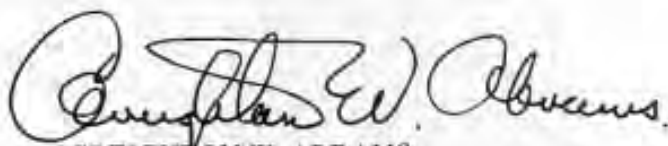
*Pointman... Rifleman... Squad Leader... Pathfinder,
Fire Direction Plotter... Gunner... Ammo Handler... Forward Observer
Truck Driver... Mechanic... Motor Officer... Dispatcher
Cook... Baker... Ration Breakdown Man... Mess Sergeant
Door Gunner... Pilot... Crew Chief... Helicopter Mechanic
Medic... Lab Technician... Pharmacist... Nurse... Surgeon
Forklift Operator... Parts Clerk... Supply Clerk... Warehouseman
Tank Driver... Loader... Tank Commander
Crane Operator... Combat Engineer... Dozer Operator... Tugboat Operator
Company Clerk... Admin Specialist... Finance Clerk
Radar Repairman... Electronics Technician... Computer Programmer
Chaplain's Assistant... Combat Photographer... MP... Armorer
Radio Operator... Lineman... Switchboard Operator... Rigger.*

All of you are part of this magazine. All of you have contributed to the history written on its pages.

TOUR 365 is also dedicated to those men of the United States Army who have made the supreme sacrifice—the sacrifice of their lives.

The contribution made by this exclusive brotherhood of men, as well as your own, are reflected in the physical security and general stability now evident throughout the Republic of Vietnam.

I appreciate sincerely what you have accomplished, and I thank you for your important effort.


CREIGHTON W. ABRAMS
General, United States Army
Commanding

For Soldiers Going Home

TOUR 365

Tour 365 is an authorized publication of the United States Army, Vietnam. It is published under the supervision of the Information Officer, USARV, APO San Francisco 96375, semi-annually for distribution to the soldiers returning to the United States upon completion of their tour in the Republic of Vietnam. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense or Department of the Army. The following agencies are thanked for their valuable contributions to the production of Tour 365: Command Historian, USARV; Southeast Asia Pictorial Center; Pacific Stars and Stripes and to those past and present members of the USARV Information Office staff for their editorial contributions.

General Creighton W. Abrams, Commanding General
Lieutenant General W.J. McCaffrey
Deputy Commanding General
Colonel Walter C. Franzen, Information Officer
Captain Karen K. Psimadis
Command Information Officer
First Lieutenant John G. Koenig, Jr., Editor
Specialist 4 Peter H. Moulton, Associate Editor
Specialist 4 Steve Crain, Illustrator

(CS)

Printed by China Color Printing Co., Inc.
Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

Contents for Winter 1971 Issue

U.S. Army, Vietnam	2
Vietnam in Retrospect	10
In the Beginning, 1954-61	14
The Darkest Era, 1961-64	16
From Buildup to Counteroffensive, 1965-66	19
The Squeeze, 1967	23
Tet and the Aftermath, 1968	27
A Year of Transition, 1969	31
Disengagement and Redeployment, 1970	34
Vietnamization Takes Hold, 1971	37
Highlights of '71	40
Nation Building	44
The Enemy We Face	48
Vietnamese Armed Forces	51
R&R, A Time to Relax	54
Pleasant Moments	57
For Valor and Service	58



U. S. Army, Vietnam

... and its units



United States Army, Vietnam as we know it was created on July 20, 1965. U.S. involvement in Vietnam, however, goes back to the late 1950s with the establishment of the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Indochina.

After committing itself to the defense of Southeast Asia under the Geneva Agreements and the Southeast Asia Defense Treaty, the U.S. set up a Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam to provide economic, technical and military assistance. Military aid and advice were forthcoming until late 1961. Then the Republic of Vietnam declared a state of national emergency on October 18, 1961, and asked the United States for combat troops.

The first complete combat units of American forces arrived in December, together with a support team, the 9th Logistical Command on Okinawa. This small team formed the nucleus from which USARV evolved. As the Army units in country increased, the U.S. Army Ryukyu Support Group, Provisional, took over logistics control of U.S. units in Vietnam. Further increases in U.S. troops necessitated that the support command be changed to U.S. Army Support Group, Vietnam.

During 1965 the increase of U.S. forces was rapid, and with the arrival of the additional combat units, the U.S. Army Support Command, Vietnam, was redesignated United States Army, Vietnam. Increased roles in combat operations spurred the creation of 3 subordinate commands: I Field Force, Vietnam, II Field Force, Vietnam and later XXIV Corps.

Under President Nixon's program of continuing Vietnamization, USARV's units are currently undergoing a period of reduction in strength and redeployment back to the U.S.

The United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) was established on February 8, 1962 as a unified command subordinate to the commander-in-chief, Pacific.

Headquartered in Saigon, MACV controls all of the United States Armed Forces in Vietnam. It has the mission of providing assistance to the constitutional Government of the Republic of Vietnam in building a free society capable of defending itself against subversion, insurgency and external aggression.



XXIV CORPS

XXIV Corps was activated at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, on April 8, 1944. On September 11 of the same year, it embarked on combat operations near Dulag on Leyte in the Philippine Islands. At that time, the 7th Infantry Division and the 96th Infantry Division were the major command elements of the Corps, later to be joined by the 77th Infantry Division. From the Philippines, XXIV Corps moved to Okinawa, and in September 1945 moved to Korea, where it remained until deactivated in January 1949.

On August 15, 1968, XXIV Corps was reactivated at Phu Bai, Republic of Vietnam. It was placed under operational control of III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) - its brother-in-arms 24 years before in the South Pacific.

On March 9, 1970, the Corps headquarters moved from Phu Bai to Camp Horn in Da Nang to become the senior U.S. military headquarters in Military Region I (MR I), replacing III MAF. The commanding general of XXIV Corps is the senior adviser to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam I Corps commander. He also is responsible for coordinating the activities of all U.S. units in the region and exercises direct operational control over them. Currently, under XXIV Corps control are the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) and the 196th Infantry Brigade.



1ST AVIATION BRIGADE

The frontless war in Vietnam has created a demand for mobility that was uncalled for in previous conflicts. In meeting this demand, the helicopter has become the symbol of Army combat in Vietnam. The more than 1,500 rotary and fixed-wing aircraft of the 1st Aviation Brigade give ground commanders an "extra edge". Never before in military history has the ground commander had such capability to find the enemy, conduct route and area reconnaissance, deploy troops, deliver supplies and sustained firepower, control the ground battle from the air, adjust artillery and air strikes and evacuate the wounded.

Since its establishment in May 1966, the 1st Aviation Brigade has consistently allowed ground commanders to keep pressure on the enemy, maintain contact in fluid situations, cut off the enemy's withdrawal and complete the destruction or capture of his forces. Flying in support of U.S. and Allied forces, the brigade has flown all types of missions, including tactical combat assaults, direct fire support, aerial reconnaissance, medevac, troop lift, cargo hauling, evacuation of South Vietnamese from battle areas and operations in support of the rural development program.

With the war winding down, requirements for aviation support have decreased. However, even with this reduction in their mission, units of the brigade in the first nine months of 1971 carried more than 200 thousand tons of cargo and nearly 2.5 million U.S. and Allied troops, flying more than 800 thousand hours to accomplish their mission.



1ST SIGNAL BRIGADE

From a satellite in orbit 18,000 miles above the Pacific Ocean to a courier on a dusty Vietnamese road, the 1st Signal Brigade passes the word into, out of and within Southeast Asia.

With more than 9,000 men scattered among approximately 140 sites in the Republic of Vietnam and Thailand, the STRATCOM brigade is the largest combat signal unit ever formed and controls the most comprehensive military communications-electronics systems in the history of warfare. Its mission is very simply put: communication.

Since its organization on April 1, 1966, the Brigade has fulfilled this mission by planning, engineering, installing, operating and maintaining both the Southeast Asian portion of the Army's world wide strategic communications system and extensive area communications systems in South Vietnam and Thailand.

All communications entering or leaving South Vietnam must pass through facilities operated by the Brigade, which consists of three subordinate signal groups (two in the Republic of Vietnam and one in Thailand) and two major support battalions. In the more than five years of its existence, the 1st Signal Team has provided communications on a scope never before achieved in a combat zone. The primary mission has been to "keep the shooters talking."

However, the standdown of units began in 1970 and increased in 1971 has led to extensive training of ARVN allies to enable them to operate the communications system. The Brigade's "Buddies Together" Vietnamization program, coupled with the increased operational take-over of sites by civilian contractors, has resulted in a smooth transition of responsibility for the highly sophisticated communications equipment in South Vietnam.





18TH MILITARY POLICE BRIGADE

Established on May 20, 1966 and sent to Vietnam on September 26, 1966, the 18th Military Police Brigade controls six MP battalions, a criminal investigation group, a Military Police customs unit and all non-Divisional MPs throughout the Republic of Vietnam.

During the 1968 Tet Offensive, the Brigade was heavily involved in the street fighting that erupted in Saigon. One of its battalions, the 716th, was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for its role in the defense of the U.S. Embassy.

The Brigade participated in the Cambodian offensive of 1970 as it escorted convoys of the 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions across the border. Similarly, in 1971, the Brigade participated in Lam Son 719, the RVNAF Laotian drive. In addition to escorting convoys, it maintained traffic control on QL9 from Quang Tri and Phu Bai to Khe Sanh.

Later in 1971, as the war continued to wind down, duties for the Brigade increased in the area of customs surveillance and drug control, as abuse in these areas rose to menacing levels.



U.S. ARMY ENGINEER COMMAND, VIETNAM

February 1, 1970 marked the origin of the United States Army Engineer Command, Vietnam (USARENGRCOMDV). This came about with the merger of Engineer Troops Vietnam, the United States Army Engineer Construction Agency, Vietnam (USAECV) and the staff of the Engineer Section Headquarters, United States Army, Vietnam (USARV).

With an authorized strength in 1970 of over 26,000 men, the United States Army Engineer Command, Vietnam (USARENGRCOMDV) was the largest major subordinate command of United States Army, Vietnam (USARV). Its principal subordinate units were the 18th and 20th Engineer Brigades and three Engineer Districts—Northern, Central and Southern.

The Engineer Command "Lines of Communication" (LOC) program, begun in 1967, is progressing rapidly, with both US and Vietnamese engineers involved in the road-building effort. When construction is completed, enough surface will have been paved to stretch a two-lane highway from New York City to Las Vegas. Vietnamization, receiving increased emphasis during 1971, centered principally around the training and support of ARVN engineer units. These include two land-clearing companies and several construction battalions.



1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)

From its activation at Fort Bliss, Texas, on September 13, 1921, through World War II and Korea, until today, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) has recorded a series of firsts.

During World War II, the Cav was the first into Manila and first into Tokyo. Then in Korea, it was the first unit to move into Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. On July 1, 1965, at Fort Benning, Georgia, the unit became the U.S. Army's first Airmobile division.

Arriving in the Republic of Vietnam on September 14, 1965, the Cav became the first American division to serve in all four tactical zones. The division won a presidential Unit Citation by routing heavy North Vietnamese concentrations around the Ia Drang Valley, west of Pleiku, during its first year of operation. The 1st Cav is the only division to receive a second Republic of Vietnam Cross with Palm.

During May and June of 1970, Skytroopers again proved that the airmobile concept works as they crossed the border into Cambodia. Along with units under its operational control, it destroyed enemy storage sanctuaries and captured large quantities of Communist supplies and killed 2,500 enemy soldiers.

In 1971, the division began to stand down and plans were made to re-organize the 3rd Brigade as a separate command. By April 1, standdown was nearly complete and the 3rd Brigade prepared to assume its enlarged area of operations.

Since the formation of the 3rd Brigade, Garry Owen troopers have continued the mission of interdicting enemy supply and infiltration routes. Great emphasis is placed on assisting Vietnamization in every way possible. Actions such as these reassure the men of the 3rd Brigade (Separate) that they are continuing in the proud tradition of the 7th Cavalry's motto, "Garry Owen".

11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT

From its birth as a horse cavalry regiment at Fort Meyers, Virginia in 1901 to its present status as a light armored, completely mobile reconnaissance force, the 11th Cav has continuously added to its proud tradition.

Soon after it was formed, the regiment won its spurs in the Philippines and it was in these trying first years that the Blackhorse earned its motto, "Allons" (Let's Go). Since then the regiment has served along the Mexican border in 1916, in World War II and in the Vietnam conflict.

The regiment arrived in the Republic of Vietnam in September 1966. A variety of missions, from clearing roads to dislodging enemy forces from almost inaccessible jungle areas, took the regiment from southeast Long Khanh Province to An Loc in northern Binh Long Province.

The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment played a major role in disrupting the infiltration routes which spread from the Cambodian border through the provinces of South Vietnam. After that, the Blackhorse relocated to the Saigon area of Military Region 3 and launched Vietnamization and community defense and local development programs.

On March 6, 1971, the 1st and 3rd Squadrons redeployed to Fort Lewis, Washington. The 2nd Squadron remains in Vietnam.



101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)

The 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) was activated on August 16, 1942 at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. After months of arduous training, drills and practice jumps, two parachute infantry regiments and two glider regiments landed in England in the fall of 1943. The division made history on D-Day, June 6, 1944 when it jumped, 14,000 strong, into occupied France.

The division's fortunes fluctuated after World War II and it was inactivated and reactivated as a training division three times in 11 years. On July 29, 1965, the 1st Brigade and support troops arrived at Cam Ranh Bay to begin the next chapter of the Screaming Eagle's combat history.

The remainder of the division was in-country by December 13, 1967, and a year later, more than 10,000 enemy had died at the hands of the 101st. The division's mission has carried it into all four of the Republic of Vietnam's military regions. It has successfully defended the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, the Bien Hoa Air Base and the coastal city of Phan Thiet.

In 1968, the division distinguished itself in spearheading a series of operations, driving the NVA out of the infamous A Shau Valley. During the Cambodian offensive in May and June of 1970, Task Force 3/506 drove into NVA and VC sanctuaries near Prek Drang. The Communists were caught by surprise and overrun by the Screaming Eagles, who destroyed what had taken the NVA four years to build.

Late in November 1971, one brigade of the 101st began to stand down. The remainder of the division continued to hold the Piedmont in Thua Thien Province while supporting the 1st ARVN Division in its drives against enemy strongholds in Military Region 1.



196TH INFANTRY BRIGADE

Organized in 1921 as part of the 98th Infantry Division, the 196th Infantry Brigade traces its lineage from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 196th Infantry. During World War II the company served in the Pacific Theatre and as an occupation force in Japan. After the war, it was deactivated at Osaka, Japan. It returned to a reserve status in 1947 and was redesignated the 98th Mechanized Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop. It was not until 1965 that it became the 196th Infantry Brigade and was designated a Regular Army unit.

The "Charger" Brigade arrived in the Republic of Vietnam in July 1966 and established its base camp near Tay Ninh City, on the edge of Communist War Zone C. During its time in Military Region 3, the Brigade scored impressive victories in Operations Cedar Falls, Gadsden and Lancaster.

During 1967, the Brigade joined the newly-formed Task Force Oregon in Military Region 1. While carrying out its primary mission of securing Chu Lai airfield complex, the Brigade conducted Operation Benton in August and September of 1967. Later in September, the 196th became organic to the 23rd Infantry Division (Americal), formed out of Task Force Oregon.

In the years following, the Brigade performed well in Operations Frederick Hill, Fayette Canyon and Elk Canyon I and II. In 1971, during the RVNAF offensive into Laos, parts of the Brigade were responsible for the area of operations just south of the demilitarized zone and the coordination and defense of Khe Sanh.

By the end of 1971, the 196th was one of the last fully operational combat units remaining in the Republic of Vietnam. Headquartered in Da Nang, its mission is to coordinate the internal defense of that city. In addition, it works with soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam in the Vietnamization program and with both soldiers and civilians on civic action projects.



A JOB WELL DONE

Departed Units

I FIELD FORCE, VIETNAM

The crest of I Field Force, Vietnam, is a shield-shaped emblem. It features a sword pointing upwards, with the hilt and crossguard visible. The shield is divided into four quadrants by a diagonal line from the top-left to the bottom-right. The top-left and bottom-right quadrants are light gray, while the top-right and bottom-left quadrants are dark gray.

I Field Force, Vietnam, was organized and commenced operations in August 1965 as Task Force Alpha; its mission was to control all U.S. Army Forces in the Republic of Vietnam. Shortly afterward, the mission was changed to control only forces in Military Region 2. In November 1965, Task Force Alpha officially became Field Force, Vietnam, and in March 1966, when another field force was organized in Military Region 3, the command became I Field Force, Vietnam.

In the following years, I Field Force directed operations utilizing all or parts of the 4th Infantry Division, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), and numerous separate combat and combat support battalions and units. In addition to renowned victories at Dak To, Ben Het, Bu Prang-Duc Lap, Cambodia, Dak Seang-Dak Poke, and Plei Djeran, combat elements of the force defeated the NVA and VC in thousands of engagements in all 12 provinces of Military Region 2, and initiated one of the first comprehensive U.S. Army-conducted pacification programs in RVN.

I Field Force was redesignated Second Regional Assistance Group on May 16, 1971 and became a MACV asset, still headquartered in Nha Trang. SRAG is continuing the mission of supervising the advisory effort with Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, the CORDS Program, and increasing the effectiveness of Vietnamization and community defense and local development. A milestone was reached on November 3, 1971 when SRAG headquarters moved to Pleiku and assumed a wholly advisory role, the ground portion of its mission having come to a close.

II FIELD FORCE, VIETNAM

The crest of II Field Force, Vietnam, is a shield-shaped emblem. It features a sword pointing upwards, with the hilt and crossguard visible. The sword is superimposed on a large, dark arrow pointing upwards. The shield is divided into four quadrants by a diagonal line from the top-left to the bottom-right. The top-left and bottom-right quadrants are light gray, while the top-right and bottom-left quadrants are dark gray.

II Field Force, Vietnam traces its lineage to the XXII U.S. Army Corps formed in 1944 in the European Campaign. Inactivated at the end of World War II, it was reactivated at Fort Hood, Texas, with the advent of the Vietnam conflict and renamed II Field Force. II Field Force arrived in the Republic of Vietnam on March 15, 1966, and at its height was one of the largest corps-level commands in the history of the U.S. Army. II FF's area of responsibility, Military Region 3, includes the 11 provinces surrounding Saigon. At various times it had under its command the following units or elements: 1st, 9th, and 25th Infantry Divisions; 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions; 173rd Airborne Brigade; 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile); 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment; 12th Combat Aviation Group; 23rd and 54th Artillery Groups; and the 1st Australian Task Force and Royal Thai Army Volunteer Force.

II Field Force units were responsible for the decisive defeat of enemy forces in Military Region 3 during the 1968 Tet Offensive, which threatened particularly the Saigon area. Its greatest moment was the Cambodian incursion of May-June 1970 when the 25th Infantry Division, 1st Cav and 11th Armored Cav fought alongside ARVN troops in one of the war's biggest and most successful operations.

II Field Force, on April 30, 1971, incorporated the USA Advisory Group, III Corps, was redesignated Third Regional Assistance Command, and became a MACV asset. Its expressed mission became that of providing assistance to Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces and supervising civilian operations and rural development programs in Military Region 3, thus increasing the effectiveness of Vietnamization and community defense and local development.

1ST BRIGADE, 5TH INFANTRY DIVISION (MECHANIZED)

The 5th Infantry Division was organized in December 1917 to participate in World War I. It arrived in France in May 1918, where the German enemy gave the men of the division their name, Red Devils. During World War II, the 5th deployed to Iceland, England and Ireland before taking part in the invasion at Normandy.

In July 1968, the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) was deployed for overseas duty in the Republic of Vietnam, while the remainder of the division stayed at Fort Carson, Colorado. The mission of the 1st Brigade was twofold: to conduct major operations against NVA elements and to provide peace and freedom to the residents of the Quang Tri area.

The Brigade divided its time between search and clear, cordon and sweep operations, working with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. In November 1970, the Red Devils were honored by President Nguyen Van Thieu for their recovery operations following the disastrous floods in Quang Tri Province. Also, in the last months of 1970 and the early part of 1971, the Brigade conducted a massive resettlement program for South Vietnamese.

Elements of the 1st Brigade swept down Route 9 in early February 1971 to join the reoccupation of the abandoned Marine base at Khe Sanh as part of the huge operation to eliminate a North Vietnamese buildup along the Laotian frontier.

President Nixon's withdrawal program called for redeployment of the Brigade to Fort Carson, Colorado on August 5, 1971 under Increment VIII.



23RD INFANTRY DIVISION (AMERICAL)

The 23rd Infantry Division (Americal) was the largest infantry division operating in South Vietnam with three light infantry brigades and a squadron of armored cavalry. The division got its start in the rugged terrain of Military Region I in mid-April 1967 when it was known as Task Force Oregon. Its mission at that time was to ease pressure on Marines operating near the Demilitarized Zone.

Throughout 1970 and early 1971, the men, "under the Southern Cross," continued to aggressively pursue their mission in Quang Tin and Quang Ngai Provinces. The heavily populated and rice-rich coastal plains were protected from severe enemy threats as North Vietnam regular and Viet Cong forces were interdicted and destroyed in Operations Frederick Hill, Geneva Park and Pennsylvania Square. The Americal also played an integral role during the RVNAF offensive into Laos, supporting the drive from the Marine base at Khe Sanh.

Community defense and local development operations were an integral part of the 23rd's program and reached a high of 560 in December 1970. When typhoons Kate and Joan hit in October and November 1970, the 23rd Division reacted swiftly to bring relief to thousands of refugees. Large quantities of food and building supplies were provided and engineer units cleared roads and rebuilt bridges.

In mid-October 1971, the Americal Division began standdown operations. On November 27, the division colors were moved to Fort Lewis, Washington, where the division was officially deactivated.



25TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Shortly after its inception in October 1941, the 25th Infantry Division was called to defend the shores of Hawaii after the attack on Pearl Harbor. From there, the Tropic Lightning troops were on the offensive throughout the Pacific penetrating Japanese strongholds. They helped occupy Japan after the war until called into Korea for three years, where they earned the Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

From 1963, when the Division began providing men for the Vietnam conflict, until redeployment began on December 15, 1970, back home to Hawaii, the men of the 25th fought many bloody battles to break traditional Viet Cong lines of communications, supply and liaison routes between the Mekong Delta and the North. In addition, division soldiers showed genuine compassion for the problems of the South Vietnamese through their civic action programs. For these efforts, the 25th Infantry Division was awarded the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with palm on January 28, 1969.

The final element of the 25th to redeploy, the 2nd Brigade, left Vietnam on April 29, 1971.





173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE

The 173rd Airborne Brigade—nicknamed the Sky Soldiers—was formed in May 1963 and became the first major U.S. Army ground combat unit to fight in the Republic of Vietnam, arriving in May 1965.

During 1967, the Sky Soldiers distinguished themselves in the Battle of Dak To, fighting an entrenched North Vietnamese Army regiment on Hill 875. Brigade elements captured the hill on Thanksgiving Day, killing 800 enemy soldiers. For this, the Brigade was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation. It also has the Meritorious Unit Citation for the period May 3, 1965 through May 31, 1967 and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm (Gold) for the period May 5, 1965 to September 26, 1970.

Other accomplishments of the Brigade is its contribution to the improvement and modernization of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), particularly the Regional and Popular Forces. It also helped to reduce the Viet Cong infrastructure and helped develop the local Rural Cadre and People's Self-Defense Forces, enabling the South Vietnamese to protect their own key populated areas and bridge sites. In addition to this, the Brigade continued to maintain security for portions of QL 1, South Vietnam's only major north-south highway.

The Brigade ended its historical mission in Vietnam on August 5, 1971 when it redeployed to Fort Campbell, Kentucky.



18TH ENGINEER BRIGADE

The 18th Engineer Brigade was formed on July 29, 1921, as the 347th Engineers (General Service) in the Organized Reserves. It was ordered into active military service on May 6, 1942, at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, and redesignated the 347th Engineer General Service Regiment.

For its service in Normandy, northern France, the Rhineland and Central Europe during World War II, the unit received the Meritorious Unit Commendation. After the war, it was deactivated in Germany. On July 16, 1965, it was activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and prepared for deployment to Vietnam. An advance party of the brigade arrived in the Republic of Vietnam on September 3, 1965, and became operational two weeks later.

Many of the Brigade's projects stand out as exceptional engineering feats. Among them was the construction of the critical Hai Van Pass, a job attempted by many but accomplished by the 18th Brigade, and a storage area at Cam Ranh Bay, two years in construction and enclosing 191,700 square feet.

The Brigade was also actively engaged in road building and land clearing, as well as numerous community assistance projects until it stood down on April 18, 1971.

The accomplishments of the 18th Engineer Brigade have not only contributed significantly to the success of combat forces in Military Regions 1 and 2 but have provided valuable assets to the future development and growth of South Vietnam.



20TH ENGINEER BRIGADE

The history of the 20th Engineer Brigade extends back to the Civil War. The unit was constituted on August 3, 1861. Unit designations have been changed many times since then, but the ancestors of the 20th Engineer Brigade participated in campaigns in the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine insurrection, the Mexican expedition, and World Wars I and II.

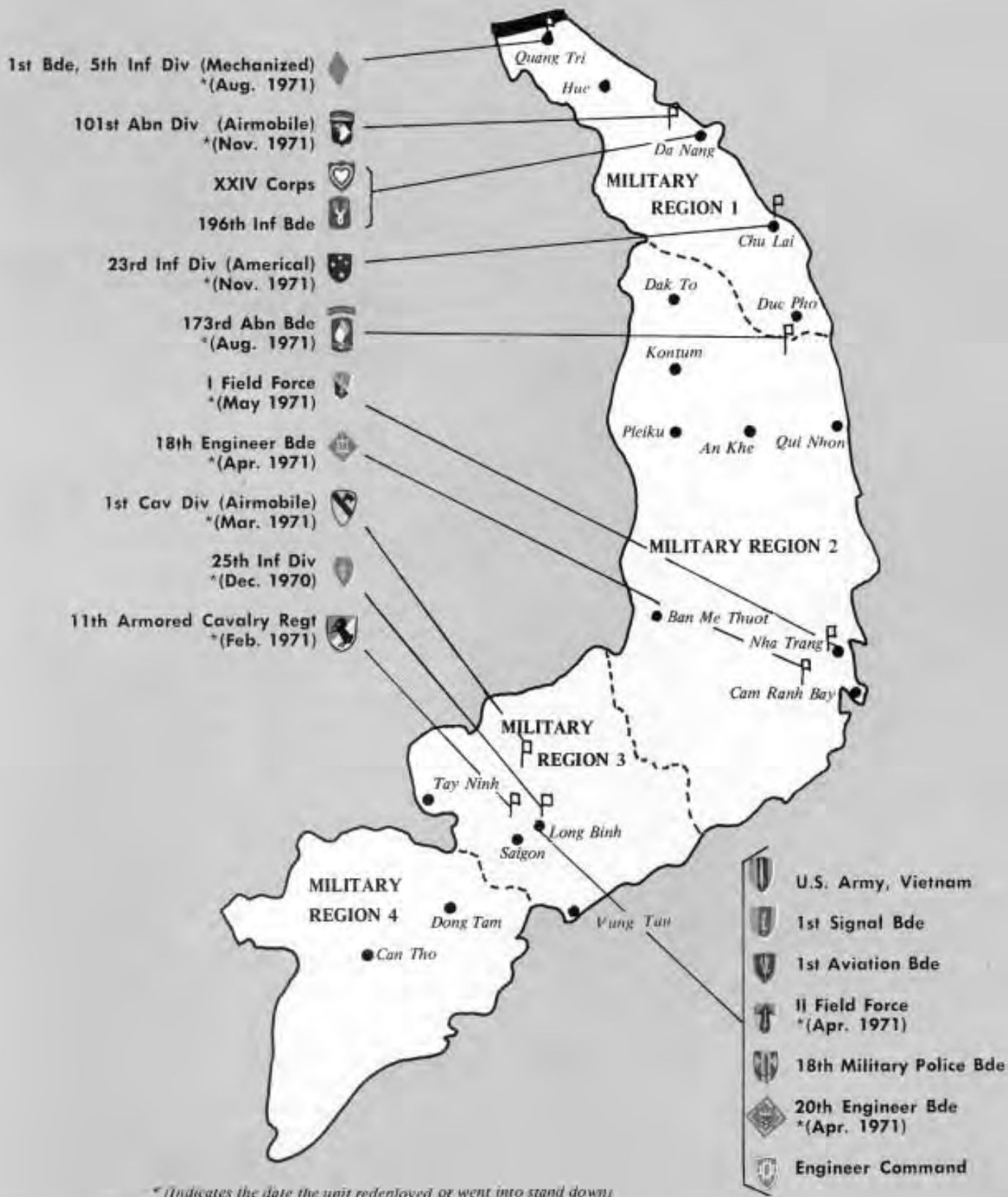
The Brigade headquarters was reactivated on May 1, 1967, and arrived in the Republic of Vietnam on August 3, 1967. The 20th Brigade missions were to command assigned and attached units, provide operational support for the U.S. and free world forces, plan and execute construction, and provide for security of personnel, equipment, facilities and construction sites of assigned or attached units. Many of the Brigade's projects stand out as exceptional engineering achievements. Among these are the restoration of National Highway (QL) 4 between Song Be and Dong Xoi, and the clearing of over a half-million acres of jungle.

As the war's emphasis shifted to Vietnamization, the Brigade developed far-reaching programs of mutual assistance with the ARVN. The ARVN began to take over an increasing amount of work, as evidenced by their restoration project on QL-1 and their three trained land clearing companies.

On April 20, 1971, under President Nixon's continuing withdrawal program, the Brigade stood down.

The Brigade has been awarded the Republic of Vietnam Civic Actions Honor Medal, First Class, for assistance rendered to orphanages, schools and other community defense and local development projects.

MAJOR UNIT LOCATIONS



Vietnam in retrospect



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

Most of the Vietnamese come from a non-Chinese, Mongoloid people who traveled from their south China tribal lands to settle in the Red River Delta in North Vietnam, near Hanoi.

CHINESE CONQUEST

Chinese historical documents make the first mention of a country called Nam - Viet, "People of the South," who lived in southern China.

The kingdom of the Viets in southern China was short-lived. In 111 B.C. the kingdom of Nam Viet was conquered by the Chinese and remained under their domination for the next thousand years.

The Chinese rule over Vietnam and its people was cruel and oppressive. Nevertheless, considerable progress was made during that era: the plow was introduced and effective planting and cultivation of rice was initiated.

The Chinese also introduced more sophisticated construction methods. Due to the expansion of highways and canals, commerce began to flourish. China's greatest gift to Vietnam was the art of writing. This did much to raise the cultural level of the Viets.

INDEPENDENCE AT LAST

In 938 A.D. a great revolt culminated in the defeat of the overlords at the battle of Bach Dang and drove them across the border.

Later attempts by the Chinese to retake Vietnam were less than successful. An uneasy peace existed between the two countries as Vietnam entered its own period of expansion. The Vietnamese moved south and west. In the west they encountered the Khmer empire in Cambodia. After a series of conflicts, the Vietnamese defeated the Khmers in 1660.

The amazing thing about the Vietnamese expansion is that it took place during a civil war within their own country. Two powerful families, the Trinh in the north and the Nguyen in the south, were vying for control of Vietnam. This family rivalry continued into the 18th century.

EUROPEAN INFLUENCE

European influence reached Vietnam in 1535 when Portuguese Captain Antonio de Faria arrived in Da Nang Bay. For a century the Portuguese dominated commerce in Vietnam, but they were unable to impose their will on the Vietnamese.

In 1636, the Dutch arrived. Their coming coincided with the civil war between the Trinh and the Nguyen families. The Dutch set up arms factories in the north and sold their wares to the Trinh. The Portuguese supplied the same service in the south for the Nguyen.

A truce in the war resulted in the end of the arms business and a general slowing down in commerce. By 1700, due to the slump in trade, the Portuguese and Dutch merchants left, leaving behind the first Christian missionaries.

EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Confucian-oriented officials had their misgivings about the new religion. They suspected it as the forerunner of conquest and feared its effect upon the traditional order which had been the foundation of the state for centuries.

French Catholic missions started in the 17th century. Before then, the Vietnamese introduction to Christianity had been casual.

The missionary Alexandre de Rhodes (1591-1660) devised the first Romanization of the Vietnamese language (Annamite, as it was then called); education through this medium, by almost eliminating the Chinese script, helped develop a feeling of nationalism, emphasizing the distinctiveness of Vietnamese.

Missionary activities spread, despite a loosely enforced ban. Christianity was embraced by a substantial portion of the Vietnamese population. Gradually, however, restrictions on preaching Christianity became more stringent and ultimately became punishable by death. The first French missionary was executed in 1833.

During that time, a European power struggle was taking place in the Far East. The defeat of the Chinese by the British in the Opium War of 1839 caused the Vietnamese government to have second thoughts about their persecutions. The Vietnamese monarch, Minh Mang, sent emissaries to France and England, offering to ease persecution of the Catholics and expressing willingness to enter into free trade. He died before the envoys returned. His son, Thieu Tri, and grandson, Tu Duc, feeling that further diplomacy was useless, resumed the Catholic persecutions.

FRENCH DOMINATION

Toward the middle of the 19th century, pressure mounted in France for the government to take positive action to establish a position on Vietnam. This pressure resulted from an envy of the power other European nations were establishing in Asia and a desire to protect the missionaries. Finally, Napoleon III, nephew of Bonaparte, used the persecution of the missionaries as an excuse to attack Vietnam.

In 1858 the French captured the city of Da Nang and, in

July 1861, they took Saigon. The Vietnamese court at Hue ceded Saigon and the adjacent area to the French and agreed to pay an indemnity. In 1867 the western part of the southern delta was annexed, and the area known as Cochinchina (the extreme southern portion of Vietnam) was under French control.

For the next 30 years, the French expanded their control over all of Indochina, what is known today as 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 mandarin remained in both central and north Vietnam; Cochinchina was administered directly by the French. The old structure of government remained; however, all major decisions were made by French authorities. French rule demoralized the emperors and mandarin, tending to turn them into self-seekers and yes men.

French colonialism also had profound economic effects on the region. Absentee ownership grew as large-scale agricultural and rubber plantations appeared. Prosperous Vietnamese moved into the cities, and more and more of the land was tilled by peasants who did not own it.



French colonial architecture abounds in the cities.

Large-scale canal systems were dug in the Mekong Delta to exploit rice production. By the early 20th century, the French had managed to produce a rice surplus.

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

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

THE RISE OF HO CHI MINH

Leadership of the clandestine nationalist movement 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 Ho Chi Minh.

Ho Chi Minh did not enter the political scene until the end of World War I, when he appeared at Versailles with an eight-point plan for revising colonial rule in Vietnam. The representatives were busy with policies of greater import and he was ignored.

Not long thereafter, Ho affiliated himself with the 3rd Communist International and ultimately went to Moscow to study Communist doctrine in 1924. During that time he wrote several nationalistic pamphlets. Nationalists in Vietnam, where the pamphlets were smuggled, mistakenly considered him to be for their cause.

Ho was soon sent to China as an interpreter for a group of Communist revolutionaries. The group was called the Russian Political Mission. Their job was to start a revolution in China.

Taking advantage of a temporary alliance between the Chinese Communists and Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government, Ho was able to train a number of his officers in Chinese military schools.

In 1927, when the Communists and nationalists split, Ho left China. Some time later he turned up in Thailand posing as a Buddhist priest. He was still organizing revolutionary groups out of the Vietnamese living there.

From Thailand Ho traveled to Hong Kong, where he formed a new organization, the Indochinese Communist party. In Vietnam, the French were acting quickly to put down any nationalistic uprisings. For this reason the Communists remained quiet. Ho Chi Minh remained on the sidelines.

In 1934, he was back in Moscow studying the party line. In 1938, he served with Mao Tse-tung's forces in China. After 30 years' absence, Ho returned to Vietnam in 1940.

JAPANESE OCCUPATION

When France fell to Germany in June of 1940, the Vichy government ceded all of French Indochina to the Japanese.

However, the French administration was permitted to remain intact, with many lucrative agreements being made between wealthy French interests in Vietnam and the occupying forces.

Meanwhile, Ho Chi Minh had become the leading national political figure in Vietnam. His party adopted a policy of collaboration with all non-Communist nationalists to broaden the social and political base of its activities.

This united-front organization was known as the Vietnam Independence League (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh) or Viet Minh.

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

In August 1945, Emperor Bao Dai, fearing the French would return when Japan surrendered, abdicated his throne and handed over power to Ho Chi Minh. French troops re-entered Vietnam in September.

POST WAR PERIOD

The Viet Minh and French conducted negotiations for a year in an effort to assure some form of independence for Vietnam. By December 1946, the Viet Minh decided that the only way to achieve an independent Vietnam was through a "war of liberation." For the next eight years the French fought the Viet Minh. The culmination of these years of conflict came on May 7, 1954. At A fort outside the town of Dien Bien Phu, the French-outnumbered and outgunned—surrendered to the Viet Minh after a 54-day siege.

Two weeks before, a prominent Vietnamese nationalist, Ngo Dinh Diem, had been named by Emperor Bao Dai to



French Garrison pulls out of Haiphong after the fall of Dien Bien Phu.

be the prime minister of Vietnam with full power.

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 Indochinese 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 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 1958.

The French proceeded to hand over the controls and

administration to the non-Communist Vietnamese with the capital in Saigon. In Hanoi, Ho began the total communization of the nation north of the 17th parallel. He later turned his attention southward.

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

Vietnam was left divided. The South had a pro-Western government struggling to establish a non-Communist society. In the north, Ho Chi Minh was busy organizing a Communist state—the base from which he would attempt the realization of his dream of a unified Communist Vietnam.



The Cao Dai Temple at Tay Ninh (top right)

Buddha's all-seeing eye inside the Cao Dai Temple (bottom right)

A Vietnamese statue near Hue (top left)



1954—1961

In the Beginning



The result of the Geneva Accords of 1954 was creation of a North and South Vietnam. Although the United States was not an active participant in bringing about the end of the French-Indochina War, our government worked quietly behind the scenes. At the same time, groundwork for the Southeast 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." The signatories accepted 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 the south was subjected to subversive activities. President Eisenhower instituted economic aid for the new country in late 1954 and active American interest in South Vietnam began.

To understand the events following, we must look at the development of North Vietnam: the rise of the Viet Cong and its assistance from the North, and the increased economic and military aid to the South furnished by the United States.

Ho Chi Minh began an immediate consolidation of forces. An estimated 90,000 Communists moved north of the 17th parallel while thousands of 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 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 by the people, causing morale to drop in the Communist ranks and many defections to occur. Compounding the problems of the North, per capita food output dropped by 10%. Authorities in the North openly admitted that food production goals were not being reached. The North's failures coupled with the South's successes caused a major revision in over-all strategy. Military forces would have to be employed to take over the South.

TERRORISM STEPPED UP

By 1958, the plan became obvious. In 1959, the pace of terrorism accelerated. Recruiting for the Viet Cong was stepped up.

Communist propaganda tried to exploit the confusion by stating that the South's government was falling apart and was unable to protect its people. The entire campaign was being directed from the North.

The National Liberation Front appeared on December 20, 1960, 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 obtained their weapons by capturing them from American and French sources.

INFILTRATION

Elaborate precautions were taken to prevent discovery of North Vietnam's support of the southern Communist organization. Reliable sources estimate 40,000 trained

OPPOSING LEADERS

President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam was a constant target of Communist propaganda.

Ho Chi Minh felt that North Vietnam could subjugate the south through subversion.



military personnel infiltrated from North to South Vietnam through Laos in the five-year period from 1959 through 1964.

When an infiltrator arrived at the Laotian border, his North Vietnamese army uniform was exchanged for a Lao "neutralist" uniform. He would give up all personal effects of an incriminating nature. A local guide took him halfway to the first of a series of way stations along the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail. There he was met by the next guide until the process led the infiltrator into South Vietnam.

In South Vietnam, he received a black, pajama-like uniform, two unmarked uniforms, rubber sandals, a sweater, a hammock, mosquito netting and waterproof sheeting.

The other infiltration route was by sea. Agents departed from ports just north of the 17th parallel in boats disguised as innocent-looking fishing vessels. However, this route has become virtually closed due to improved patrolling by the South Vietnamese with U.S. Navy assistance.

The Geneva Accords called for a general election in 1955 to unite the two parts of Vietnam. In that year, with stepped up infiltration, 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 have won such an election. He replied, "You know as well as I do that there won't be any elections."

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

Phase one of the battle occurred from 1954 to about 1960. During that period, the United States had first assisted the Vietnamese government with economic aid and then added military advisers 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 totaled about \$1.5 million between 1954 and 1961.

In 1960, the guerrilla warfare intensified and, by 1961, had reached a point of open warfare. By then, the Viet Cong was reinforced by practically the entire 325th North Vietnamese Regular Army Division.

The American advisory forces had grown to approximately 700 men by 1961. It was 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 personnel. The President felt he could not abandon South Vietnam.

The decision had been made. The United States would assist in stopping the spread of aggression in Southeast Asia. In the next three years, more decisions would be made that would prove America, indeed, was not allowing a "red wave" to sweep over Asia. A decision that would lead to your tour of 365 days in Vietnam.

1961- 1964

The Darkest Era

Republic of Vietnam forces, under attack by VC, unload supplies from a U.S. helicopter.



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.

ADVISORY TEAMS

Advisers 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 fewer 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 as advisers to ARVN units or to the U.S. Army Support Group, Vietnam, the forerunner of the United States Army, Vietnam.

Each ARVN corps had U.S. Army advisory teams attached. They brought their specialized knowledge in aviation, logistics, planning, ordnance, medical services, communications, artillery and use of paramilitary force 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.

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

Warfare was leaving the terrorist stage and was now entering into the stage of small unit attacks on strategic hamlets and lightly defended villages, although terror attacks were still common as a psychological weapon against the people.

THE "PEOPLES' PARTY"

The Communist party in South Vietnam, called the Peoples 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."

Radio Hanoi announced the PRP's formation on January 18, 1962. Despite using the North Vietnamese medium for making the announcement, the new group denied any connection with Hanoi, Peking or Moscow, beyond the "fraternal ties of communism."

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, forcibly impressing thousands into their services and requiring families to provide food, clothing and shelter for them. Whole villages were sometimes required to build bunker and trench systems for the guerrillas.

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. These delegates traveled on North Vietnamese passports and used northern currency, although they claimed to represent the South Vietnamese people.

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

CIVILIANS SUFFER

On the civilian scene, equally shocking devastation was taking place. During 1963 alone, 17,710 civilian casualties resulted from Communist terrorist activities.

Refugees—innocent victims of Viet Cong terrorism.

This figure breaks down as follows:

Assassinated:

Civilian population	1,558
Local government officials	415
Civil servants	100
Injured	8,375
Kidnaped	7,262

Between January 1, 1961, and August 10, 1964, 181 Americans gave their lives in combat alongside the Vietnamese. More than 900 were wounded during the same period.

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





NORTH VIETNAM SUPPORTS VC

No longer were the North Vietnamese denying their support of the Viet Cong. It was evident that the screen of "civil war" was being cast aside. The North anticipated victory and was striking out in all directions.

Emboldened by their success, the North Vietnamese attacked 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.

TONKIN GULF RESOLUTION

The attack in the Tonkin Gulf proved to be a major blunder on the part of the North. America was quick to react to the attack. President Johnson asked for and received from Congress approval to use all available means to defeat the aggressor in South Vietnam.

The August 7th 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 the 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.

Thus, with 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.

The USS Maddox was attacked off the coast of North Vietnam on August 2, 1964, thus leading to the Tonkin Resolution (above). President Johnson requested and received the consent of Congress to use armed force to protect Southeast Asia (below).



1965—1966

From Buildup to Counteroffensive

United States involvement in South Vietnam increased sharply during 1965. Other free world forces joined 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 complexion of the war developed from guerrilla warfare and terrorism to large unit actions on the part of the Viet Cong, reinforced by North Vietnamese regular army units. The South Vietnamese Army and the Communists were now engaging in battalion and larger force actions. Guerrilla actions occurred from time to time, and terror still played a prominent part of 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 NVA 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.



U.S. A-1H aircraft drops its ordnance on an enemy position.

DEPENDENTS EVACUATED

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 housed American enlisted men. Twenty-three died in the attack and 21 were injured. Fourteen Vietnamese were also injured in the attack.

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



During the American buildup the Saigon port was a major unloading point.

BUILDUP CONTINUES

In May, U.S. force began to build up 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 Military Region I.

The buildup continued in June with the arrival of Australia's first 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 congestion of supply ships at Saigon port.

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



Logistics personnel ship supplies from docks to depot and then to the field.

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 showed 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.

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 Military Region 2. Originally designated Task Force Alpha, the headquarters later became I Field Force, Vietnam (IFFV). The 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) 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 Viet Cong killed in three days.

Another free world force entered Vietnam in October. The Republic of Korea sent its Capital Division into South Vietnam to aid a country invaded from the north by Communists, as was Korea 15 years earlier. During the same period, the remaining elements of the 1st Infantry Division arrived.

By November, the 1st Cavalry Division was conducting tactical operations. The prelude to one of the largest actions 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.

IA DRANG VALLEY

Communist forces were moving into the Ia Drang Valley intent on engaging the 1st Cavalry and winning a victory over the "green" troops. The enemy met the 3rd Brigade of the division and stayed to fight, 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 as many Americans were killed. The "green" troops and the airmobile concept had proved themselves.



The Communists had suffered a stunning defeat against the Americans in the Ia Drang Valley, but they overran an ARVN unit at the Michelin Plantation on 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.

Before the year closed, the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, deployed from Hawaii. This raised the total strength of U.S. and free world military forces in Vietnam to 181,000. Meanwhile, enemy forces had increased from 103,000 at the beginning of the year to an estimated 230,000.

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

The year 1966 was marked by military, political and diplomatic changes in South Vietnam. Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) were beginning the first phase of the counteroffensive.

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 resulted in more than 400 enemy deaths.

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

In the past, VC tax collectors had bled off large



The airmobile concept proved itself during the early days of the conflict.

percentages of the rice harvest. The 101st Airborne's 1st Brigade and Korean Marines were sent to Phu Yen Province to secure the rice harvest.

Prior to Tet's 84-hour truce, the Viet Cong was busy attacking targets ranging from the airfield at Da Nang to a

Special Forces camp and a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) outpost, even exploding a Claymore mine outside the main gate of Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

CHARLIE FEELS THE SQUEEZE

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 resulted in 150 VC killed. The 101st's Operation Harrison 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 uncovered enemy camps, weapons and ammunition.

At Bien Hoa, II Field Force, Vietnam, was activated to control U.S. forces in Military Region 3.

A program designed to bring the Viet Cong back to the government, called the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) Program, met with spectacular success in March when a record-setting 2,336 former enemy soldiers rallied during the month.

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

The expansion of forces continued with the arrival of the USS Corpus Christy Bay at Cam Ranh Bay to provide a floating maintenance facility for Army helicopters and the Royal Australian Task Force. As mid-year approached, the threatened VC monsoon offensive was blunted by several operations. One found the 1st Infantry Division pushing deep into War Zone C near Tay Ninh, where no friendly troops had been for five years. Large quantities of supplies were captured.

In August, elements of the 4th Infantry Division landed at Qui Nhon, and the 196th Infantry Brigade and the first of a 2,000-man Philippine Civic Action Group arrived.

In September, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, a

The 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, arrived in June.



Spanish medical team and a German hospital ship arrived, plus the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. Two U.S. operations, Attleboro and Irving, kept the enemy off-balance. The 1st Cavalry accounted for 230 Viet Cong killed in Binh Dinh Province, while the 196th Infantry Brigade and elements of the 1st, 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions and 173rd Airborne Brigade mauled the 9th VC Division, killing more than 1,100 in Operation Attleboro. The force also captured 2,243,000 pounds of enemy rice.

During October, a combined force of 1st Cavalry, Koreans and Vietnamese killed 681 Viet Cong in Operation Irving. To avoid the superior firepower of the Allies, the enemy confined his raids to the northern provinces near his supply lines.

November was marked by increased VC raiding. The 4th Infantry Division, operating west of Plei Djereng, withstood a mortar barrage of more than 500 rounds. At the close of the year, elements of the 9th Infantry Division arrived to bring the U.S. troop strength to 361,000.

DIPLOMACY AND POLITICS

The year was marked by harmony on the diplomatic front. To set the stage for high-level discussion, then 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 in 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. Then Secretary of Defense McNamara visited Vietnam prior to the Philippine meeting.

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

The political calm was shattered in April, when the 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 historic capital of Hue. The unrest continued into early April, resulting in anti-government 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 forces pledged to fight communism alongside the government.

Marine operations in Military Region 1 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.

Relative calm prevailed for the remainder of the year, broken only by the Saigon dock strike. The new constitution's first three articles were approved.



A monk uses a loudspeaker to talk to a crowd during Buddhist demonstrations.

The 1967 Squeeze

U.S. soldier under fire scrambles for cover (right). U.S. patrol moves cautiously through the jungle searching for "Charlie" (below).



In 1967, the free world forces tightened the screw on the enemy. His manpower was slowly whittled down by many operations. His weapons and food caches were seized, blunting many planned raids and offensive actions. Increased air strikes made his supply routes difficult to use. His cause was weakened further by thousands of Viet Cong, political cadre and North Vietnamese who rallied to the government of the Republic.

During the later months of 1967, the enemy made spectacular tries at propaganda victories at Loc Ninh and Dak To. These battles alone accounted for nearly 3,000 enemy dead.

His losses for the year included 87,534 killed in action and more than 31,000 weapons captured. He lost almost 14,000 tons of rice and 162 tons of salt. His ammunition supply was reduced by almost 2½ million rounds. His ranks were depleted by 27,178 who rallied to the Chieu Hoi Program, 17,671 of whom were fighting men. He was found to be recruiting boys from 12 to 16 years old.

He was, feeling the pinch, yet he continued to fight. Civilians in the Republic of Vietnam were his victims almost as often as the military. Communist terrorists slaughtered more than 4,000 South Vietnamese and wounded more than 8,000 in their attacks. Kidnaping accounted for another 5,454 persons, all in an attempt to control the people.

Meanwhile, more civilians moved into government-protected resettlement areas than ever before.

The enemy's source of labor, recruits, food and shelter was slipping away.

In the early spring, the Constituent Assembly, under the administration of Premier Ky, was submitted a draft constitution for South Vietnam. The Assembly approved the draft and it was ratified shortly afterwards. A copy of the new constitution was presented to President Johnson while in Vietnam to attend a meeting of ambassadors of Manila Conference countries in preparation for a two-day conference in Guam.





During May, elections were held (left). In October, Nguyen Van Thieu was sworn in as President of South Vietnam (below)

ELECTIONS

In April and May, there was an eight-week election period for thousands of villages and hamlets throughout the country. About 77% 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 others kidnaped.

On September 3, the presidential elections were held. About 83% of the voters turned out. Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky were elected president and

vice-president respectively. The voters also chose an upper house for the new government.

Early in October, the Vietnamese National Assembly validated 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% of the electorate turning out to complete the last round of elections. On the last day of the month, inauguration ceremonies were conducted in downtown Saigon.



MILITARY OPERATIONS

Elsewhere, Thailand announced in March it would allow bases within its borders to be used by B-52s in support of Vietnam operations. Previously, they had flown from Guam to South Vietnam in a 5,000-mile round trip.

Russia made a late-September announcement that a new military assistance agreement had been signed by the U.S.S.R. and North Vietnam whereby the Russians would furnish airplanes, anti-aircraft and rocket equipment, artillery and small arms ammunition and other military equipment.

By February, 20,000 men were added to U.S. forces, increasing troop strength to 470,000, a few thousand from the year-end peak of 490,000 servicemen in-country. The increased manpower permitted the U.S. forces to enter the field for long periods of time.

The four-day truce for the Lunar New Year, Tet, provided a stand-down period in which many operations were terminated. Operation Lam Son II in Binh Duong Province and Operation Thayer II were terminated with a combined kill of slightly more than 2,000 enemy soldiers.

At mid-month, elements of the 9th Infantry Division in Long An Province started Operation Enterprise while other 9th Division units began operations in the Mekong Delta with U.S. Navy units. This marked the beginning of the Allied squeeze on Viet Cong domination of Delta waterways.

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 war, Operation Junction City. The gigantic force was supported by the 11th Combat Aviation Group and 7th Air Force planes.

U.S. troops in War Zone C, north and west of Saigon, formed a giant horseshoe enclosing 250 square miles of enemy-held territory. Heavy fighting characterized the operation, and large stores of ammunition, weapons, clothing, food, documents and utensils were confiscated. After 81 days, 2,738 enemy lay dead from the operation and War Zone C was no longer a VC stronghold. Their bases were destroyed, most of their supplies were gone.

Farther north, the 1st Cavalry Division had begun Operation Pershing and the Communists pounded the Da Nang Air Base with more than 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.

In April, with enemy pressure mounting near the Demilitarized Zone, Marine units were moved to counter the threat. The 196th Infantry Brigade was moved to the Chu Lai area to replace the relocated Marine units. Other units soon joined the 196th. They were the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division and, in May, the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). The Army troops in the zone were placed under the operational control of Task Force Oregon.

In July, Thailand announced it would send a 2,200-man regiment to the Republic of Vietnam. This force was the

first ground combat unit contributed by the Thais who had already provided airlift of supplies on several occasions.

Enemy action during August was 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. The Ban Me Thuot airfield in Darlac Province was struck by mortars twice during the month.

In Military Region I, the Marine bases at Gio Linh and Con Thien began to receive heavy artillery and mortar attacks. These attacks reached a peak during September. Marine and Army artillery, plus Air Force bombers, lifted during September. Marine and Army artillery, plus Air Force bombers, lifted the

New operations during September included Task Force Oregon's Operation Wheeler in Military Region I, accounting for nearly 2,000 enemy dead; the Mobile Riverine Force's Operation Coronado V in the Delta, costing the enemy 330 killed; Operation Bolling, conducted by the 173rd Airborne Brigade and elements of the 1st Cavalry Division; and the 1st Infantry Division's Operation Shenandoah in Binh Duong Province, which took 956 enemy lives and 100 weapons.



Huey Cobra flies cover for some "slicks".

The Huey Cobra, a helicopter especially designed for ground support, was introduced in October. This gunship, with advanced weapons systems, slim silhouette, high speed and maneuverability, began combat operations in 1st Aviation Brigade units. The 4th Infantry Division started Operation MacArthur in Pleiku Province during the month. Also the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry, arrived at Qui Nhon to further increase U.S. strength in the Republic.

DAK TO

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 border. The town was normally garrisoned by ARVN troops and elements of a U.S. Special Forces-trained Civilian Irregular Defense Group.



U.S. aircraft move toward enemy target.

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 battle grew in ferocity. The NVA regulars pinned the Americans down. The 3rd Battalion commander called in air support against positions atop the steep hill. Artillery and mortar fire combined with the bombs to stem the enemy fire. Morning reconnaissance 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 to reinforce those locked in combat. The 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 air strikes pounded the hills for hours prior to infantry assaults on the enemy positions. The soldiers found the enemy still capable of delivering effective 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 fought off American and ARVN soldiers for four days.

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 was impossible to estimate.

AT YEAR'S END

At year's end, one of the most atrocious terror attacks in Vietnam's history occurred. In the Montagnard village of Dak Son, two battalions of Communists pushed the local defense force into a small area, then rampaged up and down the hamlet streets, systematically burning down more than



A Communist MIG-17 is shot down.

half of the 150 thatched homes. With flame throwers and grenades, the Communists slaughtered persons in their primitive homes and bunkers. Seven out of every 10 of the 252 victims were either women or children.

New U.S. troops continued to arrive in-country during December, mostly from the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). Just before Christmas, U.S. troop strength increased to more than that of the Korean War.

Tet and the Aftermath ... 1968



Smoke from VC-fired rockets lingers over one part of Saigon.

Without question, 1968 was the most eventful year during America's agonizing war in Southeast Asia. It saw the most savage series of attacks, the most brutal fighting and a strong glimmer of hope for an honorable end.

The most violent time of the year was the Communists' winter-spring offensive. It began with a 36-hour New Year's truce that was violated by the Reds 177 times. Bombers flew north for the fourth year to raid above the Demilitarized Zone.

SIEGE AT KHE SANH

There were rumors that Ho Chi Minh was seriously ill as January neared its end. An offensive was beginning near the DMZ, where a string of artillery, rocket and ground attacks were unleashed on Allied posts all along the buffer zone. Khe Sanh and neighboring Lang Vei were hit hard on January 21, beginning a three-month drama that would focus the eyes of the world on a small Marine garrison in the rolling hills of the Laotian border country.

The U.S. command rushed 3,000 1st Cavalry Division troops as reinforcements into Military Region 1 (MR1) and infantrymen from the 101st Airborne Division soon followed. A total of 10,000 Marine and Army troops were poured into areas near the DMZ to guard against an expected "major offensive" there.

American intelligence reports indicated that a fresh North Vietnamese division had been infiltrated into MR1 to

make a total of three full divisions poised for a general attack.

TET TREACHERY

On Saturday, January 27, the Communists began their unilateral seven-day truce to mark the Tet holiday season. However, it was completely ignored in the northern part of the Republic, and the carnage went on. On January 31, the Allies began their 36-hour Tet truce. It lasted 15½ hours – until rockets began slamming into Da Nang Air Base. Wild street fighting broke out in the peaceful seaside resort of Nha Trang and Communist sappers breached the security of the U.S. Embassy grounds in Saigon.

One senior American officer said of the northern provinces: "It is something I would label an invasion. It is no longer just an infiltration." Street fighting raged in all eight major cities and at least 30 towns and provincial capitals.

The North Vietnamese virtually occupied Hue. They assassinated more than 1,000 civilians in that city alone. They held half of Kontum. Terrorist slaughter was reported everywhere. Foreign missionaries were slain, and anyone who worked for the Americans was murdered or tortured.

General William C. Westmoreland, U.S. commander in Vietnam, stated the attacks were a diversionary effort to draw attention from the northern part of the country. Communist sappers were operating within 200 yards of his

Tan Son Nhut headquarters. The Philippine Embassy residence had been destroyed by terrorists, the ambassador and his wife barely escaping death or capture. Tanks ringed the Saigon home of U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker.

Five thousand Communists had died in savage, confused fighting in the first of the Tet offensive. That name was already burning itself into front pages and TV screens around the world. More than 650 enemy deaths occurred in Saigon alone.

By February 9, 920 U.S. soldiers had died in the Tet fighting; 4,561 were wounded. Newsmen were reporting that "countless civilians perished in the fighting." The final count was almost 20,000 killed or wounded. Dive bombers and rocket helicopters were raining destruction on enemy troops entrenched in the suburbs of South Vietnam's capital, the city that the world had considered secure until the morning of February 1.



The scars of terrorism will last a long time.

COMMUNISTS GAIN NOTHING

That is how it began. It went on in Saigon until mid-February, when fighting still flickered in the suburbs of Cholon and around the Phu Tho racetrack. Who won the battles of the Tet offensive? It is a hard question to answer. Certainly, the Communists were deprived of every major goal, with the exception of publicity.

It was by no stretch of the imagination a military win; 27,706 Reds died in the Tet fighting. For this, the



MPs hustle a Viet Cong detainee apprehended near the American Embassy in Saigon during Tet.

River boats on patrol.



Communist high command had not one single prize to show. It was not a psychological victory. In no clearly defined instance did any of the civilians in the areas of fighting join or support the Reds – unless at the point of a gun.

On the other hand, no one will deny that South Vietnam's city populace suffered terribly. There are scars of destruction that will last a long time—and scars of the mind that will last longer. As Dean Rusk said, "This is a time of trial for the South Vietnamese and their Allies. It may well be the climactic period of the struggle in Southeast Asia."

ANCIENT HUE HELD

As the cleanup began in mid-February, a drama was unfolding in Hue. Some 4,000 communists had died there in the first three weeks of February, but an estimated 500 North Vietnamese had holed up in the old imperial Citadel, from which Vietnam's ancient emperors ruled. A Communist flag had been raised on January 31 and it fluttered for nearly a month over the Citadel as U.S. Marines pushed grueling street fighting back toward the center, step by step. On February 24, a company of South Vietnamese soldiers charged the last holdout and the flag came down. Hue lay in ruins.

In mid-March, Operation Quyet Thang (Resolved to Win) started around Saigon. More than 50,000 Allied troops –

including the 1st, 9th, 25th Infantry Divisions, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment and elements of the 7th and 25th ARVN Infantry Divisions, an airborne task force, and the 5th Ranger Group plus National Police forces—swept the provinces around the capital, searching for Communist troops and arms caches. Before it ended, on April 9, 2,658 Reds had been killed.

CHANGES FROM THE TOP

On Friday, March 22, President Johnson announced in Washington that General Westmoreland would be promoted to Army Chief of Staff. Replacing General Westmoreland as commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam would be General Creighton W. Abrams, then deputy commander.

On the last day of March, the President made his famous "I won't run" speech and cut back the bombing in the north to below the 19th Parallel, marking America's broadest appeal to Hanoi for peace.

On April 1, Operation Pegasus/Lam Son, a massive aerial assault, began several days of sweeping near Laos that would lift the siege of beleaguered Khe Sanh Marine camp where up to 1,300 enemy shells had been falling every day. On the same day, President Nguyen Van Thieu announced general mobilization, which would place more than 200,000 additional South Vietnamese under arms by the end of the year. Another mass Allied sweep, Operation Toan Thang (Complete Victory), was launched on April 8. Fifty thousand soldiers began a drive through 11 provinces around Saigon, with the same objective that the earlier operation had, but on a scale twice as large.

TALKS BEGIN IN PARIS

On May 3, there was an announcement the world had been waiting for: the United States and Hanoi agreed to begin preliminary peace discussions in Paris. On the very next night, though, the nearly simultaneous shelling of 119 cities, towns and villages in the Republic began. There were ground attacks in Saigon and Bu Dop, three miles from Cambodia. The Bu Dop attackers were driven off in hours. It took longer in Saigon.

There was wild and confused street fighting in the western and southern suburbs of the city. The first secretary of the West German Embassy was assassinated. But no U.S. installations in Saigon were attacked this time, and there was no such terrorism and sniping as marked the Tet fighting. On Monday, May 6, the Reds were turned back when they tried to break into Tan Son Nhut Air Base from the western perimeter, but the South Vietnamese commander of the base was killed by an enemy rocket.

By the end of the week, the resistance had been localized into pockets in the western and southern suburbs, but they still had to be rooted out. This meant treacherous house-to-house fighting and more heavy damage to Saigon's badly needed housing areas. By Sunday, May 12, it was over. The last pocket of Reds surrendered. Enemy losses had reached a total of 2,982 killed. They had never entered the heart of the city itself. An intended 26 to 30 battalions had never gotten close enough to take part in the second assault on Saigon. The two big sweeps had cut them off or wiped them out.





Skysoldiers of the 173rd Abn. Bde. advancing under fire (left). A soldier checks the passport of a traveler as a precautionary measure (center). Flares and smoke mark sites of combat during the 1968 Tet attacks (right).

PEACE?

The next day, May 13, the Paris peace talks began. But on Ho Chi Minh's birthday, May 19, 20 big 122mm rockets slammed into downtown Saigon, killing 11 and wounding 51. It marked the start of a scatter-shot terror campaign of rocketings against Saigon and other cities that killed only innocent civilians and lasted until the fall. The shellings did more to turn the population against the VC than to

terrorize them into the Communist line. Massive, close-in Allied sweeps turned up scores of Red rockets and put a stop to most of the shellings. During the last half of the year, a switch in combat accent away from the cities and back into the countryside occurred. President Johnson, after months of bitter wrangling with Hanoi's representatives in Paris, told the world he was ordering a total halt to the bombing of North Vietnam on November 1, five months after he initially limited the bombing.

A platoon winds its way through the fertile fields in the never-ending search for the enemy



1969... A Year of Transition

The new year got off on a hopeful note with the release of three American soldiers captured by the Viet Cong during 1968 and the escape, the day before, of Special Forces Major James Rowe, a VC captive since 1963. Peace talks were continuing in Paris and Richard M. Nixon was inaugurated as President of the United States.

During the February offensive, more than 100 cities and military facilities in the Republic of Vietnam came under attack, but American and Vietnamese forces quickly repelled and routed the attackers, inflicting heavy enemy casualties.

JOINT OPERATIONS

With each new day, the ARVN began playing a larger role in the war effort. Vietnamization was working. Many combined operations with ARVN units were undertaken.

On January 13, elements of the 23rd Infantry Division, ARVN troops and U.S. Marines joined forces for Operation Russell Beach. The operation ended February 10, with a cordon on the Batangan Peninsula resulting in 158 enemy killed. Operation Vernon Lake II, begun November 2, west-southwest of Quang Ngai City, had resulted in 455 enemy killed and 181 suspects detained, as compared with 23 U.S. soldiers killed.

The 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) and the ARVN 1st Infantry Division continued Operation Nevada Eagle from late 1968 until the end of February. The operation resulted in more than 3,000 enemy killed.

Defying Allied warnings that continued attacks could only end in defeat, Communist gunners stepped up the shelling of cities and military bases with rocket and mortar fire as their spring offensive got underway. The attacks continued through March, April and May. Enemy losses soared as U.S. and ARVN soldiers successfully defended military bases and positions while continuing to receive a minimum of casualties.

ENEMY SUFFER

In late April, an estimated two battalions of NVA and VC troops attacked a fire patrol base occupied by an element of the 25th Infantry Division, 20 kilometers south of Tay Ninh City. Troopers of the 25th Infantry Division manning the base were backed by artillery, air strikes and helicopter gunships. At least 120 of the enemy were killed.

Operation Massachusetts Striker, a 69-day push into the A Shau Valley, ended in early May after 101st Division soldiers accounted for 176 enemy killed and an impressive store of Communist supplies and munitions captured.

May 6 marked the beginning of what was to be a 56-day period of heavy enemy activity around a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) camp at Ben Het, eight miles west of Dak To in the Central Highlands.



ARVN platoon leader discusses tactics with American advisers.

American B-52 Stratofortresses pounded the area around Ben Het. On July 1, Republic of Vietnam troops moved through dense jungle to Ben Het without meeting opposition from the enemy. Communist activity around the base had subsided and, for the first time since May 6, a 24-hour period passed without a round hitting the base.

Late in May, 101st Division soldiers and ARVN infantrymen captured and occupied a 4,000-foot-high North Vietnamese mountaintop fortress along the rugged Laotian frontier. U.S. military spokesmen claimed more than 500 North Vietnamese troops had been killed in the battle for Dong Ap Bia mountain overlooking the A Shau Valley, a major Communist supply depot and staging area for attacks in northernmost Military Region 1 (MR 1).

REDEPLOYMENT BEGINS

It was little more than a week later that Presidents Nixon and Thieu met at Midway Island and announced a

25,000-man redeployment. President Nixon promised that further announcements would be made when the time was right for additional replacement of American troops with Republic of Vietnam soldiers.

Plans were made to redeploy the 9th Infantry Division back to the States. During September and October of 1969, the 1st and 2nd Brigades were deactivated and the 3rd Brigade remained at its base camp in Tan An, where it stayed until its redeployment and deactivation in October 1970.

As President Nixon had promised, the initial contingent was leaving a month to the day from the announcement at Midway Island. Also as promised, all of the 25,000 troops were gone from Vietnam by the end of August.



The President makes a surprise visit to Vietnam in July 1969.

As the low level of ground action continued into late July, President Nixon embarked on a world-wide tour which included countries of Southeast Asia. On July 30, while on the Thailand leg of his journey, the President took a day off and made a surprise visit to the Republic of Vietnam. He traveled to Saigon for meetings with President Thieu. During mid-afternoon, President Nixon made a quick flight to Di An to talk with members of the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division.

WAR LULL HALTS

As the summer wore into August, the lull came to an abrupt halt with massive Communist ground attacks on forward elements of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and several ARVN and CIDG units in the Quan Loi-Loc Ninh area near the Cambodian border.

Elements of the 1st, 9th and 25th Infantry Divisions, along with units of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade; 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division; and the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile); plus ARVN and other free world

forces, concluded the third phase of Operation Toan Thang, initiated February 16 throughout Military Region 3 (MR 3). During the operation, a total of 41,803 enemy were killed. Additionally, more than 13,700 individual and almost 2,900 crew-served weapons were captured.

During the first 15 days of Operation Toan Thang's fourth phase, begun November 1, units operating throughout MR 3 combined to kill 1,891 Communists.



Thick jungle makes the going tough.

In a major engagement during September, the 23rd Infantry Division, manning an isolated hilltop firebase in Hiep Duc Valley, weathered a three-hour attack by an estimated North Vietnamese Army sapper battalion, killing 31 NVA regulars. Several of the Communists made it to the outer defenses of Landing Zone Siberia, 24 miles west-northwest of Tam Ky, but were felled before they could penetrate the perimeter. A similar attack on nearby Firebase West, on August 17, touched off five days of bitter fighting in the valley in which 364 enemy perished.

In early October, 4th Division reconnaissance elements retraced the footprints of two NVA soldiers killed in an early morning firefight directly back to the main body of a company-sized Communist force 26 miles northwest of An Khe where, supported by gunships, the troops killed an additional 19.



Mobility, firepower and shock effect are the strength of a main battle tank.



Sheridan track followed by APCs moves through a rubber plantation.

A three-week period of relative calm was broken in the first week of September when Army units operating throughout MR 3 reported a sharp upsurge in enemy activity on the day following the death of North Vietnam's leader Ho Chi Minh.

Sheridan tracks and armored cavalry assault vehicles of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment virtually destroyed a company of 7th NVA Division troops during a six-hour battle between Loc Ninh and the Vietnamese Cambodian border, killing 70 of the enemy and taking 5 wounded detainees the next day. About the same time, 1st Infantry Division ground troops killed 60 Communists who attempted to ambush a 1st Logistical Command convoy heading for Quan Loi along Highway 13.



Engineer road clearing operations keep travel routes open.



Scout dogs have proved themselves in tracking and finding the enemy.

VIETNAMIZATION SHOWS PROGRESS

It was during the fall of 1969 that President Nixon's Vietnamization concept began to bear fruit. The security of the sprawling Mekong Delta was successfully turned over to ARVN forces and in all areas of the country U.S. units were working side by side with the ARVN. The country gained a new posture of pride as each day better trained and better equipped South Vietnamese forces flexed their strength against enemy forces. Each day this new strength enhanced the possibility of future withdrawals of American units.