

TOUR 365

HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
Office of the Commander
APO San Francisco 96222



Now that your tour of duty with the United States Army, Vietnam has ended, you can look back with perspective on your experiences. You now know the difficult tasks inherent in fighting to help protect the freedom of peace-loving people against Communist invaders. As a veteran, you understand better than many of our countrymen the meaning of North Vietnam's aggression against the Republic of Vietnam.

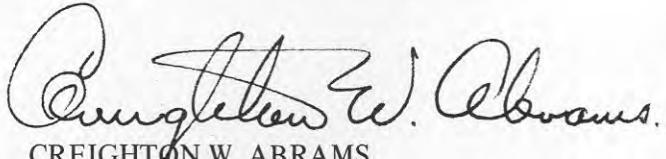
You have seen the horror and destruction created by North Vietnamese soldiers and the local Viet Cong terrorists who kill and maim their own neighbors. You have fought beside soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam and other Free World nations in a common struggle of defense.

During the past year, U.S. and Republic of Vietnam forces have made considerable progress in the Vietnamization program. Because of the intensive training received through our efforts, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces are rapidly approaching the eventual takeover of the defense of their country.

Our assistance in implementing the Pacification program has also helped the Republic of Vietnam to expand its control over areas which were previously influenced or controlled by the enemy. This has resulted in a better life and increased security for the Vietnamese people.

People at home will want to hear your story of the war. Tell it. Regardless of the role you played, part of your story is reflected in the pages of this magazine. I hope this publication will assist you in relating your experiences.

I extend my sincere appreciation for your help in accomplishing our task in Vietnam and my thanks for a job well done. May your trip home and reunion with your family and friends be the pleasant, happy occasion you anticipate.


CREIGHTON W. ABRAMS
General, United States Army
Commanding



RICHARD M. NIXON, 1969

It is beyond question that without the American commitment in Vietnam, Asia would be a far different place today... Asian leaders know why we are in Vietnam... and urge us to see it through to a satisfactory conclusion.



LYNDON B. JOHNSON, 1965

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



JOHN F. KENNEDY, 1961

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



DWIGHT D. EISEN- HOWER, 1959

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

TOUR 365

For Soldiers Going Home

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General Creighton W. Abrams, Commanding General
 Lieutenant General Frank T. Mildren, Deputy Commanding General
 Lieutenant Colonel Ross L. Johnson, Information Officer
 Major Victor F. Keefe, Command Information Officer
 First Lieutenant Joseph E. Moreland Jr., Editor
 Sergeant Alex Van Ryan, Associate Editor

Vietnam

in Retrospect

The cathedral at Tay Ninh is the Holy See of the Cao Dai Church. Cao Daism is a blend of Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity, the major religions of Vietnam.



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.

In 938 A.D., after centuries of Chinese domination, the Vietnamese drove the invaders from the Red River Delta at the Battle of Bach Dang. Attempts to retake the area were repelled. In 946, though by no means out of danger, an independent Vietnam became a reality. With the exception of a 20-year interlude of reoccupation in the early 15th Century, Vietnam remained independent for the next 900 years.

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

The role of the emperor was dominant. He was the father of the nation-family—the absolute temporal monarch in whom all power of state resided. And he was the religious head of the realm acting as intermediary between it and heaven. A civil bureaucracy, called the mandarinate, performed the functions of administering the country.

In mid-13th Century, Kublai Khan tried to invade Dai-Viet, as Vietnam was then called. Three times his armies were repelled—the last time in 1287 by an army under General Tran Hung Dao.

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

European influence reached Vietnam in 1535 when Portuguese Captain Antonio de Paria 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 as they had the West Indians.

The first Catholic missionaries entered Vietnam during the 16th Century. 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.

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

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 missionaries who were, at times, being persecuted.

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, or what today is North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

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

The emperor and the mandarinate remained in both central and north Vietnam; 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 mandarinate, 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. 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.

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

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 the 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 once Japan surrendered, abdicated his throne and handed over power to Ho Chi Minh. French troops re-entered Vietnam in September.

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. On May 7, 1954, the French army was decisively defeated at Dien Bien Phu.

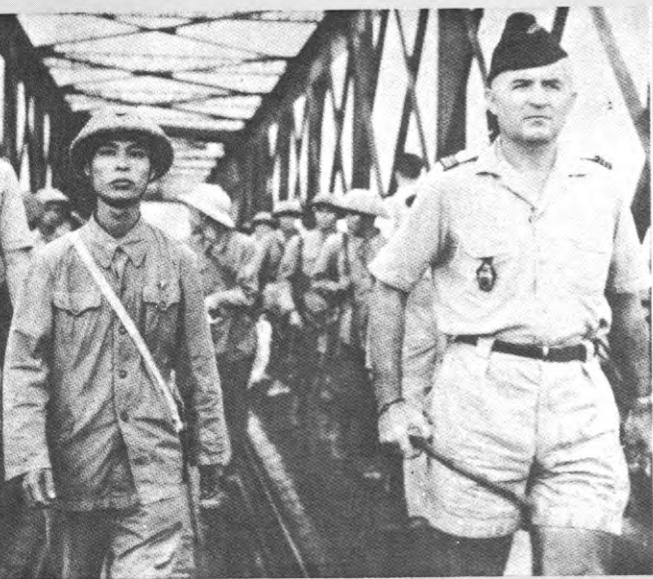
The day after the Battle of Dien Bien Phu the Geneva Conference turned its attention to the French-Indochina War. The conference had been called by the Big Four to discuss the Korean and Indochina problems.

The agreement reached for Vietnam fixed a provisional demarcation line roughly along the 17th parallel and provided for the total evacuation of French military forces, as well as the removal of Viet Minh forces from the South. Freedom of movement between the two sections was guaranteed for 300 days. An international Control Commission was formed to supervise the truce agreements, its members coming from Canada, India and Poland. Finally a provision was made for the holding of general elections throughout Vietnam in 1958.

The French proceeded to hand over the controls and administration to the non-Communist Vietnamese with its 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. This 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 which would be the base for the realization of his ultimate dream of a unified Communist Vietnam.



The stern faces of victor and vanquished are shown, shortly after the fall of Dien Bien Phu (above). The Geneva Conference opened in April 1954. Participants included Communist China, Laos, Cambodia, South Vietnam and North Vietnam (below).



U. S. Army, Vietnam

...and its units

United States Army, Vietnam as we know it on its anniversary, was created on July 20, 1965. But U.S. involvement in Vietnam 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 was forthcoming until late 1961. Then the Republic of Vietnam declared a state of national emergency on Oct. 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 two subordinate field commands, I Field Force, Vietnam, and II Field Force, Vietnam. IFFV was located at Nha Trang to command U.S. Army units in II Corps Tactical Zone; IFFV was located in III Corps to command Army units there.

General Bruce Palmer Jr., then USARV deputy commanding general, paid tribute to the men of USARV on their second anniversary in 1967 when he named USARV "a fighting command of dedicated soldiers, young and not so young, career men and citizen-soldiers, but All-Americans in the truest sense."



The United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) was established on Feb. 8, 1962, as a unified command subordinate to the commander-in-chief, Pacific. MACV has the mission of assisting the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces to maintain internal security against subversion and insurgency and to resist external aggression.

With headquarters in Saigon, MACV controls all of the United States Armed Forces in Vietnam. MACV is involved in two basic activities. Its forces constantly seek to engage the enemy in combat on the ground and territorial waters of the Republic of Vietnam, to provide assistance to the constitutional government of Vietnam in building a free society capable of defending itself.





I FIELD FORCE, VIETNAM

I Field Force, Vietnam, was organized in August 1965, as Task Force Alpha to control all U.S. Army forces in Vietnam. Shortly, however, the mission was changed to control over forces in II Corps. In November 1965, Task Force Alpha was renamed Field Force Vietnam. The command became I Field Force in March 1966, when a second field force was organized in III Corps.

Currently, the major units under operational control of I Field Force include the 4th Infantry Division; the 173rd Airborne Brigade; Task Force South; the 17th Combat Aviation Group, and Company B, 5th Special Forces Group. The battalions of I Field Force Artillery provide support for all major U.S. and Allied combat operations. The complex communications network in II Corps is operated by the 54th Signal Battalion.

Task Force South was organized in July 1968 to increase pressure on enemy forces operating in the four southern provinces of II Corps. It is a force made up of combat units from the 4th Infantry Division, 173rd and the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) with armor, helicopter and artillery support. Task Force South's command element is co-located with the Light Infantry Command Post of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) 23rd Infantry Division. Coordinated operations have resulted.



II FIELD FORCE, VIETNAM

Since its arrival in Vietnam, on March 15, 1966, II Field Force, Vietnam, has grown into the largest combat command in the world.

Though only three years old, II Field Force, Vietnam, traces a proud lineage to its predecessor, XXII U.S. Army Corps. Prior to its inactivation at the end of World War II, XXII Corps saw action in the Rhineland and in various central European campaigns. When reactivated at Ft. Hood, Texas, in January 1966, the command received its new name, II Field Force.

Upon arrival in Vietnam, II Field Force had operational control of five major units: the 1st and 25th infantry divisions, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, the 12th Combat Aviation Group and the 23rd Artillery Group.

During the following three years, numerous U.S. and Free World Military Forces came under II Field Force's control. Currently operating under II Field Force operational control are such diverse units as the 25th Infantry Division, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the 1st Australian Task Force, the Royal Thai Black Panther Regiment and the Capitol Military Assistance Command (CMAC).

Also with II Field Force are the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and the 3rd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division. The 23rd and 54th Artillery Groups, the 12th Combat Aviation Group and the 20th Engineer Brigade provide support for the II Field Force combat units.



XXIV CORPS

XXIV Corps was first activated at Ft. Shafter, Hawaii, on April 8, 1944. It remained in Hawaii until Sept. 11 of the same year, when it then embarked on combat operations in the South Pacific.

The Corps received its baptism of fire near Dulag, on Leyte in the Philippine Islands on Oct. 20, 1944. At that time, the 7th Infantry Division and 96th Infantry Division were the major combat elements of the Corps, later to be joined by the 77th Infantry Division.

From the Philippines, the Corps moved to Okinawa, and in September 1945, moved into Korea. It remained in Korea until it was deactivated on Jan. 25, 1949.

On Aug. 15, 1968, XXIV Corps was recalled to the colors at Phu Bai, Republic of Vietnam. The Corps replaced Provisional Corps Vietnam which had been created to assist in stemming the tide of the North Vietnamese Army Tet Offensive in January 1968. The Corps was placed under the operational control of III Marine Amphibious Force—its brother in arms of 24 years earlier in the South Pacific.

At the time of its activation, the Corps assumed operational control of those units which had been under the control of Provisional Corps Vietnam: the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), the 3rd Marine Division and the 108th Artillery Group and the Navy's Task Force Clearwater.

1ST LOGISTICAL COMMAND

On Sept. 20, 1950, the 1st Logistical Command was activated at Ft. McPherson, Ga., with 15 officers and 35 enlisted men. Its early years were spent at Ft. McPherson and later at Ft. Bragg, N.C.; the command's varied responsibilities during this period include participation in logistical exercises and assisting in the testing and evaluation of new logistics doctrine and organization.

In July 1958, 1st Log was designated a major unit of the Strategic Army Corps, and during the next three years it was responsible for administrative and logistical support to contingency forces of the Corps. During the Berlin crisis, 1st Log deployed to France and became a major unit of the Communications Zone, Europe. After nearly a year of service in Europe, the command returned to the U.S. and was based at Ft. Hood, Texas. As U.S. military involvement in Vietnam increased, an urgent requirement developed for immediate and responsive combat service support. On April 1, 1965, 1st Log was established in Saigon to meet the challenge.

By the end of 1965, less than a year after establishment, 1st Log's strength had increased to more than 22,000 personnel.

During 1966, 1st Log became the largest single major command in Vietnam as its military personnel strength increased to 50,000.



1ST AVIATION BRIGADE

On the frontless war in Vietnam, more than 2,000 rotary and fixed-wing aircraft from the 1st Aviation Brigade give ground commanders an "extra edge" in closing with the enemy and defeating him in combat. Never before in military history has a ground commander approached the capability with which today he can find the enemy, conduct route and area reconnaissance, deploy infantrymen to the enemy's location, deliver sustained firepower and supplies, control the ground battle from the air, adjust artillery and air strikes and evacuate the wounded soldiers.

Established in May 1966, the 1st Aviation Brigade consistently supplies the "extra edge" with which the ground commander can 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 been on all types of missions, including tactical combat assaults, direct fire support, aerial reconnaissance, medevac, troop lift, cargo hauling, evacuation of Vietnamese civilians from battle areas and actions in support of the Rural Development program.

In 1969, the brigade carried more than 6.5 million troops in more than four million sorties, flying more than 1.5 million hours to accomplish this monumental mission.



1ST SIGNAL BRIGADE

From a satellite in orbit 18,200 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 20,000 men scattered among more than 200 sites in Vietnam and Thailand, the 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 worldwide strategic communications system and extensive area communications systems in Vietnam and Thailand.

All communications entering or leaving Vietnam must pass through facilities operated by the brigade, which consists of six subordinate signal groups, five in Vietnam and one in Thailand. In the more than three years of its existence the 1st Signal team has provided communications of a scope never before achieved in a combat zone. The primary mission is to "keep the shooters talking" but as the last sentence of every signal unit mission outlines, the communicator will "perform as infantry" when required. This he has done admirably.



4TH INFANTRY DIVISION

The history of the 4th Infantry Division dates back to 1917, when the division was organized at Camp Greene, N. C. During World War I, division troops fought through the bitter campaigns of Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne. From the outset, their presence on the battlefield was feared by enemy troopers, who referred to them as the "men with the terrible green crosses." In the Meuse-Argonne, the 4th Division achieved its initial triumph by cracking the Hindenburg line and stopping the Kaiser's all-out drive to Paris.

During World War II at Normandy, the 4th Division smashed ashore at Utah Beach and later spearheaded the drive to Cherbourg. Elements of the hard-hitting 4th were the first U.S. troops into Paris and the first Allied troops to set foot on German soil.

In 1966 the division deployed to Vietnam in four major increments. The 2nd Brigade, soon to become known as the Highlanders, landed in August, and by mid-October the entire division was operating in the Central Highlands. No time was wasted in going into full-scale operations. On Oct. 18, the division launched Operation Paul Revere IV. Since that time the division has continued to mete out heavy punishment on Viet Cong and main line North Vietnamese Army forces.

3RD BRIGADE, 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION

When the 9th Infantry Division became the first U.S. Army unit to redeploy from Vietnam, the 3rd Brigade was left at its base camp in Tan An. The Go Devil Brigade has kept the memory of the 9th Division alive with its operations in southern III Corps Tactical Zone.

The 3rd Brigade, along with the rest of the 9th Infantry Division—the Old Reliablies—was first organized July 18, 1918, at Camp Sheridan, Ala., but was demobilized in February 1919 shortly after the war ended. It was redesignated a Regular Army unit in 1923, though remaining inactive. Reactivation took place on Aug. 1, 1940, at Ft. Bragg, N.C., and subsequently, the division took part in action in North Africa, on the Normandy beaches, across France, Belgium and Germany. Following World War II the division underwent a series of inactivations and reactivations, with the most recent call to duty being on Feb. 1, 1966, at Ft. Riley, Kan.

When the division first began landing in Vietnam at Vung Tau on Dec. 19, 1966, a new chapter in its history opened. The 3rd Brigade became the first American infantry unit to establish a permanent base in the Mekong Delta at Dong Tam in mid-January.

When the enemy launched his 1968 Tet attacks, the Old Reliablies reacted with swift precision to gain decisive victories, accounting for almost 2,000 VC killed. In July 1968, the 9th Division was presented the Vietnamese Valor Award, Army Level.

25TH INFANTRY DIVISION

On Oct. 1, 1941, the 25th Infantry Division was born. On Dec. 7, 1941, the 25th Infantry Division was mature. It had to be. For the 25th was called to defend the shores of Hawaii after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

Within a year of that day of infamy, Tropic Lightning troops were on the offensive in the Pacific. From Guadalcanal through the northern chain of Solomon Islands to Arundel Island and Kolombangara, the 25th penetrated Japanese strongholds.

After World War II, the Tropic Lightning Division helped occupy Japan, remaining until 1950 when they were again called into combat in Korea. It was the unit's heroics at Pusan that earned for the division its first Korean Presidential Unit Citation. For three years Tropic Lightning battled seasoned North Korean and Chinese Communist soldiers.

In 1954, the 25th was back in Hawaii. By 1963, the division was providing men for Vietnam and in late 1965, the 3rd Brigade moved. By April 1966, the division was totally in combat. The present chapter of the 25th's history is still being written.

AMERICAL DIVISION

Born in the steamy jungles and mountains of New Caledonia during World War II, the Americal Division is the Army's only named division on active duty. It is also the largest infantry division operating in the Republic of Vietnam with three light infantry brigades and a squadron of armored cavalry.

The current Americal Division got its start in Vietnam as Task Force Oregon in April 1967, marking the first time that Army troops were employed in I Corps. The task force initially moved into the Quang Ngai and Quang Tien provinces of southern I Corps to ease the pressure on Marines operating near the Demilitarized Zone. On Sept. 25, 1967, Task Force Oregon was reconstituted and redesignated as the Americal Division.

The rugged terrain of southern I Corps, where the Americal Division makes its home at Chu Lai, runs the gamut from marshy, coastal lowlands to triple-canopy jungle on steep mountain slopes.

On every front the Americal soldiers have won significant battles and inflicted more than 30,000 casualties in less than two years in such operations as Vernon Lake II, Fayette Canyon, Russell Beach, Iron Mountain, Geneva Park and Frederick Hill.



1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)

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

As the Army's first airmobile division, the 1st Cav arrived in Vietnam on Sept. 14, 1965. Less than two months later, demonstrating a mastery of terrain and enemy, it won a Presidential Unit Citation by routing heavy North Vietnamese concentrations around the Ia Drang Valley west of Pleiku. In the next 13 months, Skytroopers met and defeated strong enemy forces throughout the II Corps Tactical Zone.

In January 1968, the division was ordered to I Corps, arriving in time to blunt the enemy's Tet Offensive. After a bitter battle near Hue in February, the unit moved swiftly in April to relieve the embattled Marine base at Khe Sanh.

In October 1968, the Cav was needed in III Corps to thwart a potential Communist threat. The equivalent of a medium-sized U.S. town took wings and landed at the other end of the Republic of Vietnam. While thrusting against enemy positions along the Cambodian border northwest of Saigon, some elements of the division moved further south into IV Corps, working with Naval forces in an operation called "Nav-Cav." Thus the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) became the first American division to have fought in all four tactical zones in the Republic of Vietnam.



101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)

In the carefully conceived plans for the invasion of Nazi-held Europe, it became evident that a large force of hard-hitting, superbly-trained airborne troops would be needed to nullify coastal defenses and cut enemy lines. Thus, on Aug. 16, 1942, the 101st Airborne Division was activated at Camp Claiborne, La.

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 in the Screaming Eagles' combat history.

The remainder of the division was in country by Dec. 13, 1967, and a year later, more than 10,000 enemy had died at the hands of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). The division's mission has carried it into all four of Vietnam's tactical zones, and it has successfully defended the U.S. embassy in Saigon, the Bien Hoa Air Base and the coastal city of Phan Thiet.





173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE

Formed in May 1963, the 173rd Airborne Brigade—nicknamed the “Sky Soldiers”—went to work training for the type of warfare it would encounter in Vietnam.

Arriving in May 1965, the 173rd was the first major U.S. Army ground combat unit to fight in Vietnam. The brigade is currently conducting operations in northern Binh Dinh Province in support of the Republic of Vietnam's pacification program.

Among the brigade's responsibilities are: conducting training to upgrade Vietnamese armed forces—particularly Regional and Popular Forces, Rural Development Cadre and Peoples' Self Defense Forces, helping provide security for key populated areas, reducing the VC infrastructure, increasing the number of Hoi Chanhs and securing a portion of Highway QL 1, Vietnam's only major north-south highway.

The brigade received the Presidential Unit Citation for distinguishing itself in the battle of Dak To during November 1967. Brigade elements fought with an entrenched North Vietnamese Army regiment on Hill 875, and in some of the most bitter fighting of the war, captured the hill on Thanksgiving Day. More than 800 enemy were killed.



1ST BRIGADE, 5TH INFANTRY DIVISION (MECHANIZED)

The 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) is a little more than a year old in terms of Vietnam experience, but its units have used the organization's unique mechanized combination of heavy firepower and mobility to good advantage.

The brigade was reorganized in March 1968 for Vietnam deployment and was in-country and ready to operate by Aug. 1, 1968.

Since November 1968, the 1st Brigade has been fighting a different war, having moved a few miles south of the DMZ to the Quang Tri area for search and clear, cordon and sweep operations. The brigade spends much of its time working with the Vietnamese Army and is constantly conducting a variety of civic action programs.

In addition to these small unit actions the brigade, from time to time, became involved in 3rd Marine Division operations and since March 1969, has been out on the Khe Sanh plains twice and up to the vicinity of the DMZ to aide the Marine elements of the command. The 1st Brigade has also maintained close contact with local ARVN, RF and PF forces. During the province elections in March 1969, there were no known acts of terrorism in the brigade's area of operation. The mission of the 1st Brigade is thus twofold: to conduct major operations against NVA elements and to provide peace and freedom to the residents of the Quang Tri area.



199TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE

The 199th Light Infantry Brigade arrived in Vietnam Dec. 12, 1966. From its base camp, situated just north of Long Binh Post, the brigade's mission has developed into a role of pacification.

The 1968 Tet Offensive began Jan. 31, with a 3 a.m. rocket attack against II Field Force, Vietnam, headquarters; Long Binh Post, and Bien Hoa Air Base. With several elements of the 275th VC Regiment simultaneously attacking the II Field Force-199th perimeter, the Redcatchers killed over 500 enemy in the first 14 hours of the attack, and after three days, had been credited with more than 900 enemy killed.

During the Jan. 31 Long Binh attacks, the brigade's 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry was helicoptered into Saigon to retake the Phu Tho Racetrack from enemy forces who had infiltrated the capital and were using the racetrack as a command post. The track was taken within eight hours and for the next two days, the battalion engaged in house-to-house fighting in the Cholon Sector.

The brigade's most recent actions have been characterized by light and sporadic contact with enemy forces during numerous reconnaissance-in-force operations around the Xuan Loc-Long Binh area.

11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT

For 67 years the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment—Blackhorse—has been known for its ability to perform its mission through preparedness of both men and material. From its birth as a horse cavalry regiment at Ft. Meyer, Va., 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 in the Mexican War, World War II and now Vietnam.

The regiment arrived in Vietnam in September 1966, and has been in almost constant contact with the enemy. A variety of missions, from clearing roads to dislodging enemy forces from almost inaccessible jungle areas, has taken the regiment from southeast Long Khanh Province to An Loc in northern Binh Long Province.

During 1969, the regiment participated in several major operations north of Lai Khe to offset an anticipated enemy offensive against Saigon. The operations, most recently in conjunction with ARVN forces, have greatly reduced the infiltration of enemy troops and supplies into the III Corps area.



5TH SPECIAL FORCES GROUP

Since 1962 when the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces began deploying teams to Vietnam on six months temporary duty, the men of Special Forces have been carrying on the tradition of bringing freedom from oppression to the people of the Republic of Vietnam. In October 1964, the 5th Special Forces Group Headquarters moved to the Republic of Vietnam and began a more intensified campaign in carrying out the group's mission to advise the Vietnamese Special Forces and assist them in their operations against the Viet Cong insurgents through the Civilian Irregular Defence Group program.

The group has also been engaged extensively in Civic Action Projects to improve agricultural techniques, and to build churches, schools, hospitals and recreation centers.

The unit colors of the 5th Group have 22 campaign streamers, six of which were earned in Vietnam. The Group has also received the Meritorious Unit Citation for service in Vietnam from Nov. 1 1966, to Jan. 31, 1968.

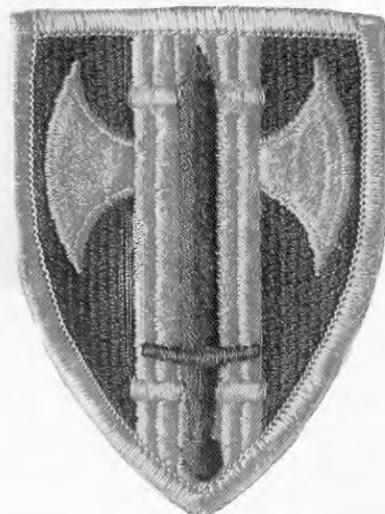


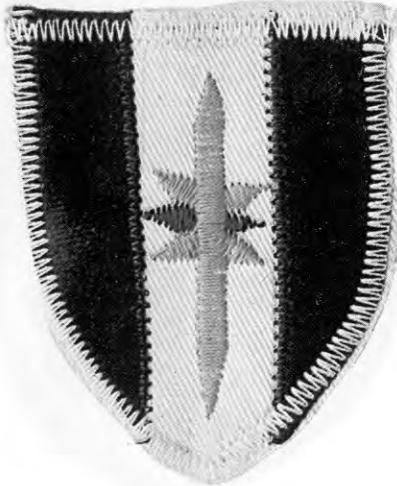
18TH MILITARY POLICE BRIGADE

From escorting mini-skirted singers to guarding strategic military points, from patrolling the streets of Hue to keeping the highways of the Delta open, the role of the 18th Military Police Brigade in Vietnam is diversified.

Established on May 20, 1966, and sent to Vietnam on Sept. 26, 1966, the brigade controls all non-divisional MPs from the DMZ down to the middle of Delta. It is the command element for two MP groups, seven MP battalions, seven infantry companies, a criminal investigation group and a transportation company (patrol boat river). The 18th MP Brigade has been used in a combat support role in addition to its normal police function. In this combat support role the MPs provide convoy escorts, highway and bridge security, refugee and detainee evacuation and traffic control.

The 18th MP Brigade also has control of a 22-square-mile area as its own tactical area of responsibility. This responsibility covers not only military operations but also civic actions programs.





44TH MEDICAL BRIGADE

The 44th Medical Brigade is the Army's major medical command in Vietnam, and it controls 165 medical support units and over 9,000 personnel. The Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment was constituted in the Regular Army on Dec. 30, 1965, and then activated on New Year's Day 1966 at Ft. Sam Houston, Texas. Ordered to Vietnam, the brigade arrived in Saigon and set up its headquarters in a group of villas in April 1966. Becoming operational in May, the brigade was reassigned directly under U.S. Army, Vietnam, and one month later moved its headquarters to Long Binh. The mission of the 44th Medical Brigade is to provide medical service support to U.S. Army personnel, Free World Military Assistance Forces personnel and other categories of personnel as directed.



18TH ENGINEER BRIGADE

The 18th Engineer Brigade was formed July 29, 1921, as the 347th Engineers (General Service) in the Organized Reserves. It was ordered into active military service May 6, 1942, at Camp Claiborne, La., 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. Redesignated the 18th Engineer Brigade, it was reactivated at Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., on Oct. 25, 1954. On March 26, 1963, it was again deactivated, but on July 16, 1965, was activated at Ft. Bragg, N.C., and prepared for deployment to Vietnam. An advance party of the brigade arrived in Vietnam on Sept. 3, 1965, and became operational two weeks later.

Units of the 18th Engineer Brigade have constructed everything from depots to seaports, airfields to orphanages throughout central and northern Vietnam.



20TH ENGINEER BRIGADE

The history of the 20th Engineer Brigade extends back to the Civil War. The unit was constituted on Aug. 3, 1861. Unit designations have changed many times since then but the ancestors of the 20th Engineer Brigade have participated in campaigns in the Civil War, the War with Spain, the Philippine Insurrection, the Mexican Expedition and World Wars I and II.

The brigade headquarters was reactivated May 1, 1967, and arrived in Vietnam on Aug. 3, 1967. The 20th Brigade missions are to command assigned and attached units, provide operational support for U.S. and Free World Forces, plan and execute construction and to provide for physical security of personnel, equipment, facilities and construction sites of assigned or attached units. Working to accomplish this mission, elements of the 20th Engineer Brigade have accumulated some fantastic achievements in more than 150 locations, having supplied housing or other facilities for most of the 400,000 U.S. and Free World Forces operating in the southern part of the Republic of Vietnam.

Departed Units

1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

From the trenches of Cantigny and the beaches of North Africa to the steaming jungles of Vietnam, dedication to duty and the distinction of being first are traditions of which the 1st Infantry Division can be proud.

The 1st Infantry Division was the first division to go overseas, land in France, meet the enemy and enter Germany during World War I. In World War II, it was the first to reach Britain and France. On July 12, 1965, the 2nd Brigade of the Big Red One landed in Vietnam, the first element of an infantry division to arrive.

Since arriving in Vietnam more than four years ago the Big Red One has participated in many significant battles and operations such as Birmingham, Junction City, Billings, Shenandoah II, Quyet Thang, Loc Ning V, An Loc and operation Toan Thang.

One of the major contributions to the peace effort has been the 1st Infantry Division's pacification program. Because soldiers of the Big Red One have ferretted out the Viet Cong infrastructure, villages have gained stability and security.

July 1969 marked the beginning of a coordinated war effort between Big Red One soldiers and members of the Army of Republic of Vietnam's 5th Division. This program, which is referred to as "Dong Tien" (Progress Together), resulted in victories over the enemy while preparing the ARVN soldier to assure security in his homeland.

In December of last year, President Nixon announced that the 1st Division would be one of the major elements of the Phase III redeployment. The division was reduced in strength and moved to Ft. Riley, Kan. After almost five years, the Big Red One's mission in the Republic of Vietnam was completed.



3RD BRIGADE, 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION

After a year and a half of protecting the western flanks of Saigon from enemy attacks, the 3rd Brigade, Airborne Division has worked itself out of a job. The unit was named as one of the major elements to be redeployed as part of the Phase II cutback. With the brigade's departure in late 1969, another chapter in its colorful history was brought to a close.

The story of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division begins in 1917 when it was activated as the 156th Infantry Brigade, an element of the 78th Division. In May 1964, the brigade was reorganized as the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division. When the brigade jumped into Florida, Jan. 22, 1968, little did the paratroopers realize that they would be fighting in Vietnam less than one month later. But on Feb. 13, the advance party departed Pope Air Force Base, N.C., for the Republic of Vietnam. On the afternoon of Valentine's Day the huge airlift began; an operation which was to require 135 C141s and six C133s before it was over. The All-Americans were on the way to Vietnam.

Landing at Chu Lai, the brigade had just began to muster itself from its deployment when it moved again. The All-Americans were attached to the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) and given the mission to protect the ancient capital of Hue in the I Corps sector. In the fall of 1968, the brigade moved again, this time to the Capital Military District where it remained until its redeployment.



In the Beginning

... 1954—1961



The result of the Geneva Accords of 1954 was the creation of a North and South Vietnam. Although the United States was not an active participant in bringing about the end of the Indochina War, our government worked quietly behind the scenes.

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

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

To understand the events following we must look at the development of North Vietnam; the rise of the Viet Cong and their 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. Many Communists moved north of the 17th parallel—an estimated 90,000—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 per cent, as the South's improved by 20 per cent. Authorities in the North openly admitted that food production goals were not being reached.

Despite North Vietnam's vastly larger industrial complex, the South's per capita gross national product was more than 50 per cent higher—\$110 per person versus \$70 per person (1960 estimate). 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!

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

Communist propaganda tried to exploit the confusion by stating 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 Dec. 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.

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

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.



40,000 trained military personnel infiltrated from North to South Vietnam through Laos in the five-year period from 1959 through 1964.

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

In South Vietnam he receives 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 with 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 the South Vietnamese government under Diem rejected the possibility of a free election. The North protested loudly, but without sincerity. After the Geneva Accords, a high North Vietnamese official, Pham Van Dong, was asked who he thought would win such an election. He replied. "You know as well as I do that there won't be any elections."

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, the ultimate victory is won.

Phase one of the battle occurred from 1954 to about 1960. During this period the United States had first assisted the Vietnamese government with economic aid and then added military advisors to assist the country's military and police forces.

Other countries of Europe and Asia and the Americas had economically helped the fledgling South. U.S. aid totaled about \$1.5 billion between 1954 and 1961.

In 1960 the guerrilla warfare intensified and by 1961 had reached a point of open warfare. By now 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 advisors and by adding pilots and supporting personnel. The President felt he could not abandon South Vietnam.

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

The Darkest Era ...1961-1964



Vo Chi Cong—Born 1921 in Quang Nam Province, Vo Chi Cong joined the Communist revolutionaries in his teens. He is one of the major founders of the National Liberation Front and probably a key figure in the People's Revolutionary Party—yet he is a relative unknown.



Tran Nam Trung—Born in North Vietnam in 1913, Tran is a militant revolutionary. He is formerly an NVA officer, but is now secretary general of the People's Revolutionary Party, which claims to represent the South Vietnamese people.

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

Advisors were increased. Supply personnel and helicopter units were also sent to assist the struggling nation. A small logistical team arrived in December 1961, followed by two Army aviation companies. The entire group numbered 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 advisors 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 forces to assist in the battle.

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

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

(NLF), the soul of the NLF."

Radio Hanoi announced the PRP's formation on Jan. 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 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.

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

This figure breaks down as follows:

Assassinated:

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

Between Jan. 1, 1961, and Aug. 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

Republic of Vietnam forces under attack by VC unload supplies from a U.S. Choctaw helicopter in the early days of the conflict (below).





President Johnson requested and received the consent of Congress to use armed force to protect Southeast Asia.

people. Refugees flowed into the cities in ever increasing numbers. Saigon's population increased spectacularly. With the refugees were Communist agents.

No longer were the North Vietnamese denying their support of the Viet Cong. It was evident 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 Aug. 2 and 4, 1964, U.S. destroyers were attacked in international waters off the Vietnamese coast by North Vietnamese torpedo boats.

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 (above) was attacked off the coast of North Vietnam on Aug. 2, 1964, thus leading to the Tonkin Resolution. A hardcore Viet Cong soldier is taken into custody by Vietnamese Army Rangers (below).





The American buildup in the Republic of Vietnam required huge amounts of supplies and equipment. Saigon port was a major unloading point.

From Buildup

to Counteroffensive

... 1965—1966

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 in the Viet Cong strategy.

On Feb. 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.

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 by the attack.

The Viet Cong also suffered a serious loss in February. A supply ship attempting to smuggle 80



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



Aerial resupply is one of the jobs performed by the Chinook helicopter, carrying goods either inside or by sling load.

tons of arms and ammunition was sunk at Vung Ro Bay.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A multi-battalion attack on Duc Hoa 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.

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

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

In the central section of the country, a tactical

headquarters was placed at Nha Trang to control new units arriving in the II CTZ. Originally designated Task Force Alpha, the headquarters later became I Field Force, Vietnam (IFFV). The 1st Cavalry Division 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.

A regimental force of VC attacked the Phu Co outpost near Qui Nhon and before the battle was complete, ARVN troops mounted a staggering toll on the attackers. Seven hundred Viet Cong died in the encounter.

Another Free World force entered Vietnam in October. The Republic of Korea sent its Capital Division into South Vietnam to help 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-scale 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.

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 stood and fought, rather than melt into the jungle after initial contact.

When the smoke of battle cleared, 1,238 enemy soldiers had died while only one-fifth as many Americans were killed. The "green" troops and the air-mobile concept had proven 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 in Binh Duong Province, inflicting heavy casualties on the South Vietnamese. The VC also countered with terror by detonating a truck laden with explosives at the Metropole Bachelor Enlisted Quarters in Saigon. Eight Americans were killed and 137 injured.

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.

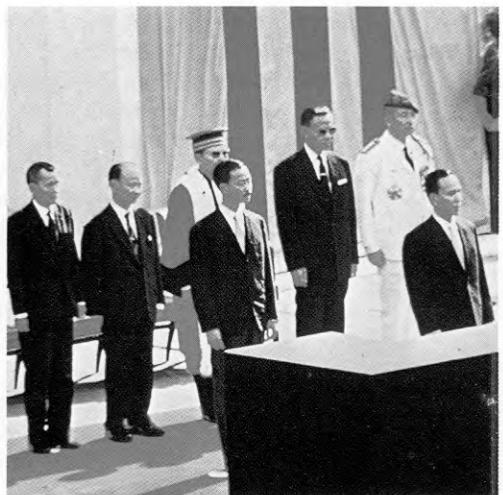
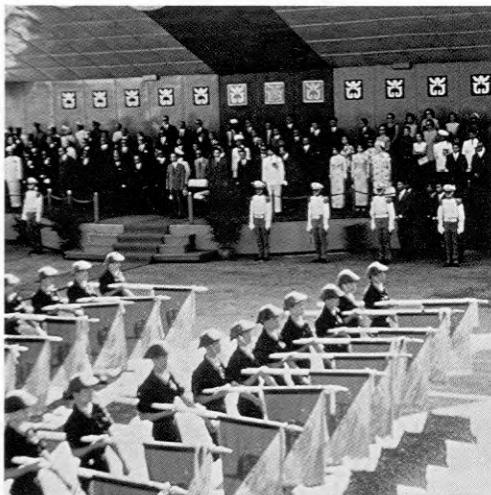
The year had seen U.S. troops penetrate into areas Communists had controlled for years. With the aid of saturation bombing by B52 bombers, the 1965 monsoon offensive the VC had promised was little more than a small splash. Superior firepower, rapid artillery and air response, plus the helicopter's mobility, were proving that the Communists' attempt to wrap up the war by 1966 would not materialize.

On the diplomatic scene Hanoi scorned America's peace overture of a 37-day pause in air strikes over North Vietnam. In Saigon the governmental turmoil was eliminated by the emergence of a military National



In June, Australia's first combat troops, the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, arrived in the Republic of Vietnam to begin operations.

After a Viet Cong attack on a U.S. compound near Pleiku, American aircraft struck at NVA barracks just north of the 17th parallel, marking the first time the U.S. had bombed North Vietnam (below). Nguyen Van Thieu is sworn in as President of South Vietnam (right), and is honored at a parade celebrating the inauguration and National Day (left).



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. For the first time, Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) of America, Australia, Korea and South Vietnam were actively entering Viet Cong strongholds, breaking the enemy's stranglehold on the people. Charlie was losing his rice, ammunition and weapons caches. The FWMAF were beginning the first phase of the counteroffensive.

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 up 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.

Korean troops began an operation in Binh Dinh Province that resulted in 250 enemy killed.

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

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

The truce was marred by more than 100 violations by the Viet Cong.

Later in January the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) joined with Vietnamese and Korean units for a 42-day operation near Bong Son that resulted in nearly 2,400 enemy dead.

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 all uncovered enemy camps, weapons and ammunition.

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

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 Pleiku Province along the Cambodian border, ARVN and 25th Division troops killed 546 of the enemy.

In III Corps Tactical Zone, a sweep through Binh Long Province by the 1st Infantry Division and 5th ARVN Division cost the Viet Cong 855 men in a little over a month. In Kontum Province the 101st and ARVN units accounted for 531 more enemy deaths. This action was near a city to become famous 18 months later—Dak To.

Terror attacks included a mine explosion at the Brinks Hotel in Saigon and attacks on Regional and Popular Forces outposts and small CIDG units.

U.S. planes faced an increasing number of Russian-made surface-to-air missiles over North Vietnam. In Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh announced a partial mobilization of the country.

Units continued to arrive to support the counteroffensive. 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 Phillipine Civic Action Group arrived.

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

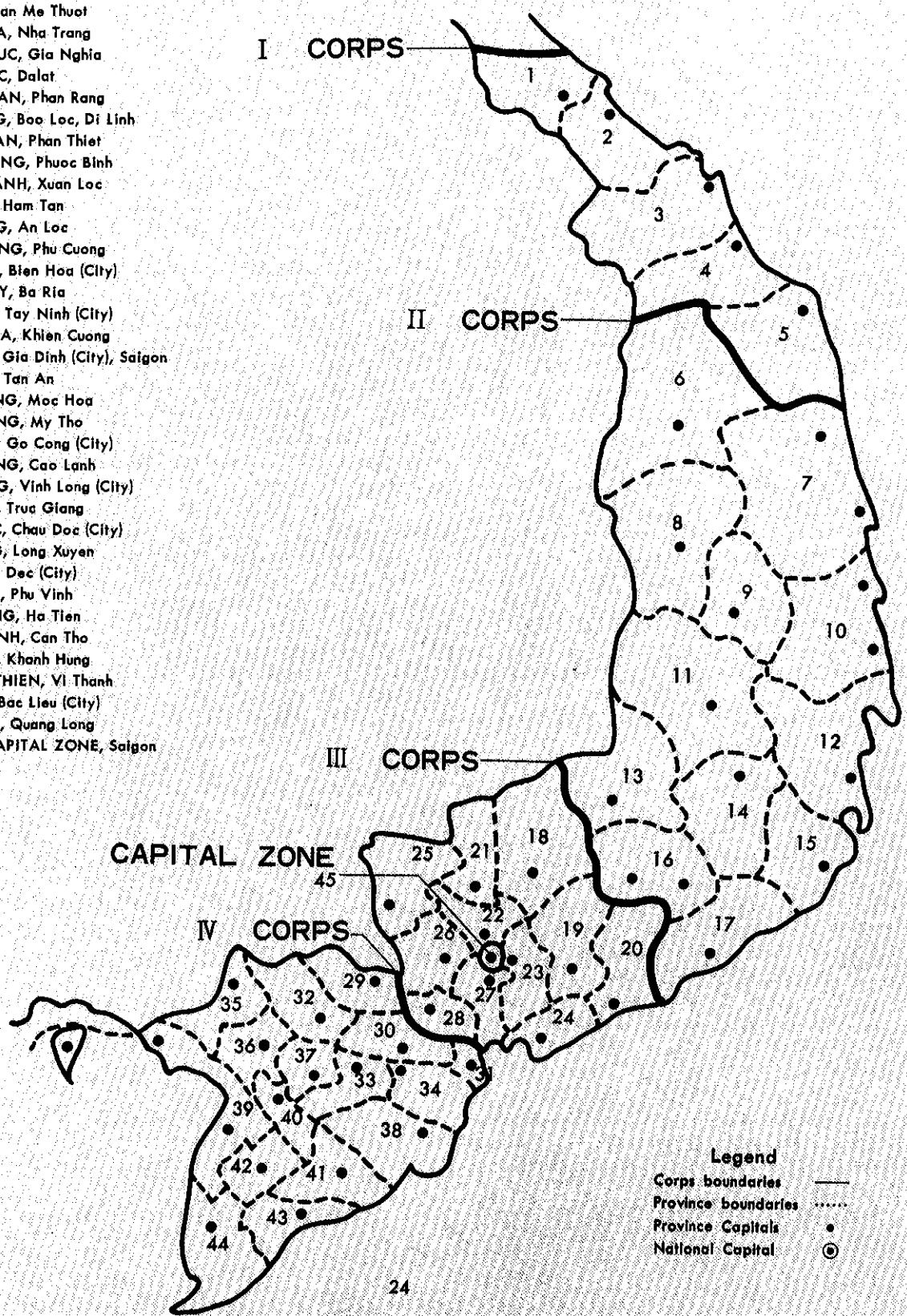
Two U.S. operations, Attleboro and Irving, kept the enemy off balance. The 1st Cavalry accounted for 230 Viet Cong killed in Binh Dinh Province, while the 196th Infantry Brigade and elements of the 1st, 4th and 25th infantry divisions and 173rd Airborne Brigade mauled the 9th VC Division, killing more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

October action saw a combined force of 1st Cavalry, Koreans and Vietnamese kill 681 Viet Cong in Operation Irving. To avoid the superior firepower of the Allies, the enemy tried to break contact as quickly as possible. The enemy confined his raids to the northern provinces near his supply lines.

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

November was marked by increased VC raiding. The 4th Infantry Division, operating west of Plei Djereng, withstood a mortar barrage of more than

1. QUANG TRI, Quang Tri (City)
2. THUA THIEN, Hue
3. QUANG NAM, Hoi An
4. QUANG TIN, Tam Ky
5. QUANG NGAI, Quang Ngai (City)
6. KONTUM, Kontum (City)
7. BINH DINH, Bong Son, Qui Hhon
8. PLEIKU, Pleiku (City)
9. PHU BON, Hau Bon
10. PHU YEN, Song Cau, Tuy Hoa
11. DARLAC, Ban Me Thout
12. KHAN HOA, Nha Trang
13. QUANG DUC, Gia Nghia
14. TUYEN DUC, Dalat
15. NINH THUAN, Phan Rang
16. LAM DONG, Bao Loc, Di Linh
17. BINH THUAN, Phan Thiet
18. PHUOC LONG, Phuoc Binh
19. LONG KHANH, Xuan Loc
20. BINH TUY, Ham Tan
21. BINH LONG, An Loc
22. BINH DUONG, Phu Cuong
23. BINH HOA, Bien Hoa (City)
24. PHUOC TUY, Ba Ria
25. TAY NINH, Tay Ninh (City)
26. HAU NGHIA, Khien Cuong
27. GIA DINH, Gia Dinh (City), Saigon
28. LONG AN, Tan An
29. KIEN TUONG, Moc Hoa
30. DINH TUONG, My Tho
31. GO CONG, Go Cong (City)
32. KIEN PHONG, Cao Lanh
33. VINH LONG, Vinh Long (City)
34. KIEN HOA, Truc Giang
35. CHAU DOC, Chau Doc (City)
36. AN GIANG, Long Xuyen
37. SA DEC, Sa Dec (City)
38. BINH BINH, Phu Vinh
39. KIEN GIANG, Ha Tien
40. PHONG DINH, Can Tho
41. BA XUYEN, Khanh Hung
42. CHUONG THIEN, Vi Thanh
43. BAC LIEU, Bac Lieu (City)
44. AN XUYEN, Quang Long
45. SPECIAL CAPITAL ZONE, Saigon



500 rounds. National Day celebrations in Saigon were interrupted by two dozen 57mm recoilless rifle rounds; the 196th's base camp near Tay Ninh was hit, and a portion of the Long Binh ammunition dump was blown up by satchel charges.

The dump was struck again in December, and Tan Son Nhut Air Base sustained a raid in which guerrillas penetrated the perimeter.

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

The 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 city 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.

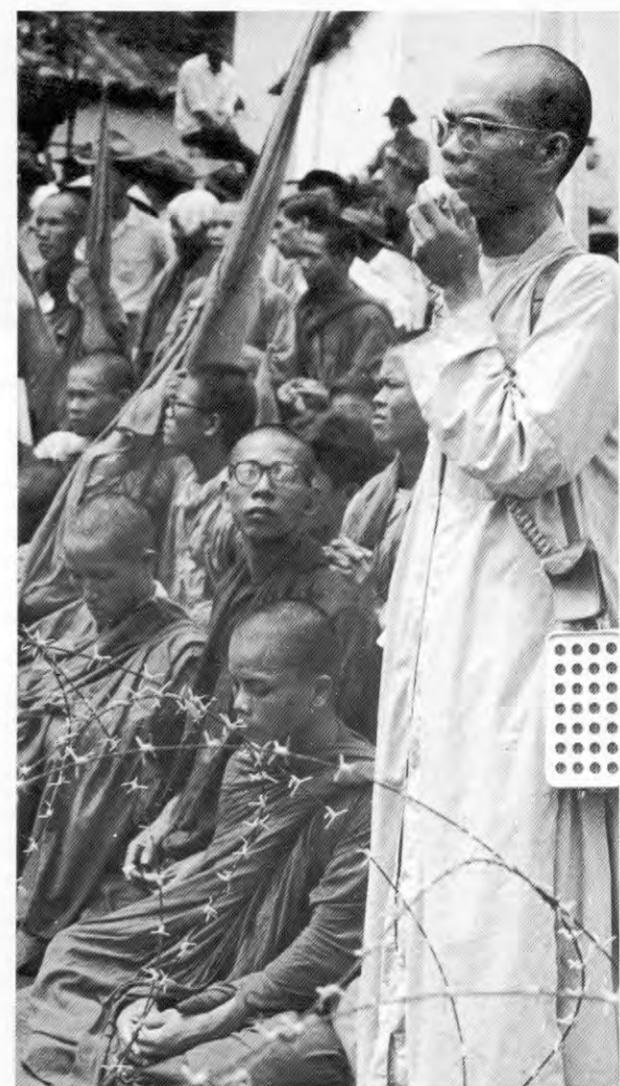
The National Political Congress announced that a constituent assembly would be elected in five months.

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

Marine operations in I Corps Tactical Zone 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, and the new constitution's first three articles were approved.

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



The Squeeze ... 1967

The year 1967 saw the Free World Forces tighten 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, curtailing his operations further. His cause was weakened by thousands of Viet Cong, political cadre and North Vietnamese who rallied to the government.

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 2.5 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. Kidnapping 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.

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

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

By February the American military strength had risen by 20,000 men. The increased manpower permitted the U.S. forces to enter the field for long periods of time.

The four-day truce for the Lunar New Year, Tet, provided a stand-down period in which many operations were terminated. The truce itself was marred by 272 violations.

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.

By mid-month elements of the 9th Infantry Division started Operation Enterprise in Long An Province and other 9th Division units began operations in the



In the midst of combat, a 173rd Airborne Brigade soldier calls for a medic to help his buddy.

PHOTO BY SPEC. 5 GORDON GAH

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; many of their supplies were gone.

Further north the 1st Cavalry Division had begun Operation Pershing and the Communist 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.

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

In Thailand, B52s began to arrive at bases in accordance with a previous agreement with the kingdom. The huge bombers were used mainly against enemy complexes in South Vietnam in early April. Previously they had flown from Guam to South Vietnam in a 5,000-mile round trip.

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

In April, an eight-week election period began for thousands of villages and hamlets throughout the country. About 77 per cent 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 kidnapped.

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

In Saigon, Ellsworth P. Bunker assumed duties from Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge who was retiring from public life.

Enemy pressure was mounting near the Demilitarized Zone and the I Corps Tactical Zone. Marine units were moved to counter the threat. The 196th Infantry Brigade was moved into the Chu Lai area to replace the relocated Marine units. This was the first of many major ground combat units from USARV to operate in the northern provinces.

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 which was controlled by the III Marine Amphibious Force.

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

In July Thailand announced that it would send a

PHOTO BY SPEC. 5 GORDON GAHAN



A sniper firing on U.S. soldiers draws a return blast (above). Soldiers protect their ears from the blast of a mortar round leaving its tube (right).

PHOTO BY SPEC. 4 JOHN HOSIER



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.

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

During the month, USARV moved to its new headquarters in the Long Binh complex and MACV moved to its new buildings opposite Tan Son Nhut civilian air terminal. Other units moved out of the capital area during the following months, including 1st Logistical Command, 1st Aviation Brigade and the 1st Signal Brigade headquarters.

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. And the Ban Me Thout airfield in Darlac Province was struck by mortars twice during the month.

In I CTZ, 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 the siege from the DMZ bases.

On Sept. 3, the presidential elections were held. About 83 per cent 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.

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

At Chu Lai, Task Force Oregon was redesignated the Americal Division, becoming the only named division on active duty in the U.S. Army.

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 . . .".

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 per cent of the electorate turning out to complete the last round of elections. On the last day of the month, the inauguration ceremonies were conducted in downtown Saigon.

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

October also saw the introduction of a helicopter especially designed for ground support—the Huey Cobra. 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.

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

At Loc Ninh, near the Cambodian border, two battalions of the 273rd VC Regiment attacked the perimeter where CIDG and ARVN troops were lodged. The Viet Cong broke through the perimeter and entered the village. The 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry was one of the first of the 1st Infantry Division units rushed to help push the enemy force from the area.

Fighting broke out again when the Viet Cong attacked across the landing strip at the district headquarters. This attempt was broken up, but not before the VC had tried to scale the walls of the outpost. Enemy forces made sporadic attempts to get back into Loc Ninh, but they withdrew from the area, losing more than 1,000 men in the over-all action.

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.

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, C47 Dragonships and giant B52 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 stood and fought off American and ARVN soldiers for four days. But when Thanksgiving Day arrived, Americans had claimed the hilltop and their turkey dinner was served them amidst the shattered bunkers and trees.

The enemy had paid a terrible price for the Dak To battle. His known losses were 1,641 men killed; how many more had been killed or seriously wounded and dragged from the battle area would be impossible to estimate. He had been subjected to fantastic bombardments during the 26 days of battle. Almost 138,000 rounds of artillery had been fired; 1,101 Army helicopter gunship sorties were flown against him, combined with 1,869 Air Force sorties and 32 strikes by B52 bombers. Many hills were decked with jumbled piles of splinters where great trees had been felled by the battle.

Year-end saw one of the most atrocious terror attacks in Vietnam's history. 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 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; some burned beyond recognition. An unknown number of men were kidnapped and led away by the 300-member Communist force.

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

New U.S. troops continued to arrive in country during December, mostly from the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). The 3rd Brigade arrived at Bien Hoa on Dec. 8, the command group on Dec. 13, and the 2nd Brigade came five days later to complete the huge airlift from Ft. Campbell by giant C141 Starlifters.

Just before Christmas, U.S. troop strength increased to more than that of the Korean War.

The Communists again showed their disdain for truces by violating both the Christmas and New Year's truce periods. The Christmas truce was marred by 40 major incidents and the New Year's by 63 major and 107 minor incidents.

Tunnel rats play an important role in searching out Viet Cong caches and locating enemy attempting to hide.





Silhouetted against the setting sun, a squad of infantrymen crosses a ridge in the Central Highlands (above). Huey Cobra gunships were introduced into the conflict in October 1967 (left).



Infantry



Medcaps



Air Support

U.S. Army, Vietnam



Armor and Airmobility



Engineers