



# VIET NAM WAR

| 1945-1975 |

**Classroom Materials**

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## **Classroom Materials for The Vietnam War: 1945-1975**

### **Developer, Writer, and Project Manager**

Marjorie Waters

### **Content Adviser**

David Parsons

### **Project Coordinator**

Lee Boomer, *Assistant Manager of Special Projects*

### **Producer**

#### **New-York Historical Society Education Division**

Mia Nagawiecki, *Vice President for Education*

Leslie Hayes, *Associate Director for Professional Learning*

Allyson Schettino, *Associate Director of School Programs*

Daniel De Santis, *Manager of Visual Arts Programs*

Kinneret Kohn, *Manager of Teen Programs*

Rugan Lewis, *Manager of Digital Learning Programs*

Emma Nordin, *Manager of School Programs*

Lee Boomer, *Assistant Manager of Special Projects*

Leah Charles-Edouard, *School Programs Coordinator*

Samantha Rijkers, *Citizenship Education Fellow*

Sughey Ramirez, *Citizenship Outreach Coordinator*

Diane Tinsley, *Education Bookkeeper*

### **Reviewers**

Marci Reaven, *Vice President, History Exhibits*

Beth Bailey, *University of Kansas*

### **Designer**

Pam Pollack, *Pam Pollack Design*

### **Copy Editor**

Carol Barkin

### **Teacher Reviewer**

Jennifer Stalec, *Eleanor Roosevelt High School*

### **Teacher Advisers**

Angelita Antonio, Loretta Brady, Paul Bennis, Ira Glasser, Aaron Hull, Mark Klarman, Robert Sandler, Jennifer Stalec, Linda Weissman

### **The Vietnam War: 1945-1975 Exhibition Team**

Louise Mirrer, *President & CEO*

Marci Reaven, *Curator and Writer*

Lily Wong, *Assistant Curator*

David Parsons, *Project Historian*

Bekah Friedman, *Project Historian*

Suzana Greene, *Media Coordinator*

Dayna Bealy, *Image & Rights Coordinator*

Gerhard Schlanzky, *Exhibition Design*

Maggie Lee, *Exhibition Design*

Kira Hwang, *Graphic Design*

Cecilia Porras, *Graphic Design*

### **Special Thanks**

Alex Colvin

Aaron Hull

Robert Hull

Richard Olsen

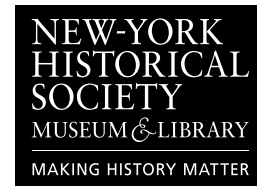
Lanelle Strawder, *Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center*

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Henri Huet, *American infantrymen looking up at tall jungle trees for Viet Cong snipers, 1967*. Photograph. Associated Press, 670615016

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### **New-York Historical Society**

170 Central Park West at Richard Gilder Way  
New York, NY 10024

212-873-3400

[www.nyhistory.org](http://www.nyhistory.org)

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# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

D

ear Educator:

The New-York Historical Society is proud to present this collection of education materials and resources to accompany *The Vietnam War: 1945-1975*, an extraordinary, comprehensive exhibition on the causes and consequences of the Vietnam War. The exhibition presents both a chronological and a thematic analysis of the war, from its underpinnings at the close of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War to its lasting impact—even today. Focusing on both battlefield and home front, the exhibit considers the war through multiple lenses.

The materials included here comprise four chronological units organized around eight thematic clusters: The Vietnamese Liberation Movement, America's Early Role, Escalation, Resistance, The Tet Offensive, The 1968 Election, Searching for an Exit, and The Long, Slow End. Each cluster includes primary and secondary resources intended for use by teachers and students along with suggested classroom activities and discussion questions. Clusters also support the Common Core State Standards as well as the New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies. Elements within these classroom materials, including documents, photographs, maps, posters, films, and a compelling online interactive, illuminate the timeline of the war, on both battlefield and home front, as well as its political, social, and cultural consequences. The life stories included with the materials profile the lives of both prominent and lesser-known individuals;

they also describe a range of attitudes and actions in support of, and in opposition to, the war. A group of Presidential Capsules focuses students' attention on the significant Vietnam-related decisions and reasoning of the six presidents who served from 1945 to 1975.

The Education Division of the New-York Historical Society is committed to providing stimulating and useful materials and programming to enhance the teaching and learning of American history in the classroom. This collection of resources has been designed to complement and enhance school visits to the exhibition as well as to help teachers and students from across the nation address this pivotal episode in American history.

To learn more about school programs designed for *The Vietnam War: 1945-1975* and about all education programs at the New-York Historical Society, contact us at 212-485-9293 or visit the Education Division online at [www.nyhistory.org/education](http://www.nyhistory.org/education).

Sincerely,



Louise Mirrer, Ph.D.  
President & CEO

NEW-YORK  
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MAKING HISTORY MATTER

**The Vietnam War: 1945-1975 • October 4, 2017 – April 22, 2018**

# ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

**T**he Vietnam War was one of the watershed events of American history. The longest armed conflict of the 20th century, it continues to provoke debate and influence public policy, 40 years after it ended. *The Vietnam War: 1945–1975*, an exhibition at the New-York Historical Society, presents a balanced exploration of this hotly contested chapter in the national story.

More than 300 artifacts, photographs, artworks, documents, and interactive digital displays capture the chronology and themes of the war. Objects on display range from a jeep used at Tan Son Nhut Air Base to a copy of the Pentagon Papers; from posters and bumper stickers, both opposing and supporting the U.S. war effort, to personal items left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC; from indelible news photographs (such as Eddie Adams’s “Execution”) to specially commissioned murals by contemporary artist Matt Huynh. The materials create a sweeping and immersive narrative, exploring, from a primarily American viewpoint, how this pivotal struggle was experienced both on the war front and on the home front.

## Introductory Gallery

The scene is set with texts and materials about the onset of the Cold War, documenting how the U.S. and its allies began to maneuver against the Communist bloc in regional confrontations while avoiding head-on engagement.

## War Begins: 1954-1965

The exhibition’s main narrative begins with the end of the First Indochina War, when the Viet Minh, a Communist-nationalist coalition, forced France to abandon its colonial claim to Vietnam. Archival footage from a CBS news broadcast illustrates the “domino theory” put forward by the Eisenhower administration as a metaphor for the Communist threat. Among the objects on view are a bicycle of the sort used by North Vietnamese forces on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and a scale model of the USS *Maddox*, one of the destroyers involved in the Gulf of Tonkin encounter with North Vietnamese forces in August 1964. The Tonkin Gulf Resolution, passed soon after, gave the Johnson administration authorization to increase U.S. military operations without a declaration of war.

In a televised address on July 28, 1965, President Johnson said that it was up to America to protect South Vietnam from Communism and announced a dramatic escalation in the military draft, which affected all men between the ages of 18 and 26. Artifacts address different responses to the draft and capture personal stories of soldiers headed to war.

## War on Many Fronts: 1966-1967

The exhibition then examines the conduct of the war and its repercussions both in the field and among American civilians. Two large illustrated murals by noted artist and illustrator Matt Huynh, titled *War Front* and *Home Front*, render key aspects of the years 1966 and 1967. *War Front* depicts the four combat zones in South Vietnam to show differing types of combat and highlight significant moments and battlegrounds. *Home Front* illustrates activity in the United States, including the Spring Mobilization, in which hundreds of thousands marched in Manhattan and San Francisco on April 15, 1967, to show their opposition to the war. The mural also shows a May 1967 demonstration in support of the war and other scenes of the Vietnam conflict’s impact on life in the U.S. Interactive kiosks, with videos and photographs, bring the murals to life. Among the notable items in this section is a recording of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, April 1967 speech against the war.

## Turning Point: 1968

Beginning in late January 1968, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces attacked South Vietnam in the Tet Offensive, challenging optimistic U.S. assessments of the progress of the war. Using an array of media and documents, this display establishes the chronology of the offensive, its coverage by the news media, and its impact on the discourse about the war. The human cost of the intense fighting comes to the fore in a

# **The Vietnam War: 1945–1975 • October 4, 2017 – April 22, 2018**

## **About the Exhibition** *continued*

corresponding display about medical care and the role of U.S. nurses—all of whom volunteered for duty. The ensuing political turmoil of the 1968 presidential election, in which America’s social, political, and racial divisions boiled to the surface, is addressed by a large interactive photo montage.

### **Searching for an Exit: 1969–1973**

This area surveys the final years of the Vietnam War: why the time period was so divisive and how the war finally came to end. Although antiwar convictions intensified and grew more widespread as the new Nixon administration took charge—as seen in materials from the nationwide October 1969 Vietnam Moratorium—President Nixon also enjoyed strong popular support. Among the objects on view are buttons with slogans such as “America Love It or Leave It,” a photograph of the “hard-hat” pro-war counterdemonstrators in New York City, and one of the bracelets distributed to raise awareness about American prisoners of war. Other key objects on display include a copy of the Pentagon Papers, published to explosive effect in June 1971; popular magazines, with headlines including “Starting to Go Home”; a graffitied helmet cover from the battle of Hamburger Hill; and a slideshow of artworks made by Vietnam War veterans. Original films, including one featuring an interview with FedEx founder Frederick Smith discussing how his experience as a marine influenced the creation of the global courier service, are screened in the gallery.

### **Aftermath: 1973 and Beyond**

The exhibition concludes with a section reflecting on the aftermath of the war, including the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, designed by Maya Lin. Among the items in this final section are a bomblet from a U.S. cluster bomb, a celebrated Hugh Van Es photograph of the evacuation from Saigon onto an Air America helicopter in April 1975, and a variety of objects that have been left in front of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, including letters addressed to fallen soldiers, a baby sweater, a baseball glove and ball, a minibottle of whisky, and playing cards.

# ABOUT THE CURRICULUM

**T**hese education materials are based on the New-York Historical Society exhibition, *The Vietnam War: 1945–1975*. The materials meet the New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies for middle and high school, and the Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies for grades 7–12. The Classroom Notes section is written for teachers. It contains suggestions for classroom activities and discussion questions. All other materials are designed for student use.

The curriculum’s four units follow the war’s chronology from 1945 to 1975. Each unit opens with an introductory page that includes a brief timeline and a description of the unit’s two thematic clusters. Each cluster has a life story—a short biographical profile that anchors each cluster—as well as a set of primary resources. Each of the eight clusters opens with a landing page that functions as a portal and as a quick snapshot of the cluster’s contents. Related materials from elsewhere in the curriculum are also listed on the landing page. All the items are clickable. All the images and text are provided individually in the Printable Resources section, without any descriptive prose. They are also listed on the introductory page of the Printable Resources.

These materials have been designed for maximum flexibility in the classroom. They can be used

individually or grouped in many different ways. Please feel free to incorporate them as you wish in your classroom study of the war.

The curriculum is structured for easy navigation. All items can be reached from the Table of Contents. To reach the unit introductory pages, click on the unit title. To reach the cluster landing pages, click on the cluster title. To return to the Table of Contents, click on the page number in the lower right hand corner of any page.

The following films were created for the exhibition and can be viewed online at [vietnamwar.nyhistory.org/video](http://vietnamwar.nyhistory.org/video):

*FedEx and the Vietnam War*. Fred Smith, founder and CEO of FedEx, connects his company’s origins to his experience with logistics as a marine in Vietnam. Produced by the New-York Historical Society. 5 minutes.

*“Napalm Girl.”* Photographer Nick Ut and Kim Phuc, the nine-year-old captured in Ut’s iconic photograph known as “Napalm girl,” talk about the war, the circumstances behind the photograph, and their lasting friendship. Produced by the New-York Historical Society. 5 minutes.

# THE VIETNAM WAR: AN OVERVIEW

**A**ugust 1945. World War II and its catastrophic destruction finally ended. In Vietnam, occupied by Japan during the war, over 1 million had died in a famine. At war's end, the Japanese were gone and the French colonizers temporarily deposed. On September 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnamese independence. His first words were, "All men are created equal." In the United States, President Harry S. Truman (1945–1953) was focused on the Cold War, which started soon after World War II and pitted the democratic capitalism of the United States against the Communism of the Soviet Union. Tensions increased after the Soviet Union successfully tested an atomic bomb in 1949. The same year, Communists in China won that country's raging civil war. Alarmed, many U.S. officials concluded that the United States must do more militarily to block the spread of Communism in Asia.

## Truman Supports the French

The Cold War mind-set led President Truman to contribute arms and money to France for its war in Vietnam. The French were fighting a Communist-led independence movement in order to recolonize what was called French Indochina: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Anti-Communism also steered the United States into its own war in Korea. When Communist North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950, the U.S. organized, and led, a United Nations-authorized coalition to fight the Communist forces. The bloody war that followed ended in a stalemate three years later.



President Dwight D. Eisenhower (left) shakes hands with President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam, 1957. Photograph. Associated Press, 570508018

France fought from 1946 to 1954 to retain colonial control over Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The United States sided with France. President Truman and his successor, Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953–1961), believed preserving colonial rule was necessary to prevent a Communist takeover in Indochina. To assist France in defeating the Communist-led independence movement under Ho Chi Minh, the U.S. paid for most of the costs of this war.

In the end, France lost to Ho's fighters, known as the Viet Minh, commanded by General Vo Nguyen Giap. The final battle took place in 1954 at the remote highlands

village of Dien Bien Phu. Admitting defeat, France agreed to exit the country on terms to be negotiated at an international conference in Geneva, Switzerland.

## Eisenhower Promotes the Partition of Vietnam

The Viet Minh's battlefield win against France did not secure victory at the negotiating table in Geneva. President Eisenhower was fiercely opposed to Communist rule in Vietnam. He used the domino metaphor in 1954 to warn that a Communist government in Vietnam would trigger a chain reaction in the region. The compelling image of falling dominos became *the* shorthand justification for America's campaign to contain Communism.

Instead of creating one independent nation, the 1954 Geneva Accords temporarily split Vietnam in two. It was not the outcome Ho Chi Minh wanted, but Eisenhower's anti-Communism had raised the specter of direct U.S. intervention. To prevent this possibility, Ho's Soviet and Chinese backers encouraged him to accept a temporary partition at the 17th parallel. An election to reunify the country was set for July 1956. The election never took place because South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem and U.S. leaders were afraid that Ho would win. Critics in the United States questioned the wisdom and morality of dispensing with elections. Eisenhower replied that the Communists would sabotage the results and that U.S. interests were at stake.

A de facto border now separated North and South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh led the Communist government in the North. Ngo Dinh Diem led the anti-Communist government in the South.

## In the South: President Diem Consolidates Control

President Ngo Dinh Diem was a devout Catholic in a majority Buddhist country. He had opposed French rule in Indochina. After the partition of Vietnam in 1954, Diem sought to fashion an anti-Communist Republic of Vietnam in the South. Saigon was designated its capital city. Eager to build a modern nation under his party's control, Diem forcibly moved many rural people to new settlements. He also cracked down on those who challenged him, including many Buddhists and former Viet Minh. His actions provoked civil strife and violent resistance.

Diem's stand against Communism impressed U.S. leaders, and the flow of U.S. money and weapons to South Vietnam increased. Eisenhower also sent U.S. military advisers to help Diem pursue his campaign against former Viet Minh.

## In the North: President Ho Supports the Southern Insurgents

President Ho Chi Minh, the father of Vietnamese independence, admired Communism for its stand against colonialism and saw it as the best path forward for Vietnam. After the partition of Vietnam in 1954, Ho and Communist party leaders focused on developing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, known



President Ho Chi Minh, 1957. Photograph. Associated Press, 5710111775

as North Vietnam. Hanoi became its capital. Following the philosophy of Communism, Ho's government continued a program begun during the war with the French, redistributing land from the wealthy to the poor. Despite the visionary motives, the actual process of taking land turned violent, and as many as 15,000 people died. Ho acknowledged that brutal tactics had

been used and was not widely blamed for the deaths.

Meanwhile, in South Vietnam, former Viet Minh who shared Ho's vision were targeted by the Diem regime. As thousands were imprisoned and unknown numbers were killed, an insurgency took hold. The insurgents appealed to North Vietnam for help. In 1959, Hanoi's leaders agreed to support a revolutionary war in South Vietnam. In 1960, they organized the insurgency into the National Liberation Front (NLF) to oppose Diem. North Vietnam provided leadership, supplies, and, increasingly, soldiers. The conflict was now a civil war within South Vietnam and a fight about reunifying the two Vietnams.

Americans called the southern insurgents Viet Cong, or VC—a pejorative meaning “commie” in Vietnamese—and referred to the North Vietnamese Army as the NVA.

## Kennedy Sends the Green Berets

When President John F. Kennedy (1961–1963) took office, he knew that wars against revolutionary nationalism were neither easily won nor easily fought from so far away. He also believed that if South Vietnam fell to the Communists, his presidency would face harsh criticism. He and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara decided to up the ante with U.S. might and expertise. To sustain Diem's regime, they sent vast quantities of weapons and thousands of civilian and military advisers, including the Green Berets. The Americans trained the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), as well as Montagnard tribesmen

from South Vietnam's Central Highlands, to battle the Viet Cong (VC).

But in 1963, spiraling unrest and warfare in South Vietnam led key U.S. officials to turn against Diem. On November 2, 1963, South Vietnamese military officers murdered Diem and his powerful brother in a U.S.-approved coup. On November 22, in an unrelated tragedy, an assassin killed President Kennedy. South Vietnam's uneasy future passed to a new set of leaders.

## Johnson Calculates a Course of Action

When Lyndon B. Johnson (1963–1969) assumed office upon President Kennedy's death, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam was losing to the Viet Cong. The Joint Chiefs of Staff told LBJ, as the president was known, that winning would demand bolder action and greater risks. President Johnson ordered covert military action against North Vietnam. This led, in August 1964, to a naval confrontation in the Gulf of Tonkin.

LBJ ordered an air strike against North Vietnamese naval installations. He also leaned on Congress to adopt the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. Passed on August 7, 1964, it authorized him to "take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force" in Southeast Asia. Congress never approved a formal declaration of war.

Viet Cong actions intensified, and national security adviser McGeorge Bundy wrote the president: "The situation in Vietnam is deteriorating, and without

new U.S. action defeat appears inevitable. . . . There is still time to turn it around, but not much." President Johnson and his advisers resolved to ratchet up the pressure on the Viet Cong and Hanoi.

## Bombing Runs and U.S. Marines

On March 2, 1965, more than 100 U.S. planes bombed targets in North Vietnam as part of Operation Rolling Thunder. Washington hoped the bombing campaign would boost the morale of Saigon's government and persuade Hanoi to abandon the southern insurgents. U.S. planes also buzzed the skies of South Vietnam and Laos, spraying defoliants and dropping bombs and napalm—a weaponized, jellied fuel that caused devastating burns. On March 8, two battalions of marines landed at Danang Air Base, which would become a major U.S. military facility for the army, air force, and marines.

The president and his men knew that their actions were Americanizing the war. But they believed the credibility of the nation and of their administration was at stake.

## Antiwar Demonstrations at Home

As military action escalated, so did public debate. Critics questioned the purpose and humanity of the fight and asked whether propping up an autocratic government was a fitting use of American power. On April 17, 1965, 20,000 Americans marched in Washington, DC, to protest the war. The large size of the crowd surprised even the organizer, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).



*New draftees, July 29, 1965. Photograph. Herald Examiner Collection, Los Angeles Public Library*

Students were not alone in voicing opposition to the war. Religious leaders formed Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam. Pope Paul IV and U.N. Secretary-General U Thant called for a negotiated settlement. Prominent public figures began to speak up.

## LBJ Raises the Draft Call

On July 28, 1965, President Johnson addressed the nation. He said it was up to the United States to protect South Vietnam and fight Communism in Asia; that to be "driven from the field" would imperil U.S. power, security, and credibility now and in the future. He also announced a dramatic escalation in the military draft "from 17,000 . . . to 35,000 per month."

The draft increase affected all men between the ages of 18 and 26. But the pool of baby boomers was larger than the number required for service in Vietnam and at other U.S. bases worldwide. So the Selective Service called up only the men needed while excusing the rest through deferments, often for education. This policy sought to utilize the nation's human resources and minimize the draft's negative impacts on society, but it paid little attention to fairness.

Over the course of the war, one-third of the men in the armed forces had been drafted, primarily into the army. A large number came from poor and working-class families. Draftees were more likely to be sent to Vietnam than volunteers were, and bore a greater share of the fighting and dying. Protests against the disproportionate number of combat deaths among black Americans in 1965 led the military to take action to correct the inequity.

Volunteers made up nearly two-thirds of those who served. They enlisted out of patriotism, or they were motivated by the draft to volunteer in order to have more choices. Volunteers were also less likely to see combat. Nearly 11,000 women joined up, mostly as nurses, despite being exempt from the draft.

## War Front and Home Front: 1966-1967

In Vietnam, U.S. and South Vietnamese government forces served alongside contingents from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines, as well as indigenous peoples from South

Vietnam's Central Highlands. They faced Viet Cong insurgents, as well as North Vietnamese Army soldiers, who fought with logistical support and weapons from China and the Soviet Union.

Because President Johnson refused to invade North Vietnam for fear of war with China, U.S.-led forces sought victory on the complex terrain of South Vietnam. Troop numbers increased dramatically, along with a massive infrastructure built to support the U.S. effort. The U.S. had two major goals. One was to find and eliminate the enemy. The VC and NVA countered this effort by choosing the time and place to fight, thus limiting their casualties. The other goal was to win the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese. This task was made more difficult by military tactics that put civilians at risk.

At home, the peace movement swelled, making common cause with civil rights activists and disaffected veterans. The war sparked public debates, family arguments, and protests in the streets. The issues were profound. What was the role of dissent and the meaning of patriotism? What were the ethical responsibilities of citizenship and the proper uses of U.S. power in world affairs?

**Two online interactive murals**, both focused on 1966-1967, offer a paired exploration of events in South Vietnam and at home. The war front mural examines the complexity of the war zone, including major battle sites, U.S. medical facilities, Viet Cong

villages and hideouts, and important military bases, all suggesting something of the experience of America's military personnel. The home front mural zeroes in on two major demonstrations in the U.S., one in opposition to the war and one in support, capturing the intensifying conflict that was dividing America.

## The Tet Offensive

On January 30-31, 1968, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army attacked key targets in more



Ralph Johnson (left) and Alex Colvin, 1968. Photograph. Courtesy of Alex Colvin

than 100 cities and towns across South Vietnam. The surprise offensive aimed to paralyze the South Vietnamese government with attacks on urban areas and government centers. Hanoi also hoped to inspire a popular uprising.

The scale and ferocity of the offensive caught many U.S. and South Vietnamese government forces off guard. Regrouping quickly, they counterattacked and drove the VC and NVA from most cities within a few days. The fighting lasted longest in the historic city of Hue and at the marine base at Khe Sanh (attacked by the NVA on January 21 in order to create a distraction).

The Tet Offensive and counteroffensive took an enormous toll on combatants and civilians. U.S. medical personnel across South Vietnam treated thousands of casualties. Combat medics, medevac helicopter crews, orderlies, doctors, and nurses all played crucial roles in the military's system of medical care. Approximately 10,000 U.S. women served as nurses in Vietnam—about half of them with the Army Nurse Corps.

The Tet attacks did not deliver the fatal blow that Hanoi intended. But the offensive heightened doubts among Americans about their own leaders' positive assurances. The enemy did not appear to be weakening.

## The 1968 Election

The year 1968 is called the turning point in the war. One reason is the shock of the Tet Offensive. Another is the chaos at home, where social, political, and racial tensions boiled to the surface. President Johnson faced a crisis.

On March 31, he ordered a partial bombing halt in North Vietnam and declared the U.S.'s interest in peace talks. Then he astounded the nation by announcing that he would not seek reelection.

Other shocks soon followed. The assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy left grief and rage in their wake. Dr. King's murder sparked civil unrest in cities across the nation. The riots of that election year convinced growing numbers of Americans that disorder and lawlessness had reached intolerable levels. The chaotic Democratic National Convention in Chicago in late August demonstrated the deep conflict within the party over the war. On Tuesday, November 5, 1968, Republican Richard M. Nixon won the presidency.



*Richard M. Nixon campaign button, 1968. Metal and plastic. New-York Historical Society*

## The My Lai Massacre

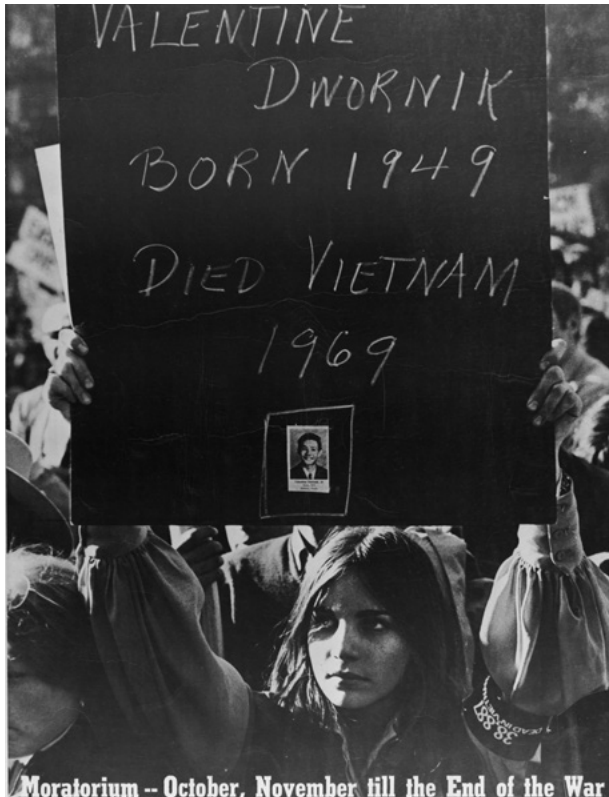
In April 1969, the army began investigating accounts of a massacre at the South Vietnamese village of My Lai. Members of the Americal Division—primed for vengeance by their commanding officers—had killed some 500 civilians in March 1968. The rapes and killings were covered up by the military until a soldier's despairing letter to Congress a year after the event. An army report blamed the officers and commanders, but in March 1971, Lieutenant William Calley became the only one of those involved to be convicted of murder. The events of My Lai and the lone conviction provoked wildly disparate reactions and searing questions from the public about morality, culpability, fairness, and justice.

## Troop Withdrawals and Vietnamization

In 1969, newly elected President Nixon continued the fight to preserve U.S. credibility and a non-Communist South Vietnam. But the rising American death toll and growing unpopularity of the war put pressure on the president to end it. In June 1969, he began to gradually withdraw U.S. troops in an effort to quiet public discontent. In December, he turned the draft into a lottery. Men turning 19 years old were now eligible for only one year. (The Selective Service also eliminated student deferments in 1971, making the draft more equitable.)

The president linked the removal of U.S. troops to a policy called "Vietnamization," in which South

Vietnamese forces increased their share of the fighting. As they grew stronger, more Americans withdrew. With ground troops decreasing in number, the United States relied more heavily on air power to defeat the VC and NVA. Strikes pounded South Vietnam and Laos. In 1969, Nixon secretly began bombing Cambodia in raids that stayed largely hidden until the U.S. withdrawal in 1973.



Moratorium – October, November till the End of the War  
Vietnam Moratorium poster, 1969. Photograph by Winston Vargas.  
Library of Congress, 2016648515

## Resistance Continues at Home

On October 15, 1969, between 1 and 2 million Americans took part in the Vietnam Moratorium. Across the nation, people skipped work and school to attend silent vigils, discussions, and marches against the war. A second Moratorium was held in November.

President Nixon swung back at the antiwar movement. Speaking on TV to “the great silent majority of my fellow Americans,” he defended his decisions and lashed out at his critics. Whatever the president’s supporters thought about the war, most defended his efforts to avert defeat and were put off by antiwar activism. Equating silence with loyalty and vocal dissent with disloyalty, the president’s speech divided Americans into two opposing sides.

On April 30, 1970, Nixon announced imminent military operations on the ground in Cambodia. Many Americans saw this as an expansion of the war. Campuses erupted in protest. On May 4, at Kent State University in Ohio, National Guardsmen fired into a protest rally, killing four students and wounding nine others. To memorialize the students, including one who came from Long Island, the City of New York closed all public schools on May 8 and flew the U.S. flag at half-staff. Antiwar groups organized a rally on Wall Street. Shortly after noon, 200 construction workers charged the rally and injured more than 70 people in what became known as the Hard Hat Riot. The riot helped turn the hard hat into a symbol of blue-collar support for the war and opposition to the protests. The

polls presented a more complicated picture. By 1970, Americans without college degrees were more opposed to the war than the college educated.

## The Pentagon Papers

In June 1971, the *New York Times* surprised readers with passages from the “Pentagon Papers.” Other newspapers followed. This classified report had been created some years earlier for Robert McNamara, President Johnson’s Secretary of Defense. McNamara had hoped to discover why the war was not going as expected.

Daniel Ellsberg, a Defense Department consultant who had helped write the report, leaked it to the press after trying and failing to get Congress to make it public. His wartime experience in Vietnam, as well as his examination of the historical record, convinced him that Americans should know how successive presidents had misled them about the war.

The Nixon administration sued to prevent publication, arguing that it threatened national security. In the landmark case, *New York Times Co. v. United States*, the Supreme Court ruled that the government had failed to prove its charge. The First Amendment prevailed and newspapers nationwide resumed publication.

## Endgame

President Nixon freed the military to pursue enemy troops into neighboring countries. In 1970, U.S. and allied forces crossed into Cambodia. That year, both

houses of Congress passed bills prohibiting U.S. ground assaults into Laos and Cambodia. Bombing operations, however, continued. In 1971, the ARVN invaded Laos with U.S. air support.

Challenges to Nixon's war strategy mounted. Business executives pressured him to end the war. The ARVN's rout in Laos sowed doubts about Vietnamization. Troop morale bottomed out and racial conflict among servicemen rose. Among veterans and soldiers, the peace movement grew, with some publicly throwing away their medals. Military leaders warned that the paucity of troops and poor morale threatened their ability to achieve their mission.

In November 1972, Nixon was reelected. The president feared that Congress, with newly elected antiwar legislators, would cut off funds for the war. This gave him another strong reason to make peace with Hanoi and convince South Vietnamese president Thieu to go along.

## Paris Peace Accords

In January 1973, the warring parties signed an agreement in Paris that ended U.S. involvement in the war. Only a small detachment of U.S. Marines remained to guard the embassy in Saigon. The treaty also made possible the simultaneous return of 591 U.S. prisoners of war. But although the accords established a process for North and South Vietnam to peacefully resolve their conflicts, fighting resumed within months.

Later that year, Congress prohibited further military activity in Southeast Asia without congressional approval. The War Powers Act followed. It requires presidents to obtain congressional approval soon after committing U.S. forces. This law is still in effect.

## The Fall of South Vietnam

On April 30, 1975, North Vietnamese troops captured Saigon, ending their Final Offensive.

This completed the military defeat of South Vietnam and ended the north-south partition. Vietnam was now one country under the Communist leadership of Hanoi. The American embassy hastily evacuated remaining U.S. personnel and some South Vietnamese allies.

Twenty years passed before a U.S. embassy re-opened in Vietnam, this time in Hanoi.



Hugh Van Es, *An Air America helicopter crew member helps evacuees at 18 Gia Long Street, Saigon, 1975.* Photograph. UPI Photo Service / Newscom

# CLASSROOM NOTES

## Approach and Structure

This supplementary curriculum was developed in conjunction with the New-York Historical Society exhibition, *The Vietnam War, 1945–1975*, on view from October 4, 2017, to April 22, 2018. For details, see [About the Exhibition](#). The curriculum and the exhibition cover the same 30-year period from the end of World War II to the end of the Vietnam War.

In the classroom materials, the time period is broken into four chronological units: Unit 1, 1945–1963; Unit 2, 1964–1967; Unit 3, 1968; and Unit 4, 1969–1975. Each unit contains two clusters that approach the time period in different ways. Each cluster contains a life story and related primary resources as well as links to other supportive materials in the curriculum.

Designed for middle- and high-school classrooms, these materials are intended to augment students' study of the Vietnam War. They do not examine every aspect of the war or the home front, and in fact they omit, or mention only briefly, some well-known events that are likely to be in many teachers' classroom work already. Instead, the goal is to provide teachers and students with new material or with added context for familiar stories and events.

Many of the life stories and resources focus on ordinary Americans. But the war was driven by the thinking and actions of political leaders. Six [Presidential Capsules](#)

briefly capture the Vietnam-related decisions and comments of the U.S. presidents who were in office from 1945 to 1975, from Harry S. Truman to Gerald R. Ford. Other important leaders are also profiled, including Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara ([Life Story](#)), Ho Chi Minh, the leader of Vietnam's liberation movement ([Life Story](#)), and Ngo Dinh Diem, the first president of South Vietnam ([Resource 6](#)).

Additional primary materials are provided in the Appendices and listed in the table of contents. [Appendix A](#) is a map of Indochina that will be useful in all the units.

## Two Online Interactive Murals

Two room-scale illustrated murals, showing the war front and home front, were developed for the exhibition and are available online at [vietnamwar.nyhistory.org/murals](http://vietnamwar.nyhistory.org/murals). This major web resource is fully interactive and combines text, photographs, and films. The focus of the murals is 1966–1967, so they support Unit 2 in particular but will be useful in the other units as well.

The war front mural provides a great deal of detailed information about events and locations in Vietnam, including: the Ho Chi Minh Trail ([Resource 10](#)); Operation Rolling Thunder ([Resource 8](#)); Khe Sanh Marine Base ([Resource 15](#)); the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong ([Resource 3](#)); the Army of the

Republic of Vietnam, which was South Vietnam's military ([Resource 7](#)); and the use of napalm and Agent Orange ([Resource 8](#)). It also introduces battlefield topics not covered in the life stories or resources. You may want to suggest that students use the map of Indochina ([Appendix A](#)) as a reference in conjunction with the war front mural.

The home front mural deals primarily with two events: the April 15, 1967, antiwar march in New York City and San Francisco, known as Spring Mobe, and the Support Our Men march, held in response to Spring Mobe, to demonstrate approval for the war and the troops. This mural expands on [Resource 9](#) and captures the growing conflicts in the American public's views of the war.

## Classroom Suggestions

These materials are designed for flexibility in the classroom. They can be used individually—guiding questions are provided for every life story and resource—or by cluster or unit, or combined in different ways. Following are some suggestions.

### Introductory Activity

In a class discussion or in small groups, ask students what they know about the Vietnam War. What are their sources of information (classroom study, popular culture, stories of family members, etc.)? How was Vietnam like or unlike other American wars they know about? Keep track of the words and phrases students

use, and return to the list later to consider how the war is remembered, and why.

Engage students in a map activity to make sure they understand Vietnam's geography. Where is Vietnam? What are its closest neighbors? Research the size of Vietnam in square miles. Use the U.S. census site (<https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/state-area.html>) to find a U.S. state that is comparable in size. Use Google Earth for a view of the country's topography.

## Unit 1: 1945-1963

This unit covers an 18-year period that includes the administrations of three American presidents and the beginning of a fourth. During these years, the U.S. presence in Vietnam, informed by Cold War thinking, began and grew. American advisers started providing training and support to South Vietnam's army but were not yet taking combat roles.

**Cluster 1, The Vietnamese Liberation Movement**, explores the perspectives of Vietnamese leaders and their attitudes toward their country and outside rulers. Materials include:

- **Life Story: Ho Chi Minh**
- **Resource 1: European Colonialism in Asia (map)**
- **Resource 2: General Giap at Dien Bien Phu (text)**
- **Resource 3: Forces Allied with North Vietnam (text and photos)**

Introduce the map of Indochina (**Appendix A**) and, if possible, print out a color copy for each student. This will be an ongoing reference throughout their study of the war. The map's 1968 date is later than the focus of Unit 1 and is well into America's war in Vietnam, but it presents Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos as the French and U.S. saw them in the 1940s and 1950s. Ask students to use a pen to go over the pale gray lines (not the railroad tracks) that mark the borders between Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, which made up the

region the French called Indochina. They can use the map in **Resource 1** as a source if needed. Using the scale of miles, roughly how long was Vietnam, north to south? How many miles wide at its widest? At its narrowest? How far apart were the cities of Hanoi and Saigon?

Ask students to read the profile of Ho Chi Minh (**Life Story**). Why was he so committed to Vietnam's liberation? How did he change his tactics to address different challenges and different adversaries? Introduce the story of General Giap, Ho Chi Minh's long-time military leader (**Resource 2**). What did the two men have in common? What did each bring to the cause they fought for?

On the map of Indochina (**Appendix A**), ask students to find and darken the demarcation line. Why would this location be chosen as the dividing line between North and South Vietnam in 1955?

Ask students to read all the materials in this cluster and study Map A and Map B in **Resource 1**. How did the French see Indochina? How did Ho Chi Minh and General Giap see the French? What made 1954 a critical year in Vietnam's history? How did French colonization affect Vietnam? How did the war with the French prepare Ho Chi Minh and General Giap to fight the South Vietnamese and their American advisers after 1955?

**Cluster 2, America's Early Role**, looks at the same 18-year period through the American lens.

Materials include:

- **Life Story: Richard Olsen**
- **Resource 4: Hiroshima USA (image)**
- **Resource 5: The Pendergrass–JFK Letters (text)**
- **Resource 6: The Rise and Fall of President Diem (image)**
- **Resource 7: South Vietnam's Army (images and text)**

The materials in this cluster explore how Cold War thinking contributed to America's early role in Vietnam. To begin, introduce Richard Olsen (**Life Story**). Ask students to use the map of Indochina (**Appendix A**) to find where his air base was located. What did this young soldier believe about his role in Vietnam? How did he understand America's responsibilities, and his own? Ask students to read the key decisions and quotations of President Eisenhower (**Presidential Capsule**) and President Kennedy (**Presidential Capsule**). What effect did their actions and thinking have on Richard Olsen?

To explore the nuclear anxiety that underlay the Cold War, introduce the presidency of Harry S. Truman (**Presidential Capsule**) with **Resource 4**. Ask students to make a simple timeline about the use and development of nuclear weapons from 1945 to the early 1960s. What was important about the successful

1949 Soviet test? Why would President Truman want to downplay it in public? What steps did he take within a year or so? What strategies did he use to prevent the spread of Communism in Asia?

One of the roles of U.S. presidents is to communicate with the American people about threats facing the country and to explain why actions are taken. Study the information about Harry S. Truman (**Presidential Capsule**), Dwight D. Eisenhower (**Presidential Capsule**), and John F. Kennedy (**Presidential Capsule**) with **Resource 5**. Ask students to focus on how these presidents described Communism. What words and tone did they use? What images and symbols? What was each president's argument for America's presence in Vietnam? Why did they keep expanding the U.S. role?

Messages about Communism also appeared in popular culture, including comic books meant for young people, especially teenage boys. One comic book, entitled *This Godless Communism*, was published by a Catholic organization during the 1961–1962 school year. Selections can be viewed online at <https://archive.org/details/ThisGodlessCommunism>. Ask students to analyze the drawings and the text. What message do they convey to young people? How do they compare to the messages from the U.S. presidents? Many of the readers would soon be old enough for military service. How might this comic book, and others like it, have affected their view of the Vietnam War?

Read **Appendix B**, the Notice to the Reader of the American edition of General Giap's *People's War, People's Army*. How was this book being presented to a mostly military audience in 1962? Compare the notice to the excerpts from General Giap's book (**Resource 2**). What phrases might the writer have thought were "sharply colored with Communist perspectives"? How does the notice compare to the views of Richard Olsen (**Life Story**)?

Before 1965, the U.S. role in Vietnam was to strengthen the government of South Vietnam and provide military advisers like Richard Olsen. Ask students to read **Resources 6** and **7** with **Resource 3**. What differences do they see between North and South Vietnam? What roles did the Soviet Union, China, and the United States play? How did their Cold War rivalries affect events in Vietnam?

## Unit 1 Discussion Questions

Combine the materials in Clusters 1 and 2 to consider these questions: How did U.S. leaders view Vietnam during this period? How did North and South Vietnamese leaders view the United States? What events and ideas contributed to these different perceptions? How did the situation in Vietnam evolve over this period of time? How would you characterize the American-Vietnamese political relationship in 1945? In 1963?

## Unit 2: 1964-1967

These years saw the dramatic escalation of America's role in Vietnam and growing divisions at home between those who believed in the war and those who opposed it.

**Cluster 3, Escalation**, examines the thinking and actions of American leaders and their supporters as the U.S. role in the war was substantially increased. Materials include:

- **Life Story: Robert S. McNamara**
- **Resource 8: Rolling Thunder and the Draft (images)**
- **Resource 9: Support Our Men (image)**
- **Resource 10: The Ho Chi Minh Trail (image)**
- **Online interactive home front and war front murals**

As they consider these materials, ask students to use their 1968 map of Indochina (**Appendix A**) to find any locations that are mentioned. Explain that although North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were bombed by U.S. planes during the war, most ground battles took place in South Vietnam.

Ask students to compare their map to the one in the photograph of Robert S. McNamara (**Life Story**) during an April 26, 1965 press conference. How are the two maps different? Where is McNamara pointing? A newsreel of this press conference is available at [https://](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-I6wcRwnfE)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-I6wcRwnfE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-I6wcRwnfE). Use the newsreel, the profile of Robert S. McNamara (**Life Story**), **Resource 8**, and **Resource 10** to consider the early weeks of Operation Rolling Thunder. What claims was McNamara, or the narrator of the newsreel, making in the press conference? What did McNamara mean when he spoke of damaging supply routes used by North Vietnam? What message was he conveying to the reporters at the press conference and ultimately to the American public?

The escalation of the war produced strong reactions in the U.S. Using **Resource 9** and the **online murals**, compare the demonstration known as Spring Mobe to the Support Our Men march. Why would people demonstrate in the streets? What arguments were the two sides making? What effect was the draft increase having on divisions within the country?

Use the materials in Cluster 3, along with Map C in **Resource 1**, the **online murals**, and the war statistics (**Appendix D**) to build a timeline of war front events in 1966-1967. In the months after the escalation, what was happening in the war? When McNamara and McGeorge Bundy encouraged the escalation, what did they think it would accomplish? Why would aerial bombardment and more troops fail to turn the war in America's favor?

Ask students to study the language of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution (**Appendix C**). What did President Johnson ask Congress to do? What arguments did he use? What

was the response from Congress? What language did Congress use to authorize presidential action in Vietnam? Compare the Tonkin Gulf Resolution to a declaration that began an earlier American war. (For World War I, see <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/65th-congress/session-1/c65s1ch1.pdf>.) Analyze the language of the declarations. What authority did each give the president? How was the Tonkin Gulf Resolution different from earlier declarations of war?

**Cluster 4, Resistance**, explores the antiwar movement that expanded after the war's escalation. Materials include:

- **Life Story: The Fort Hood Three**
- **Resource 11: Martin Luther King, Jr., at Riverside Church (text)**
- **Resource 12: American Women in Hanoi (images and text)**
- **Resource 13: Veterans Against the War (images)**
- **Resource 14: Students Against the War (images)**
- **Online interactive home front and war front murals**

The materials in this cluster contain a number of different arguments against the war. Ask small groups of students to select one of the resources to read along with the life story. Ask them to analyze the story of the Fort Hood Three and the resource they picked.

What arguments were people using against the war? What language did they use? What actions did they take? How did their reasons for opposing the war differ or align? What were the various groups hoping to accomplish?

The life story and resources in this cluster all show public action against the war. What different public actions did the Fort Hood Three, the women who visited Hanoi, the veterans, and the students use? Who were they trying to reach? What kinds of people might have had a negative reaction?

Focus on the online interactive murals of home front and war front. Ask students to create a graphic organizer to compare important features of Spring Mobe and the Support Our Men march. For example: the reasons for each march, actions taken, crowd size, speakers, who took part, the posters encouraging people to attend, phrases on the signs and banners, or other details students choose. What are the most important differences and similarities you see? According to the statistics (**Appendix D**), how did the marches reflect polled attitudes about the war in 1967?

## Unit 2 Summary Activity

Cluster 4 contrasts the war's escalation and the rise of resistance efforts. The division between those who believed the war should be enlarged, and those who believed it should end, would intensify and widen as the war went on. To help students understand the clash, ask them to take a role on one side and write an op-ed piece about the other. For example, they might take the part of a Fort Hood Three supporter and write an article about the Support Our Men march. Then ask them to switch roles. To continue the example, they might then take the role of an organizer of the Support Our Men march and write about the veterans or students who were demonstrating against the war.

## Unit 3: 1968

This unit explores the year that is considered the turning point of the war, both on the battlefield and the home front.

**Cluster 5, The Tet Offensive**, focuses on the war front, specifically on the North's fierce simultaneous attacks on locations in the South that occurred at the beginning of Tet, Vietnam's lunar New Year. Materials include:

- **Life Story: Ralph Johnson**
- **Resource 15: American Views of Tet (text)**
- **Resource 16: A North Vietnamese View of Tet (text)**
- **Resource 17: Walter Cronkite and the Stalemate (image and text)**

Using the profile of Ralph Johnson (**Life Story**) and **Resources 15, 16, and 17**, create a timeline of the Tet offensive from Westmoreland's November 1967 end-is-in-view comment to Ralph Johnson's death. How do you think the time frame might have contributed to American reactions to the assault? What else might explain why the Tet Offensive came as such a shock to American forces and the American public?

What does **Resource 16** demonstrate about the NVA's preparations? How would you describe the emotional state of this NVA first-time combatant and his fellow

soldiers? What do you think he was feeling as he described this attack some three decades later? How do you think his feelings were similar to and different from Ralph Johnson's at Hill 146? What might account for these similarities and differences?

Walter Cronkite's "mired in stalemate" (**Resource 17**) comment was extremely influential at the time and prompted much soul-searching around American dinner tables. What are the dictionary definitions of these two words? Why do you think he used them both? How would you rephrase this comment in your own words? What was he saying about America's chances in the war? Why was this broadcast considered so important?

In most locations in South Vietnam, American and ARVN soldiers reestablished control quickly. Historians sometimes say that for North Vietnam the Tet Offensive was a military defeat but a public relations victory. What do you think they mean? Why did the North Vietnamese feel like winners and Americans feel like losers? Why didn't Americans feel confident after beating back such a major assault?

**Cluster 6, The 1968 Election**, examines the tumultuous events on the home front in 1968, including President Johnson's decision not to run for reelection, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, and the turmoil that roiled

the Democratic Party at its convention in Chicago. Materials include:

- **Life Story: Bella Abzug**
- **Resource 18: Inside the Convention Hall (images)**
- **Resource 19: Outside the Convention Hall (images)**
- **Resource 20: The Election of Richard M. Nixon (text)**

The year 1968 was as much a watershed domestically as it was on the war front. For a sense of the turmoil that gripped the United States, introduce the 1968 photo collage, either in the format of the printed poster, or in **Appendix E**. Because it was designed for the direction of traffic flow in the New-York Historical Society exhibition, *The Vietnam War, 1945–1975*, the collage reads right to left. To connect the home front events to the war, it starts with the well-known photograph of the execution of a Viet Cong suspect by the chief of South Vietnam's national police in the opening hours of the Tet Offensive. From there it progresses through the year's shocking events: the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy; the urban riots that followed; the chaos in the Democratic Party before and during its national convention in Chicago.

Ask students to show the collage to someone who lived through the events of 1968, or invite someone to your class who could provide a personal perspective. How do these people remember this year? Which images do

they find powerful? What position did they take on the war? What memories stand out?

Ask all students to read the profile of Bella Abzug (**Life Story**) in conjunction with the 1968 mural. How did the events of 1968 affect the Democratic Party? Why were the Democrats more in turmoil than the Republicans? Some people say that 1968 marked the year when "the war came home." What do you think they mean?

**Resources 18** and **19** examine the Democratic convention in Chicago—both the political conflict inside the hall and the far greater conflict outside the hall, as demonstrators clashed with authorities. Why was Vice President Humphrey the choice for many delegates? Who opposed him and why? Examine the photographs from inside and outside the convention hall. What details does each photograph provide? How would you describe the difference between what happened inside the hall and events on the street?

**Resource 20** introduces Richard M. Nixon as the Republican candidate who promised peace in Vietnam and "law and order" at home, which was a reference to the racial unrest that had followed the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Analyze the excerpts from the speech he made when he was nominated. What was he promising? In what ways was he subtly addressing the events portrayed in the 1968 mural?

## Unit 3 Discussion Questions

What made 1968 a turning point in both Vietnam and the United States? How did events in and regarding Vietnam affect politics at home, and vice versa? What changed during this year? What did not change?

## Unit 4: 1969-1975

This unit examines the slow winding down of the war, beginning with optimism in some corners that newly elected President Nixon would quickly bring peace and continuing through the eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces in 1973 to the final Communist victory over South Vietnam in 1975.

**Cluster 7, Searching for an Exit**, explores the home front with a particular focus on 1969 and 1970.

Materials include:

- **Life Story: Robert Hull**
- **Resource 21: Working-Class War (text)**
- **Resource 22: The Vietnam Moratorium (image)**
- **Resource 23: The Draft Lottery (image)**

Assign small groups to read the profile of Robert Hull (**Life Story**) along with at least one of the other resources. What kinds of conflicts did the war create? What were people on opposing sides hoping for, or angry about, or afraid of? What strategies did people use to deal with conflict? In a class discussion, share the findings of the small groups. What kinds of divisions do you see in American life today? How are they dealt with? What connections, if any, do you see to the era of the Vietnam War?

President Nixon (**Presidential Capsule**) said he would rather be a one-term president than preside over a losing war. Earlier, faced with the prolonged assault on Khe Sanh, President Johnson told his generals (**Resource 15**) he didn't want any "damned dinbinphoo." He was troubled by the memory of Dien Bien Phu, where the Vietnamese finally defeated the French. Why do you think the prospect of defeat was so hard for American leaders to accept? Do you think the United States should always win? Why?

**Cluster 8, The Long, Slow End**, carries the war front and home front stories forward from 1971 to the war's end in 1975. Materials include:

- **Life Story: Nancy Sanchez**
- **Resource 24: The Pentagon Papers (text)**
- **Resource 25: The Paris Peace Accords (text)**
- **Resource 26: The End and the Aftermath (images)**

This cluster provides an opportunity to look at how the war ended and why it lasted so long. To begin, zero in on the year 1971 with the profile of Nancy Sanchez (**Life Story**) and the Pentagon Papers (**Resource 24**). In 1971, how many years had elapsed since the first American advisers were sent to Vietnam under President Eisenhower (**Presidential Capsule**)? Since the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (**Appendix C**)? Since the escalation of the war (**Resource 8**)? Ask students to compare their answers to the time frame of their lives, or their parents' lives, or events in their town or in the United States. If you had been your age in 1971, how old would you have been when the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was passed? How do you think the war's long time frame might have affected how people were feeling in 1971?

Based on their reading of Cluster 8, ask students to identify what they see as the important events that took place between 1971 and 1975. What was happening in the war and at home? Then ask them to return to materials that covered the early years of the war, for example, the profile of Richard Olsen (**Life Story**), and President Kennedy's exchange with Bobbie Lou Pendergrass (**Resource 5**). In the early 1960s, why did Americans think the U.S. was involved in Vietnam? What differences do you see between the early 1960s and the 1970s?

Nancy Sanchez destroyed her radio, perhaps in April 1971, after hearing a broadcast from President Nixon. The Pentagon Papers (**Resource 24**) were released in June. What connections do you see between these events and reactions to them? What did Americans find so upsetting? How would the long period covered by the Pentagon Papers have affected how the public responded?

If you have access to the *New York Times* archive, print out "The 1972 Campaign," an article published on October 21, 1972, and a follow-up, "McGovern Compared Ho Chi Minh to Washington," published on October 23, 1972. The articles appeared toward the end of the 1972 presidential campaign, when President Nixon ran for reelection against the Democratic candidate, George McGovern. They recount an episode that took place during the campaign, when one of Nixon's Democratic supporters, former Texas governor John Connally, attacked McGovern for comparing Ho Chi Minh to George Washington. Ask students to read the articles, or summarize the story for them. Was the comparison between Washington and Ho justified? Why would it be contentious in 1972?

The Paris Peace Accords (**Resource 25**) formally provided for the U.S. exit from the war. Compare the terms of this document with the materials in Unit 1 and the presidential capsules. Focus on the leaders—

Ho Chi Minh (**Life Story**), Ngo Dinh Diem (**Resource 6**), Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy (**Presidential Capsules**). What had they wanted at the beginning? When the Paris Accords were signed, what did each side get? Why do you think the war continued in Vietnam after the withdrawal of American troops? During the administration of President Gerald R. Ford (**Presidential Capsule**), how did questions about America's role continue even after the Paris Accords?

**Resource 26** includes two photos of the chaotic effort to evacuate South Vietnamese people who had helped the U.S. during the war. How do you think photographs like these were viewed by Americans when they appeared in U.S. newspapers? Based on the text in this resource, how would you summarize the steps Americans have taken since the war? What do you think they suggest about how Americans have dealt with the war's legacy?

## Unit 4 Discussion Questions

How did Nixon's handling of the war differ from that of previous presidents? If 1968 marked the war's turning point, why did it continue so much longer? Why do you think North Vietnam won?

## Presidential Capsules: 1945–1975

This series of one-page profiles summarize the thinking and actions of the six U.S. presidents, representing both political parties, who governed during the Vietnam War era: Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon, and Gerald R. Ford. Each of these capsules is incorporated into the study of the clusters, but they can also be explored as a group. Suggestions follow:

Assign small groups of students two sequential presidential capsules: Truman and Eisenhower, Eisenhower and Kennedy, etc. For each capsule, they should select one or two decisions they think are most significant. How did these decisions reflect how presidents viewed America's power, its responsibility in the world, and the threats it faced? How did each president build on the actions of his predecessor? Why did American commitment to the war keep growing? Why did the war go on for so long? For additional information, students can draw on the statistics in **Appendix D**.

Focus on Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon, who presided over the years of formal U.S. involvement in the war. How did each man see Vietnam? How did each understand America's role in the world? Which of their decisions proved most crucial to the war and to public reactions in the U.S.?

## Research Projects

### The Wall

Research the history of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. Why was this memorial, commonly called The Wall, controversial in the beginning? Why did some veterans refer to it as a “black gash of shame”? At what point did it start to be viewed differently? Why do you think it is considered so moving now? What does this history indicate about how attitudes toward the Vietnam War have endured or changed?

Many neighborhoods, towns, and cities also have memorials to the Vietnam War. Research the history of the one closest to you and the reactions of the public, both when it was installed and over time. Interview people who were involved. Compare this story to the history of The Wall in Washington, DC. In what ways does your local community reflect national attitudes toward Vietnam in the years since the war ended?

### John McCain and John Kerry

John McCain was an Operation Rolling Thunder pilot (**Resource 8**) and a prisoner of war in Vietnam. John Kerry was a navy lieutenant who became one of the leaders of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (**Resource 13**). Both men went on to long careers in the U.S. Senate, and both were their party's presidential nominees. Ask students to research their lives in published works and online. What connections do they see between the two men's later careers and their experiences during the war? How did their campaigns for president expose ongoing discord over the Vietnam War?

### The Afghanistan War

Research the Afghanistan War that began in 2001. What event prompted it? How was military action authorized? How long has it lasted? How many service people have fought in the war? What are the casualty figures? How has the all-volunteer army affected attitudes at home? How have returning veterans been treated? How would you characterize the differences between the wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan?

## Wrap-Up Discussion Questions

The Vietnam War raises questions that go straight to the heart of what it means to be an American. Following are some of the big issues you can explore with your students once they've studied the war.

### WHAT IS PATRIOTISM?

What does the word mean to you? How do you think the Americans profiled in these materials defined it? Were Ho Chi Minh ([Life Story](#)), General Giap ([Resource 2](#)), or Tuan Van Ban ([Resource 16](#)) "patriots"? What is the purpose of patriotism? What are some of the benefits of patriotism? What are some of the drawbacks?

**Suggested Activity:** Ask the class to brainstorm how patriotism is expressed. What do people do and say? Keep track of the answers and then categorize them. Break the class into small groups and assign each group one category to pursue in these materials or others. One category that might emerge is the use of the American flag. Students could examine the photographs in this curriculum, and other sources, to explore how the flag's symbolism became a flash point during the war.

### WHO SHOULD FIGHT A NATION'S WARS?

Do all citizens have a duty to fight in their country's wars? What if they disagree with the war? Is there a fair way to decide who serves in combat? Do you think the all-volunteer army is more fair than the draft?

### HOW DO PEOPLE DEVELOP THEIR IDEAS ABOUT WAR AND MILITARY SERVICE?

How do families shape these attitudes? What role do friends and communities play?

### WHAT MADE THE VIETNAM WAR UNIQUE?

How was it different from World War II? Why is World War II so often described as a "good war," while Vietnam is often considered a "bad war"? Do you agree with this distinction?

### HOW MUCH WAR POWER SHOULD THE PRESIDENT HAVE?

Should the U.S. president have the authority to wage war without public input or knowledge? How much say should American voters have in decisions about war? What kinds of limits should be placed on the president's power?

### HOW SHOULD THE U.S. USE ITS POWER?

What is America's role in the world today? What was its role during the Vietnam War? When is it appropriate for America to intervene in the affairs of other nations?

### IS WAR INEVITABLE?

What role do leaders' decisions play? How might individual presidents have changed the story of the Vietnam War?

# UNIT I

## 1945-1963

**B**eginning with the last days of World War II and continuing into the Cold War, this unit examines the rise of a liberation movement in Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh, the war with the French who sought to recolonize Indochina, and U.S. efforts to prevent the spread of Communism in the region. During these years, the American presence in Vietnam began and grew.

**Cluster 1, The Vietnamese Liberation Movement**, explores the perspective of nationalist Vietnamese leaders on their country and the presence of foreigners, both French and American.

**Cluster 2, America's Early Role**, examines U.S. actions during this period, from supporting France during the First Indochina War to deploying military advisers to aid South Vietnam.

1945: Ho Chi Minh declares Vietnam's independence.

1946: War begins between Vietnam and France.

1949: Soviets test atomic weapon.

1950: Truman announces U.S. intervention in Korea.

1954: France defeated at Dien Bien Phu. Geneva Accords divide Vietnam.

1955: American advisers arrive to bolster S. Vietnam's army.

1963: Ngo Dinh Diem and, later, John F. Kennedy assassinated.

# Cluster 1 • The Vietnamese Liberation Movement

*The long fight to gain independence*

LIFE STORY



*Revolutionary leader and Vietnam's first president*

## Resource 1

*European Colonialism in Asia*  
How colonial rule evolved in the twentieth century



## Resource 2

*General Giap at Dien Bien Phu*

The winning general explains the victory over the French



## Resource 3

*Forces Allied with North Vietnam*

The North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong guerrillas



## Related Materials

- [Harry S. Truman Presidential Capsule](#)
- [Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Capsule](#)
- [John F. Kennedy Presidential Capsule](#)
- [Appendix A: Map of Indochina](#)
- [Appendix D: War Statistics](#)

# UNIT 1 • CLUSTER 1 • The Vietnamese Liberation Movement

## Life Story • Ho Chi Minh

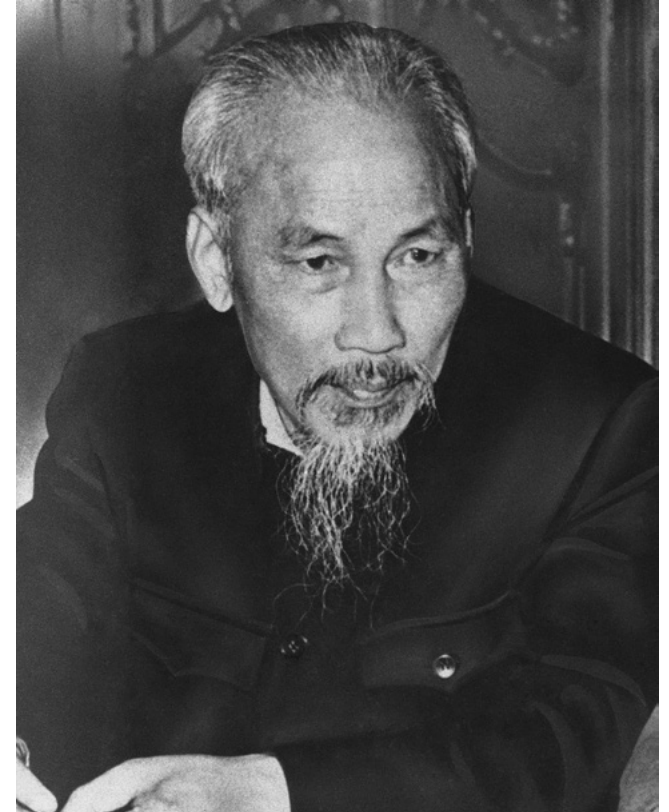
The United States supported South Vietnam during the war. So for many Americans, Ho Chi Minh (1890–1969) was the enemy, the menacing North Vietnamese Communist determined to conquer the democratic South. For many Vietnamese, however, he was a national hero, a man of the people, a beloved “uncle.” Ho’s birth name was Nguyen Sing Cung. His family was poor, but his father was a scholar fiercely opposed to the French who had colonized what they called Indochina—Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia (**Resource 1**). Ho was still a teenager when he began writing against colonialism. At 22, he left Vietnam to travel and reside in the west, in part to understand how Europeans thought. While living in Paris, he sympathized with poor people and discovered Communism, which he admired for its stand against colonialism. He lived for a time in the Soviet Union and in China.

Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist—he wanted to see his country free of foreign rule, as it had been for centuries before the French arrived. In 1940, when France was conquered by Germany early in World War II, Ho saw an opportunity. He returned quietly to his country and set up headquarters in the Pac Bo Cave, close to the Chinese border. Taking the name Ho Chi Minh—“he who enlightens”—he organized a liberation group, the Viet Minh. In 1944, General Vo Nguyen Giap assembled a small Viet Minh army, which worked briefly with the U.S. to defeat Japan at the end of World War II.

The war’s end presented Ho Chi Minh with another opportunity. In a speech on September 2, 1945, he declared the independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam and declared himself the country’s first president. By then he was middle-aged, with the wispy beard and peasant clothing that would make him recognizable around the globe. Ho modeled his speech on the U.S. Declaration of Independence and expected western support.

American leaders, however, did not applaud Ho’s declaration. Worried that Communism would spread into former European colonies, the U.S. instead supported and funded the French effort to reclaim Indochina. The Viet Minh resisted, and the conflict between the two sides, known as the First Indochina War, began in 1946.

The war continued for eight years until the Viet Minh defeated the French at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and won the war. Westerners were stunned. Ho and General Giap were not (**Resource 2**), but their celebrations were short-lived. The French, hoping to maintain as much control as possible, insisted that the major world powers address the issue of Indochina. So when peace talks began in Geneva, the parties included not only Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and France, but the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union too. Postwar rivalries among the world powers overwhelmed Ho’s claims, and he had no choice but to accept what was offered in the Geneva Accords:



President Ho Chi Minh, 1957. Photograph. Associated Press, 5710111775

# UNIT 1 • CLUSTER 1 • The Vietnamese Liberation Movement

## Life Story • Ho Chi Minh *continued*

a temporary division of Vietnam at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, with a vote on reunification scheduled for 1956.

Ho Chi Minh's government ruled in the North and continued a program it had begun in 1953, taking land from the wealthy and redistributing it to the poor. Land reform was essential to the Communist vision, but the teams who carried out this process in the countryside used brutal tactics and executed as many as 15,000 people. Facing protests, Ho admitted that mistakes had been made. But he represented the dream of an independent Vietnam, and most people in the North continued to support him.

South of the demarcation line, the U.S. was the real power, and it backed the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic anti-Communist who had been appointed prime minister in the waning days of French control (**Resource 6**). Diem's regime was violent and repressive, but the U.S. remained on his side because he was against Communism. President Eisenhower and many others believed voters would choose to reunify Vietnam and that eventually Ho Chi Minh and the Communists would govern the whole country. It was the outcome they feared most. So they supported Diem when he ignored the Geneva Accords and cancelled the scheduled reunification vote.

Ho Chi Minh believed he would need to fight another war to unify and free Vietnam. In 1959, he ordered construction of a secret network of roads and paths, later called the Ho Chi Minh Trail (**Resource 10**). Porters on the trail took food and supplies to the Viet Cong (insurgents in the South who hoped to unseat President Diem). Troops from the North Vietnamese Army (**Resource 3**) used the trail to move in and out of South Vietnam.

As the United States sent more and more aid and advisers to strengthen Diem, Ho saw Americans as the new outsiders, bent on ruling his country. But he was, as always, confident. "The Americans are stronger than the French," he said in 1962. "It might take ten years, but our heroic compatriots in the South will defeat them in the end." He died in 1969, nearly 30 years after beginning his campaign to liberate Vietnam. He did not live to see his forces capture Saigon in 1975 and win what they called the American War.

### Guiding Questions

- What experiences shaped Ho Chi Minh's commitment to Vietnam's liberation?
- Why do you think Ho based his September 2, 1945 speech on the Declaration of Independence?

# Resource 1 • European Colonialism in Asia

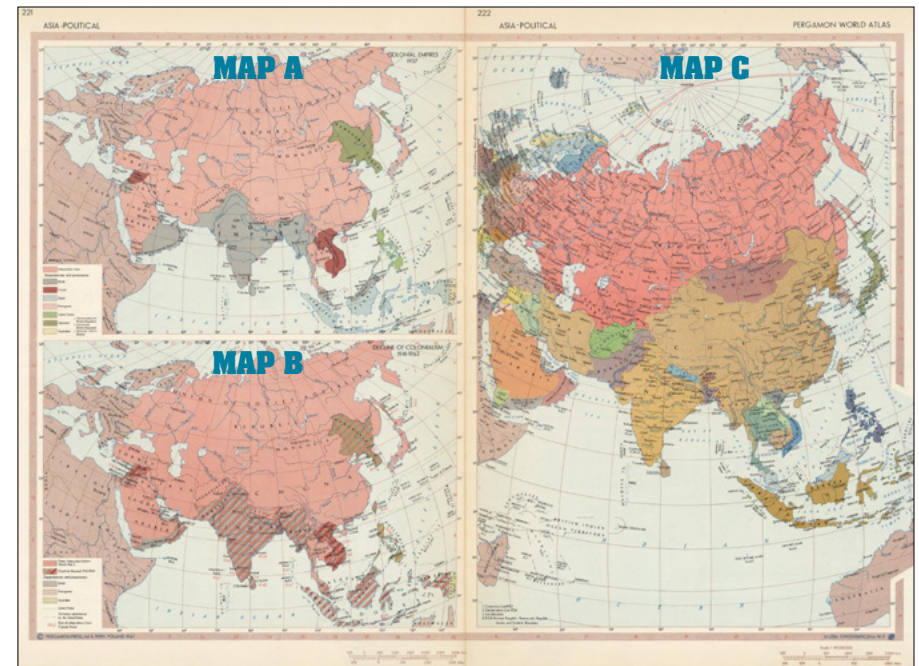
In the 1600s, French Catholic missionaries first arrived in Vietnam, where two local empires ruled, one in the north and one in the south. In the 1800s, after two centuries of working to convert the people to Catholicism, the missionaries were expelled. France invaded in 1856 to protect Vietnamese Catholics. By the 1880s it had established a colony it called Indochina—today the nations of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

These maps were published in Poland in 1967 and in an English atlas in 1968. Map A shows the extent of western colonialism in 1937. (The date appears in the map's upper right-hand corner.) This was Asia as Ho Chi Minh ([Life Story](#)) knew it for much of his life, and it was the reality that fostered his commitment to his country's independence.

During and after World War II (Map B), many one-time colonies in south and southeast Asia became independent, by peaceful means or not. But a vast swath of the continent was occupied by the Communist Soviet Union and by China, which was Communist after 1949. To the American government, they seemed to loom over the fragile new nations to their south and threaten the whole world. The U.S. funded French efforts to recolonize Indochina after World War II in order to keep Communism at bay.

Map C shows Asia in 1967, the height of the Vietnam War. Vietnam was still divided by the terms of the 1954 Geneva Accords: in the north, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the U.S.-backed Republic of Vietnam in the south. The question of whether it was one country or two was at the heart of the conflict between them.

**For larger separate versions of all three maps, click on the headings on the map at right.**



## Guiding Questions

- **Map A:** Before World War II, which western countries controlled areas of Southeast Asia? Which controlled the most?
- **Map B:** How did the mapmakers portray Vietnam after World War II? Who was their likely audience? Would Ho Chi Minh have agreed with this map?
- **Map C:** How did these western mapmakers understand Vietnam in 1967? How would Ho have drawn Vietnam at this time?

*Asia - Political. Pergamon World Atlas, 1968. Maps. First published by Polish Army Topography Service, 1967. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection*

# Resource 2 • General Giap at Dien Bien Phu

**V**o Nguyen Giap (1911-2013) was a striking combination: well-educated, aristocratic, and Communist. His surname was Vo, but he was known as General Giap. He had no military training and later said he had learned about war from books and his own experiences. But he was Ho Chi Minh's military commander. He formed the Viet Minh army in 1944 and worked briefly with American forces during the last weeks of World War II. General Giap led Viet Minh troops in the First Indochina War, defeating the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. He was still in uniform during the Vietnam War, and he directed the North Vietnamese Army's months-long siege against U.S. marines at Khe Sanh in 1968. He retired in 1973 and died forty years later, at the age of 102.

This excerpt is from *People's War, People's Army*, an English-language collection of General Giap's articles in which he explained his 1954 victory over the French. The book was published in the U.S. in 1962, when the American government was sending money and advisers to support South Vietnam's military. Beyond the story of Dien Bien Phu, this excerpt offers clues to Giap's broader perspective on the strengths of his people and the weaknesses of the west.

For a glimpse of the American military's view of Giap's book, see the Notice to the Reader (**Appendix B**), which appeared in the 1962 Department of Defense edition.

*The French and American military authorities believed that the fortified entrenched camp of Dien Bien Phu was impregnable. . . . General Navarre [the French commander] had over-estimated the Dien Bien Phu defenses. . . . Never did it enter his head that the whole fortified camp could be annihilated by our troops.*

*[W]e had only very limited artillery fire and no mechanized or air forces. We overcame this difficulty by digging a whole network of trenches that . . . enabled our forces to deploy and move in open country under the rain of enemy napalm bombs and artillery shells. . . . Our troops cut through mountains and hacked away jungles to build roads and haul our artillery pieces to the approaches of Dien Bien Phu. Where roads could not be built, artillery pieces were moved by nothing but the sweat and muscle of our soldiers. . . .*

*[Our] combatants kept moving forward to carry out their tasks. One fell, but many others rushed forward like a sweeping rising tide that no force on earth could hold back. . . . The imperialists and traitors could never appreciate the strength of a nation, of a people. This strength is immense. It can overcome any difficulty, defeat any enemy.*

— Vo Nguyen Giap

Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War, People's Army*. First English publication, Hanoi, 1961. Published by the Armed Services Technical Information Agency, U.S. Department of Defense, 1962, <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/AD0292744>.

## Guiding Questions

- How did the Viet Minh make up for its limited military equipment?
- How did General Giap explain his defeat of the French?



Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, 1950. Photograph. Associated Press, 687979592591

## UNIT 1 • CLUSTER 1 • The Vietnamese Liberation Movement

# Resource 3 • Forces Allied with North Vietnam

VIET  
NAM  
WAR  
| 1945-1975 |

In the late 1950s, Communists in South Vietnam—people who had supported Ho Chi Minh’s war against the French—were repressed by President Diem’s regime. They began forming self-defense groups and sometimes attacking government facilities to steal weapons. In 1960, these groups merged to form a guerrilla force formally known as the National Liberation Front. Diem nicknamed them the Viet Cong, a derisive term that meant “commies.” The insult was partly accurate, since the leaders and many members were Communists, and at least some of the group’s activities were directed from Hanoi, the North’s capital. But many Viet Cong were driven less by ideology than by opposition to Diem, whom they saw as a puppet of the United States.

The Viet Cong—VC for short—grew into a large, potent force in South Vietnam. Some were trained soldiers, others were locals of any age and either gender. It was impossible for outsiders to know who was a VC and who was not. They were especially strong around Saigon, where they controlled most of the countryside. When necessary, they could hide for long periods in the vast tunnel system that had been built during the war with the French. The tunnels had living quarters, classrooms, and basic medical facilities.

*continued*



North Vietnamese Army troops attack Khe Sanh, 1968. Photograph. ©Vietnam News Agency

*In the North, because of wartime food shortages, people had to mix cassava [an edible root] into their rice. In the Central Highlands [a strategically crucial region of South Vietnam] there was so little rice that we used to say that our cassava carried rice on its back. . . . From commanders down to ordinary soldiers we all grew cassava. . . . Once when we were feeling very optimistic we composed a song we called “The Cassava Offensive.” . . . There were lots of ups and downs, many hardships but a lot of joy.*

—Dang Vu Hiep, NVA officer, 1964-1975

“Dang Vu Hiep,” Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 11.



Viet Cong tunnel, 1967. Photograph. Adoc Photos

*When the revolution broke out I was just a kid. In 1962, the puppet soldiers came to my house and said, “Your father was a Viet Cong so we killed him. Go fetch his body.” He had gone to a meeting with his comrades. The southern soldiers surrounded the building and killed everyone. From then on, I decided to take revenge for my father’s death. . . . I wanted to do something to liberate my country and help people get enough food and clothing. I believed my mission in life was to continue my father’s cause, so in 1963, when I was seventeen, I joined the guerrillas.*

—Tran Thi Gung, the only woman in her unit

“Tran Thi Gung,” Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 15.

# UNIT 1 • CLUSTER 1 • The Vietnamese Liberation Movement

## Resource 3 • Forces Allied with North Vietnam *continued*

Above the demarcation line at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, Ho Chi Minh presided over the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, often known simply as North Vietnam, and the Army of North Vietnam (NVA). This standing military force was an outgrowth of the Viet Minh army that had defeated the French. The Geneva Accords had required it to move north of the demarcation line. All young men in the North could be drafted, but the NVA was flexible about traditions and families' needs, an important difference from the opposing army in the South (**Resource 7**). NVA soldiers used Soviet or Chinese rockets and mortars to fire across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) that separated North from South. They also infiltrated South Vietnam, either to join Viet Cong operations or to launch full-scale attacks.

Throughout the Vietnam War, Viet Cong and NVA soldiers fought on one side. On the other were the South Vietnamese forces (**Resource 7**) and those of the countries that aided them: primarily the United States, but also Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and South Korea.

### Guiding Questions

- What did the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Viet Cong (VC) have in common? How did soldiers characterize their service? How were their goals and strategies different?
- Examine the photograph of the Viet Cong carefully. What does it suggest about this insurgent movement?

# Cluster 2 • America's Early Role

The U.S. perspective on Communism, the Cold War, and Vietnam

LIFE STORY



Richard Olsen  
*An American adviser in Vietnam*

### Related Materials

- Harry S. Truman Presidential Capsule
- Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Capsule
- John F. Kennedy Presidential Capsule
- Appendix A: Map of Indochina
- Appendix B: Notice to the Reader
- Appendix D: War Statistics

**Resource 4**  
*Hiroshima USA*  
America's nuclear-war anxiety



**Resource 5**  
*The Pendergrass-JFK Letters*  
An adviser's death, a sister's questions, and U.S. goals

**Resource 6**  
*The Rise and Fall of President Diem*  
South Vietnam's U.S.-backed leader



**Resource 7**  
*South Vietnam's Army*  
The military force supported by American advisers



# UNIT 1 • CLUSTER 2 • America's Early Role

## Life Story • Richard Olsen

In the early years of the Cold War (**Resource 4**), Richard Olsen (1935– ) was a teenager preoccupied with sports. He attended the University of Wisconsin from 1954 to 1958, majoring in physical education and joining ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps). He graduated as an officer with a civil pilot's license. On active duty in the U.S. Army from 1959 to 1963, he was one of the American advisers dispatched to Vietnam by President Kennedy in 1962 (**Resource 5**). "I felt like I was in the middle of world history," he said later, "part of a world process, not a local insurrection. I wanted Communism and totalitarianism to be ruled over by a Free World Spirit. This was the early phase of U.S. involvement and we had the collective idealism of the Kennedy years." (Appy, *Patriots*, 62-3)

Olsen was a first-rate helicopter pilot. His unit, the 33rd Transportation Company (Light Helicopter), was stationed at Bien Hoa Air Base, near Saigon, from September 1962 to June 1963. "Vietnam," he says, "was all about cool pilots. . . . I was with the best men in the world flying over rice paddies, canals, serpentine rivers, and savannas of elephant grass. . . . All of my daydreams from when I was ten or fifteen years old were coming true." (Appy, *Patriots*, 63)

The advisers were in Vietnam to safeguard the government of Ngo Dinh Diem (**Resource 6**). By the end of 1963, they numbered 16,000. The job of Olsen's team of chopper pilots was to deliver South Vietnamese troops into the

field and pick them up later, along with any casualties. The American advisers were not allowed to shoot unless they were shot at first. At this stage of the war, the combatants were all Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Viet Cong (VC) (**Resource 3**) fought *against* the government of South Vietnam, and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) (**Resource 7**) fought *for* the government of South Vietnam, with the help of American advisers. The two sides were at odds over the reunification of the country.

Being an adviser did not mean being out of harm's way. Advisers gave combat training and advice, transported troops, and sprayed defoliants. They may not have been firing weapons, but the Viet Cong saw them as enemies. The pilots of the 33rd flew big, unwieldy Shawnee helicopters, nicknamed "flying bananas." Because they generally flew low to the ground, ambushes were a constant hazard. On January 18, 1963, a VC bullet traveled through the floor of Olsen's chopper and out the top, passing through his thigh along the way. He was awarded a Purple Heart, the decoration given to U.S. service members wounded or killed by the enemy.

After the army, Olsen earned a graduate degree in art from the University of Wisconsin and explored his Vietnam experience in his paintings. He is an emeritus professor of art at the University of Georgia. He continues to believe in the war and the troops who fought it. In 2017, he wrote, "I am a Patriot and always will be and shed blood for my country, so will always



Richard Olsen, 1963. Photograph. Courtesy of Richard Olsen

rest easy with myself, knowing that I am NOT a coward in the face of battle, and will always . . . remember the men I served with as the finest above and beyond most people I know."

### Guiding Questions

- How does Richard Olsen's story reflect the thinking behind and spirit of America's early actions in Vietnam?
- What do you think Olsen means when he says he will always "rest easy" with himself?

# UNIT 1 • CLUSTER 2 • America's Early Role

## Resource 4 • Hiroshima USA

In the summer of 1950, the cover of *Colliers*, a popular American magazine, showed an atomic bomb exploding in New York City. It was an artist's imagined scene—no bomb fell on Manhattan—but it came straight from America's nightmares. American atomic bombs had destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, two Japanese cities, just five years earlier. Now Americans felt at risk.

At the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union were the most powerful nations on earth. They distrusted each other deeply. The Soviets tested an atomic bomb on August 29, 1949. On September 23, 1949, Truman announced the news to the American public. Now both sides had nuclear weapons. In an effort to maintain calm, he added that this was expected, and that the U.S. had been planning for this possibility. In January 1950, Truman approved the development of a hydrogen bomb, known as the "superbomb."

The fear of mutual destruction is why the Cold War stayed cold in the U.S. and the Soviet Union, although it burned very hot in other places. Instead of fighting a nuclear war that neither would survive, the two superpowers battled each other in deadly conventional wars on other people's soil, beginning in Korea in 1950. In nearby Vietnam, the Soviet Union and China

(a Communist state after 1949) provided money and weapons for Ho Chi Minh's war with the French. The U.S. took the other side and funded France's attempt to recolonize Indochina.

America's nuclear fears grew. In 1951, a civil defense film starring Bert the Turtle taught schoolchildren to "duck and cover." In 1953, the magazine of the Bureau of the Atomic Scientists showed the symbolic Doomsday Clock reading two minutes to midnight—two minutes to nuclear annihilation. In 1961, President Kennedy urged American families to build fallout shelters.

### Guiding Questions

- Why would this image have been frightening to Americans in 1950? Why was the nuclear bomb such a uniquely terrifying weapon?
- The *Collier's* headline asked if anything could be done. What kinds of actions did Americans take?



*Collier's Weekly*, cover, August 5, 1950. Painting: Chesley Bonestell, *Atom bomb hits New York City*, 1950. Oil on paper laid on board. New-York Historical Society, Gift of Chesley Bonestell

# Resource 5 • The Pendergrass–JFK Letters

**O**n January 2, 1963, seven U.S. helicopters were shot down by the Viet Cong, and two American advisers died. On January 11, another helicopter crashed, apparently for technical reasons, killing all on board. On January 18, Richard Olsen (**Life Story**) was shot through the leg by a sniper as he flew his chopper. These incidents, which involved different helicopter models from different air bases, were proof of the dangers faced by American advisers in Vietnam. On February 18, Bobbie Lou Pendergrass wrote to President Kennedy (**Presidential Capsule**) about her brother's death in the January 11 crash, and the president responded. These passages are from their letters.

## Guiding Questions

- Bobbie Lou Pendergrass asked, "Isn't it worth fighting to win?" What actions do you think she wanted?
- Did President Kennedy answer her questions? Why did he think the American presence in Vietnam was so important?

*Dear President Kennedy,*

*My brother, Specialist James Delmas McAndrew, was one of the seven crew members killed on January 11 in a Viet Nam helicopter crash. . . .*

*[My older brothers fought in World War II.] During those war years and even all during the Korean conflict we worried about all of them—but that was all very different. They were wars that our country were fighting, and everyone here knew that our sons and brothers were giving their lives for their country.*

*I can't help but feel that giving one's life for one's country is one thing, but being sent to a country where half our country never even heard of and being shot at without even a chance to shoot back is another thing altogether!*

*Please, I'm only a housewife who doesn't even claim to know all about the international situation—but we have felt so bitter over this—can the small number of our boys over in Vietnam possibly be doing enough good to justify the awful number of casualties? It seems to me that if we are going to have our boys over there, then we should send enough to have a chance—or else stay home. Those fellows are just sitting ducks in those darn helicopters. If a war is worth fighting—isn't it worth fighting to win?*

*Very sincerely,  
Bobbie Lou Pendergrass*

*Dear Mrs. Pendergrass,*

*The questions which you posed in your letter can, I believe, best be answered by realizing why your brother—and other American men—went to Viet Nam in the first place. . . .*

*Americans are in Viet Nam because we have determined that this country must not fall under Communist domination. Ever since Viet Nam was divided, the Viet Nameese have fought valiantly to maintain their independence in the face of the continuing threat from the North. Shortly after the division eight years ago it became apparent that they could not be successful in their defense without extensive assistance from other nations of the Free World community. . . .*

*If Viet Nam should fall, it will indicate to the people of Southeast Asia that complete Communist domination of their part of the world is almost inevitable. Your brother was in Viet Nam because the threat to the Viet Nameese people is, in the long run, a threat to the Free world community, and ultimately a threat to us also. For when freedom is destroyed in one country, it is threatened throughout the world. . . .*

*I believe if you can see this as he must have seen it, you will believe as he must have believed, that he did not die in vain. Forty-five American soldiers, including your brother, have given their lives in Viet Nam. In their sacrifice they have earned the eternal gratitude of this Nation and other free men throughout the world. . . .*

*Sincerely,  
John F. Kennedy*

Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. White House Central Subject Files. National Security - Defense (ND). ND: 9-2-2: Condolence letters and communications: M: Executive. JFKWHCSF-0604-027. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKWHCSF-0604-027.aspx>.

**W**hen the Republic of Vietnam—also known as South Vietnam—was created in 1955, the United States was the real power in the country. Despite many doubts, President Eisenhower (**Presidential Capsule**) backed Ngo Dinh Diem as the country's president. An upper-class Catholic and an anti-Communist, Diem had been named prime minister by the French. President Diem ignored the Geneva Accords and, with U.S. support, cancelled the 1956 vote on whether or not to reunify divided Vietnam. Diem and American officials believed that voters would choose reunification, which would lead to the popular Communist leader Ho Chi Minh (**Life Story**) eventually ruling all of Vietnam.

Diem imprisoned or executed thousands of Communists in South Vietnam. Others went into hiding and began guerilla actions against him. He mocked them as Viet Cong, which meant “commies,” and the name stuck (**Resource 3**). Diem also favored Catholics for important positions, and he repressed Buddhists, who made up the majority of the population. Buddhists grew bitter and increasingly protested the Diem regime. On June 10, 1963, a Buddhist monk named Thich Quang Duc set himself on fire to draw worldwide attention to the hated Diem government. Photographer Malcolm Brown was among the journalists who had been alerted in advance by the monks that something important was about to happen.

Brown's photo appeared in newspapers across America. Reportedly, it horrified President Kennedy. Because



Malcolm Browne, *Self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc*, 1963. Photograph. Associated Press, 435461675395

Diem was unable to maintain control—his primary job, in American eyes, was to prevent Communist insurgency—U.S. support for him began to collapse. The Kennedy administration gave quiet permission for a military coup, and Diem was overthrown on November 1, 1963. The next day he was assassinated. In a stunning coincidence, President Kennedy was himself assassinated three weeks later. The future of South Vietnam was suddenly in new hands.

### Guiding Questions

- Why would the monks want western journalists to witness this event?
- Why do you think this photo may have contributed to Diem's downfall?

UNIT 1 • CLUSTER 2 • America's Early Role

Resource 7 • South Vietnam's Army

The Republic of Vietnam, also known simply as South Vietnam, was established in 1955, and its military was formed at the same time. Strictly speaking, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) referred only to the army—the ground troops—but the term was used broadly for all the armed forces, including the air force, marines, and navy.

South Vietnam's draft provided ARVN with soldiers, and some were firmly committed to the cause. They fought to defend their village or family, or to guarantee the future of South Vietnam, or to defeat Communism. But some ARVN soldiers were uncertain what they were fighting for. In 1961, the length of service for drafted men was extended to two years. Soldiers were not allowed time off to help with the family crops, in contrast with centuries of Vietnamese tradition. Desertions were not uncommon.

The first American advisers arrived in 1955, dispatched by President Eisenhower to provide training and support to ARVN forces. By the end of 1963, there were 16,000 American advisers in Vietnam. In much greater numbers, Americans were in combat roles alongside ARVN troops from 1965 until the U.S. withdrew in 1973. Although

the U.S. provided by far the largest foreign force in South Vietnam, troops were also sent by Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and South Korea, along with fighters from the indigenous people of South Vietnam's Central Highlands.

The Republic of Vietnam and its army ceased to exist after Saigon fell to North Vietnamese forces in 1975.

**Guiding Questions**

- How do you think ARVN troops and American advisers might have viewed each other?
- According to Huynh van Hung, why did people begin to doubt the South Vietnamese government? Why do you think that might matter?

*Everyone in my village who had sons began to doubt the government. In three short years Saigon had doubled the length of time our sons were expected to serve, and yet security in our village was worse than it ever had been. What were they doing with our boys? We got so little for our sacrifice. . . . I do not think the leaders in Saigon understood what a hardship it was to send your boys off to war. Field went unplowed. Rice went unplanted. Families fell apart.*

— Huynh van Hung, father of two draft-age sons, interviewed January 2004

Robert K. Brigham, *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 8.



René Burri, *ARVN troops in South Vietnam*, 1963. Photograph. Magnum Photos

# UNIT 2

## 1964-1967

# T

hese years saw the dramatic escalation of America's military role in Vietnam and growing divisions at home between those who believed in the war and those who opposed it.

**Cluster 3, Escalation**, examines the thinking and actions of American leaders and their supporters as the U.S. began a bombing campaign against North Vietnam and doubled the draft call.

**Cluster 4, Resistance**, explores the growth of the antiwar movement across a spectrum of American society.

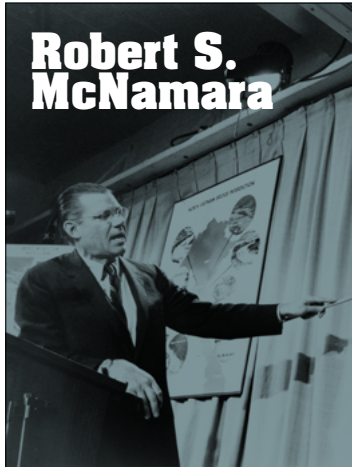
- August 7, 1964: With the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Congress approves U.S. intervention in Vietnam.
- February 13, 1965: President Johnson authorizes Operation Rolling Thunder, the bombing of North Vietnam.
- March 8, 1965: U.S. Marines land in Vietnam and are soon in combat roles.
- July 28, 1965: President Johnson announces an increase in the draft call.
- June 30, 1966: Fort Hood Three publicly refuse to serve in Vietnam.
- April 15, 1967: Antiwar protest in New York City, known as Spring Mobe.
- May 13, 1967: Support Our Men parade endorses the war and those in uniform.
- November 1967: U.S. officials claim progress in the war.

## UNIT 2 • 1964-1967

# Cluster 3 • Escalation

The U.S. expands its military role in Vietnam

### LIFE STORY



Secretary of Defense,  
architect of escalation



Resource

8

*Rolling Thunder and the Draft*

A bombing campaign and a call for more troops

Resource

9

*Support Our Men*

A demonstration of approval for the war



Resource

10

*The Ho Chi Minh Trail*

The North's supply route and U.S. efforts to block it



### Related Materials

- Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Capsule
- The War Front Online Mural
- Appendix A: Map of Indochina
- Appendix C: The Tonkin Gulf Resolution
- Appendix D: War Statistics

## UNIT 2 • CLUSTER 3 • Escalation

## Life Story • Robert S. McNamara

In the mid-1960s, most Americans instantly recognized Robert McNamara (1916–2009). As secretary of defense, he was seen so often on television and in photographs that people sometimes called Vietnam “McNamara’s War.” He was appointed in 1960 by President Kennedy and remained through most of President Johnson’s administration. A former executive at the Ford Motor Company, he brought a businessman’s brain to his new job. Earlier secretaries of defense had measured the success of a mission in terms of territory lost or won. McNamara was interested in efficiency. How many men were needed to take that hill? How much did it cost? One colleague remembered that he would come to meetings with “a spectacular display of facts and statistics.” He could be intimidating, and not everyone liked him.

But McNamara had a great deal of power. In the United States, civilians control the military. The president sets broad goals about the use of military power and authorizes major operations. The secretary of defense advises the president and carries out his goals. Both Kennedy and Johnson thought McNamara was brilliant and relied heavily on his judgment. No secretary of defense in U.S. history has served longer than Robert McNamara. His role was crucial during the years when Vietnam grew into a major American war.

In 1964, despite the aid of American advisers, South Vietnam was losing its war with the North. Looking for a dramatic move, President Johnson and his team



Marion S. Trikosko, *Sec. of Defense Robert McNamara pointing to a map of Vietnam at a press conference, April 26, 1965.* Photographic print. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC, 2004666288

sent two Navy destroyers, the *Maddox* and the *Turner Joy*, to conduct surveillance in the Gulf of Tonkin, off North Vietnam’s coast. The two ships reported being attacked on August 2 and August 4, and they fired back. The details were extremely confused, but Johnson and McNamara agreed that the U.S. should retaliate. The president ordered an air strike and asked Congress for expanded war powers. On August 7, the Tonkin Gulf Resolution ([Appendix C](#)) gave the president broad

authority to intervene in Vietnam. This was the only document authorizing U.S. action in the war. (In 1971, the Pentagon Papers, [Resource 24](#), exposed secret details about the Tonkin incident.)

In January 1965, just a week after President Johnson was inaugurated, Robert McNamara and National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy gave the president what McNamara called a “short but explosive” memo. It

## UNIT 2 • CLUSTER 3 • Escalation

### Life Story • Robert S. McNamara *continued*

said the situation in Vietnam was unraveling and “our current policy can only lead to disastrous defeat.” It advised the president to escalate America’s role in the war, and Johnson did. He called for round-the-clock bombing of the North in a campaign called Operation Rolling Thunder. On April 26, Secretary McNamara held a press conference to describe the extent of the damage to North Vietnamese facilities.\*

Further responding to the “short but explosive” memo, President Johnson sent marines to Vietnam to defend American bases. In the summer, he ordered a massive increase in the draft (**Resource 8**). By the end of 1965, some 200,000 American troops were in Vietnam.

Secretary McNamara bolstered the president’s message about the importance of the escalation in his Pentagon briefings and press conferences. But within a few weeks he had private misgivings. Despite the tremendous display of U.S. military might, the North did not collapse. Despite the bombs dropped on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, this critical route was repaired again and again, and supplies and troops continued to slip into the South (**Resource 10**).

By 1967, the war had expanded further, and Americans were increasingly at odds with one another. On April 15, 1967, hundreds of thousands marched in New York City in the Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, called Spring Mobe for short. In May, supporters of the war held their own Support Our Men parade in New York (**Resource 9**). The two events drew large, very different crowds that reflected a divided population. As for McNamara, his doubts had grown. Always hungry for data, he ordered a top secret study of U.S. policy toward Vietnam since the 1940s. Then he testified before Congress that Operation Rolling Thunder had failed to push North Vietnam toward negotiation. (Go to [vietnamwar.nyhistory.org/murals](http://vietnamwar.nyhistory.org/murals) for a detailed online interactive that explores the 1966–1967 war front and home front with text, images, and media.)

President Johnson felt betrayed by McNamara’s change of heart, but rather than fire him outright, he appointed him to head the World Bank. McNamara left the Pentagon in February 1968. In 1971, his top secret study was leaked to the press by Daniel Ellsberg, who had helped to write it. The study became known as the Pentagon Papers (**Resource 24**). It exposed a long pattern of official deception that shattered the public’s faith in both its leaders and the mission in Vietnam.

McNamara spent much of his later years thinking about the war. In his 70s, he wrote *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*. “We . . . acted according to what

we thought were the principles and traditions of this nation. . . . Yet we were wrong, terribly wrong.” In the 2003 film, *Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*, he made this comment: “In the case of Vietnam, we didn’t know them well enough to empathize. And there was total misunderstanding as a result. They believed that we had simply replaced the French as a colonial power, and we were seeking to subject South and North Vietnam to our colonial interests, which was absolutely absurd. And we, we saw Vietnam as an element of the Cold War. Not what they saw it as: a civil war.” Many applauded McNamara’s late-life candor, but for others, it was too little, too late.

### Guiding Questions

- How would you describe the role Secretary McNamara played in the war?
- In *The Fog of War*, McNamara spoke of a “total misunderstanding” between the two sides. What evidence do you see to support this?

\*A newsreel of the press conference, “McNamara on Vietnam: New Moves Counter Red Infiltration,” can be viewed at [https://archive.org/details/1965-04-26\\_McNamara\\_On\\_Vietnam](https://archive.org/details/1965-04-26_McNamara_On_Vietnam).

# Resource 8 • Rolling Thunder and the Draft

In 1965, Viet Cong insurgents were winning the war. Encouraged by his team to escalate America's military role, President Johnson took two dramatic steps. First, in early 1965, he ordered a massive bombing campaign against North Vietnam, called Operation Rolling Thunder. It lasted for three years. American planes dropped bombs of many kinds, as well as chemicals like napalm to ignite fires and Agent Orange to defoliate plants and trees. The crew in the squadron photo at right was training for Rolling Thunder. The pilot standing at the front right is John McCain, who was shot down in 1967, held as a prisoner of war until 1973, and later elected to the U.S. Senate.

President Johnson's second step involved soldiers on the ground. He sent marines to protect U.S. bases, and, more dramatically, in July he doubled the size of the draft.\* For many Americans, this marked the true beginning of the war. By the end of summer, more than 125,000 American servicemen were in Vietnam. About a third were draftees. The rest had volunteered, either out of patriotism or because volunteers were less likely to see combat.

The draft had been in place, with only a brief gap, since 1940. During World War II, men had to register up to age 45, and most available men served in that war. During the Vietnam War, only those between 18 and 26 had to register, but even with this narrower age range there was a surplus of men, thanks to the baby boom. So the

\* Johnson's press conference can be viewed at <https://www.c-span.org/video/?327149-1/president-lyndon-b-johnson-vietnam-war>.

Selective Service System offered deferments, especially to men attending college, and exemptions for health reasons. There was a logic behind the college deferments: officials believed the country's future prosperity depended on educated people. But this approach favored those with the financial resources to pay for school, hire lawyers, and see sympathetic doctors. It left poorer, less educated men vulnerable, who then made up the majority of those who served in Vietnam, and those who died.

## Guiding Questions

- What did U.S. leaders believe would happen as a result of escalation?
- Why do you think Americans saw the draft increase as the true beginning of the war?



New draftees, July 29, 1965. Photograph. Herald Examiner Collection, Los Angeles Public Library



Squadron training for Operation Rolling Thunder, 1965. Photograph. Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress



Vietnam U.S. Bomber Planes, 1965. Photograph. Associated Press, 171222096516

UNIT 2 • CLUSTER 3 • Escalation

Resource 9 • Support Our Men

The Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, known as Spring Mobe, was held in New York City on April 15, 1967, with a related rally in San Francisco. It drew hundreds of thousands and was, at the time, the largest antiwar demonstration in the nation's history.

Spring Mobe was a massive event, but it did not represent the way most Americans felt. According to one 1967 poll, less than half the American population thought intervention in Vietnam was a mistake. Many Americans believed in the war or at least felt great sympathy for the men in uniform who were risking their lives. Ray Gimmler, a New York City fire captain, was one of those who were incensed by Spring Mobe. Newspaper photos showed draft cards and American flags being burned, and the Viet Cong flag was carried through his city, violating values he had fought for in World War II. With no experience organizing events, he quickly planned a countermarch down Fifth Avenue. Sixteen volunteers took calls from 8 a.m. to midnight, when they took the phones off the hook to get some sleep because so many people were calling. Gimmler had touched a nerve.

The Support Our Men parade was held on May 13, 1967. An estimated 70,000 to 125,000 people took part, and thousands more watched from the sidelines. It was an impressive turnout, given the short organizing time and the small number of organizers. Among the marchers were veterans and

union members, off-duty police officers, members of anticommunist organizations, groups of Catholic women, and others who wished to show where they stood. Many marchers carried signs: "Give the Boys Moral Ammo," "Down with the Reds," "Escalate, Don't Capitulate." People sang "God Bless America" and "The Star-Spangled Banner." For the marchers, the parade was an opportunity to demonstrate patriotic appreciation for American servicemen, for the war, and for America itself, and to distinguish themselves from those in the antiwar movement. One father, marching with his wife and two young children, spoke simply of his motives: "We wanted to show we're with it – with our side and our boys in Viet Nam."

Explore Spring Mobe and the Support Our Men parade in detail at [vietnamwar.nyhistory.org/murals](http://vietnamwar.nyhistory.org/murals).

**Guiding Questions**

- In 1967 most Americans supported the war. What did the Support Our Men parade indicate about their reasons?
- Explore the [online home front mural](#). How did the antiwar and pro-war sides differ in their views of patriotism? Were there points of agreement?



Support Our Men in Vietnam poster, 1967. New-York Historical Society

## UNIT 2 • CLUSTER 3 • Escalation

## Resource 10 • The Ho Chi Minh Trail

A primary target of the U.S. bombing campaign called Operation Rolling Thunder (Resource 8) was a network of roads and paths called the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It ran through the jungles of Laos and Cambodia and into South Vietnam at several places along its lengthy western border. The North used the trail to deliver supplies, weapons, and troops to the Viet Cong. People moved on foot, on bicycles, or in trucks. The U.S., hoping to put this lifeline out of commission, bombed the trail repeatedly. But it was constantly rebuilt by North Vietnamese workers who included tens of thousands of teenage girls. One remembered, “Most of the time we worked only at night because that’s when the trucks and soldiers came and we needed to be ready to help if they got stuck. . . . If the trail was blocked for just one hour there’d be a terrible traffic jam and that was an invitation to American bombers. Anytime bombs hit the trail, we had to rush out and fill in the craters immediately.” (Appy, *Patriots*, 104)

Despite the bombs, traffic on the trail actually increased during Operation Rolling Thunder, from 1,500 soldiers a month in 1965 to 6,000 a month in 1967. Desperate to block the flow, Secretary McNamara proposed an elaborate barrier system that would combine wire, minefields, computerized sensors, watch towers, and armored backup. Located just below the demarcation line at the 17th parallel, the planned barrier would

stretch all the way across Vietnam and into Laos, blocking not only the Ho Chi Minh Trail but any large-scale infiltration across the demilitarized zone (DMZ). With President Johnson’s authorization, construction began in the spring of 1967. But the work was slow, and in early 1968 the Tet Offensive (Cluster 5) demanded all of the U.S. military’s attention. The barrier was eventually completed, and some parts of it worked as hoped. But overall it did not prevent the North from entering the South. Critics of the secretary of defense mocked the costly failure as “McNamara’s Line.”

### Guiding Questions

- What made the Ho Chi Minh Trail so effective?
- Why did McNamara’s Line fail to achieve its goals?

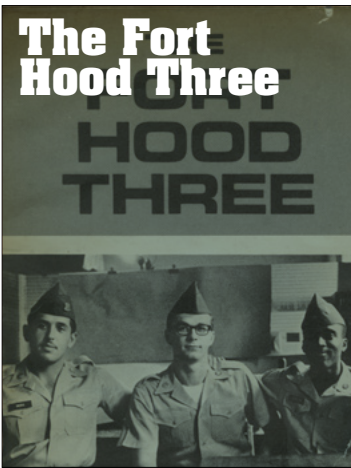


Dinh Thuy, *Bicyclists carry food and ammunition down the Ho Chi Minh Trail*, 1966. ©Vietnam News Agency

# Cluster 4 • Resistance

*Growing public opposition to the war*

LIFE STORY



*Three draftees refuse to deploy*

### Related Materials

- [Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Capsule](#)
- [The Online Home Front Mural](#)
- [Appendix D: War Statistics](#)

## Resource 11

*Martin Luther King, Jr., at Riverside Church*

The noted civil rights leader criticizes the war



## Resource 12

*American Women in Hanoi*

Antiwar activists visit North Vietnam



## Resource 13

*Veterans Against the War*

Some returning soldiers turn against the war



## Resource 14

*Students Against the War*

Antiwar activities on American campuses



## UNIT 2 • CLUSTER 4 • Resistance

# Life Story • The Fort Hood Three

In the spring of 1966, three soldiers refused to go to Vietnam. James Johnson was African American, Dennis Mora was Puerto Rican, and David Samas was of Italian-Lithuanian descent. They had been drafted in December 1965, as part of the escalation recommended by Robert McNamara (**Life Story**) and ordered by President Johnson (**Presidential Capsule**). Working-class men in their early 20s, they met during training, became friends, and discovered they were all opposed to the war.

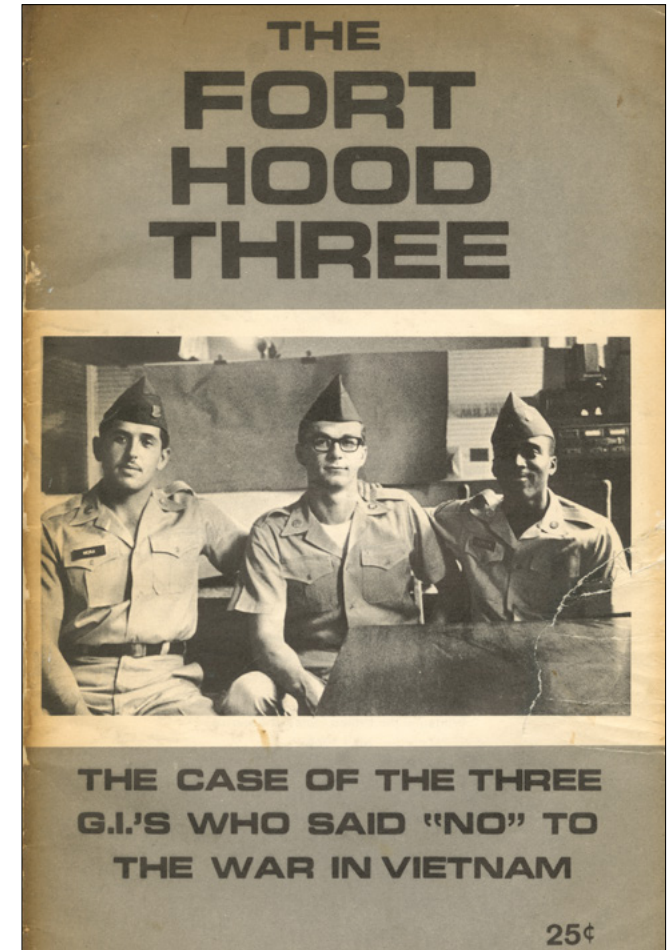
The three men were stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, when their unit was ordered to Vietnam, but they had made their decision. During the 30-day leave given to soldiers before shipping out, they went to New York City. They contacted a peace group and met with a lawyer to formally challenge the legality of the war and the army's right to send them to fight. They held a press conference on June 30, 1966. Dressed in suits rather than uniforms, they appeared in front of reporters, photographers, family members, and activists from peace and civil rights groups, and read a prepared statement: "We have been told that many times we may face a Vietnamese woman or child and that we will have to kill them. We will never go there—to do that. . . . We want no part of a war of extermination." A week later, they were arrested by military police and held in a stockade in Fort Dix, New Jersey, awaiting court martial.

The Fort Hood Three were the first American soldiers who declared publicly that they would not serve in

Vietnam. They were not, however, the first Americans to question the war. Even in the mid-1950s, when the U.S.-backed Diem government refused to abide by the terms of the Geneva Accords, a small number of critics questioned whether American democratic values were being contradicted and whether the Diem government could survive in the long term. These concerns grew as American advisers were sent to Vietnam in increasing numbers.

In 1965, as military action escalated, so did public debate. On April 17, 1965, 20,000 Americans marched in Washington, DC, to protest the war. The march was organized by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), but students were not alone in voicing opposition to the war. Religious leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr., formed Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (**Resource 11**). Pope Paul IV and U.N. Secretary-General U Thant called for a negotiated settlement. Prominent public figures began to speak up. Influential columnist Walter Lippmann particularly upset President Johnson when he wrote in May, 1965, "We are supporting and promoting a cruel and nasty war that has no visible end. There is no light at the end of the tunnel."

So when the Fort Hood Three refused to go to Vietnam, they had supporters. A defense committee, formed by long-time pacifists, held public events, drafted petitions, and raised money. Black leader Stokely



*Fort Hood Defense Committee pamphlet, cover, 1966. New-York Historical Society Library*

## UNIT 2 • CLUSTER 4 • Resistance

### Life Story • The Fort Hood Three *continued*

Carmichael noted that two of the Fort Hood Three were non-white, and that “we are being drafted and end up in the worst of the fighting, out of all proportion to our numbers in the population.”

The soldiers’ numerous relatives attended court hearings and defended their actions. James Johnson’s father built support within his labor union. Marlene Samas, just 17 years old, delivered her new husband’s speech after he was arrested. Grace Newman, Dennis Mora’s sister, spoke often on his behalf and was later one of four American women who traveled to North Vietnam to see the war’s damage for themselves ([Resource 12](#)).

In the mid-1960s, a few veterans had begun to speak openly against the war. Donald Duncan, a Green Beret, wrote about his tour in Vietnam and became active in the antiwar movement ([Resource 13](#)). Many Americans saw these men as disloyal to the military but also recognized that they had served their country and spoke from experience. The Fort Hood Three were seen differently. Because they had refused to deploy, many viewed them as cowards shirking their duties as soldiers and citizens. After court-martial, Johnson, Mora, and Samas were dishonorably discharged from the army and sentenced to prison at Fort Leavenworth. A rally in their support drew college students from around the country, part of the swelling antiwar

movement on American campuses ([Resource 14](#)). A. J. Muste and Dave Dellinger, two leaders of the Fort Hood Three Defense Committee, were among the primary organizers of Spring Mobe, the massive 1967 antiwar demonstration ([Resource 9](#) and the [home front mural](#)).

The lawsuit challenging the war’s legality was denied by several successive courts until the Supreme Court refused to hear the case in 1967. The Fort Hood Three served three years in prison and became active in the antiwar movement.

### Guiding Questions

- Why did the Fort Hood Three refuse to serve in Vietnam? What reasons did they offer?
- What support did they have for their decision? Why did some people disagree with their actions?

## Resource II • Martin Luther King, Jr., at Riverside Church

Questions about the morality of the Vietnam War arose early among some American religious leaders. After President Johnson escalated America's role in 1965, a *New York Times* ad implored him, "In the Name of God, Stop It!" The ad was placed by a group of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders, later known as Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV). Most were white men, but black civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., was a significant member of the leadership. Many Americans associated the antiwar movement with people they saw as both strident and unpatriotic. CALCAV made the peace argument much harder to reject. These were clergy from mainstream denominations, middle-aged men in suits and clerical collars, all demonstrating against the war.

Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke at New York's Riverside Church on April 4, 1967, an event organized by CALCAV. He delivered what became known as his "Beyond Vietnam" speech. As he had expected, he was criticized for stepping beyond civil rights and into controversies concerning the war. Many prominent black leaders thought his antiwar stance threatened the entire civil rights movement. The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other newspapers demonized him. He was called a Communist and a traitor to his nation and his people. President Lyndon Johnson was so angry that he never again spoke to Dr. King.



John C. Goodwin, *Religious leaders protest the Vietnam War*, 1968. Photograph. Courtesy of David Goodwin and Benjamin Goodwin

Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated one year to the day after delivering this speech.

### Guiding Questions

- What reasons did Dr. King give in his speech for speaking out against the war? Why do you think his speech was criticized?
- Why was the public antiwar stance of religious figures significant?

*Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. . . . And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. . . .*

*For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence. For nine years we vigorously supported the French in their abortive effort to recolonize Vietnam. . . . After the French were defeated, it looked as if independence and land reform would come again through the Geneva Agreement. But instead there came the United States, determined that Ho should not unify the temporarily divided nation, and the peasants watched again as we supported one of the most vicious modern dictators, our chosen man, Premier Diem. . . . When Diem was overthrown they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictators seemed to offer no real change, especially in terms of their need for land and peace. The only change came from America as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept, and without popular support. . . .*

*If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. . . . [W]e must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways. In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war.*

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

From "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," Martin Luther King, Jr. at Riverside Church, April 4, 1967. [http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc\\_beyond\\_vietnam/](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_beyond_vietnam/) (accessed 5/7/17 by M. Waters).

# Resource 12 • American Women in Hanoi

In mid-December 1966, at the invitation of the Women’s Union of North Vietnam, four antiwar American women arrived in Hanoi. Among them was Grace Mora Newman, the sister of Dennis Mora, one of the Fort Hood Three ([Life Story](#)). Dave Dellinger, a member of the Fort Hood Three Defense Committee and a prominent antiwar activist, made the arrangements for the trip. He had been to North Vietnam himself, as had others who opposed the war, including British pacifist Bertrand Russell (1872–1970). The U.S. State Department prohibited travel to North Vietnam, so the women went to Paris, then to Moscow and China, and finally to North Vietnam. They had been told in advance that they would travel in a camouflaged jeep, at night and without lights, because of the American bombing campaign. In Hanoi, they met with Ho Chi Minh; visited schools, hospitals, and factories; and spoke with two American prisoners of war.

In January 1967, after returning to New York, three of the women held a press conference to describe the deaths, injuries, and destroyed buildings they had seen. They said they believed that North Vietnam would “fight against foreign domination even if they were bombed back into the stone age.” Grace Newman displayed part of a small American device called a “lazy dog,” which she had brought back as evidence of U.S. attacks. She said these bombs could be found all over the North. Bertrand Russell agreed.

Very few Americans saw North Vietnam for themselves, but opposition to the war was spreading among women.



Harry Harris, “Lazy dog” bomb, 1967. Photograph. Associated Press, 860767326340

Women Strike for Peace, founded in 1961 to protest above-ground testing of nuclear weapons, had by the mid 1960s turned its focus to the Vietnam War (see the [Life Story](#) of Bella Abzug). Another Mother for Peace formed in March 1967 in Los Angeles and drew prominent entertainers and ordinary citizens, male and female.

*I arrived in Hanoi on February 21, 1966, and travelled in five provinces under heavy bombardment. . . . I saw the result of 650 sorties per week, bombs of 1,000 pounds, napalm, phosphorous and a fiendish weapon known as the “lazy dog”. . . . A “lazy dog” is a grenade-like bomb containing 250 slivers of razor-sharp steel. There are forty such bombs in a cylinder; 10,000 pieces of steel in a sudden storm of hail, lacerating anyone exposed or seeking shelter from the half-ton bombs. The “lazy dog” has been dropped continuously on the most heavily populated areas of North Vietnam.*

— Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell, *War Crimes in Vietnam* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967) 134.

## Guiding Questions

- Why did antiwar activists want to visit North Vietnam during the War?
- What points did Grace Newman hope to make by displaying the “lazy dog” bomb at a press conference?



American women in Hanoi, 1967. Photograph. Associated Press, 392067023313

# Resource 13 • Veterans Against the War

In February 1966, the magazine *Ramparts* published an article by Donald Duncan, who had served in the demanding Army Special Forces, known as Green Berets. He had recently left the army after 18 months in Vietnam, and he wrote about what he saw as the lies Americans were being told about the war. The following year, Duncan was one of the planners of the Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam. At this massive April 15, 1967, event, six veterans, including some who had been in Vietnam, marched under a banner that read “Vietnam Veterans Against the War” (VVAW). A few weeks later, that phrase became the name of the most prominent group of antiwar Vietnam vets.

In 1971, veteran Steve Sherlock went to Washington, DC, to take part in a VVAW antiwar demonstration, probably the one held in April of that year. “Part of the plan was to turn in our Vietnam medals as a strong symbolic statement that they couldn’t buy our silence with decorations. . . . In my case, the bronze star with a V [for valor] was sort of a generic award. . . . [W]e lined up in front of the Capitol steps. Each veteran went up to the microphone, said their name, maybe their unit. . . . Then people threw their medals over this wire barricade that had been put up. . . . A lot of people were crying. When I finally got up there it was incredibly quick. I had wrapped my medal inside the paper citation and crumbled it into a ball. I think I just stepped up and said, ‘Steve Sherlock, bronze star with a V.’ Then I threw it over the barricade and stepped away.” (Appy, *Patriots* 427–429)

VVAW spokesman John Kerry, later a U.S. senator and secretary of state, was present for the April demonstration and testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He described the “absolute horror” of the soldiers’ memories. He said the veterans had “one last mission—to search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbaric war.”

By 1972, the VVAW had 20,000 members. Though only a small portion of the total number who served in Vietnam, it was a highly visible and controversial group in the later years of the war.

## Guiding Questions

- Why would the antiwar activities of returning veterans carry special weight?
- The two photos were taken five years apart. What differences do you see?



*Vietnam Veterans Against the War*  
march in San Francisco, 1972.  
Photograph. Swarthmore College  
Peace Collection



*The beginning of Vietnam Veterans*  
*Against the War*, April 15,  
1967. Photograph. Courtesy of  
Vietnam Veterans Against the  
War

UNIT 2 • CLUSTER 4 • Resistance

Resource 14 • Students Against the War

Student protests took many forms. There were “teach-ins” to educate people about Vietnam and “sit-ins” to occupy offices, laboratories, and other locations seen as supporting the war. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) organized the first national protest against the war in April 1965, drawing 25,000 to Washington, DC. Two years later, students from across the country were among the hundreds of thousands who marched in the massive Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, held on April 15, 1967 in New York City and San Francisco. By 1968, New York City high-school activists were printing antiwar newspapers and supporting their own Student Mobilization Committee.

One small but potent symbol of resistance involved matches and empty coffee cans. In August 1965, about a month after President Johnson doubled the draft call, Congress outlawed the destruction of draft cards. In open defiance, young men began to set their draft cards on fire. For the students among them, this was a powerful but largely symbolic act against the war. It was riskier for those without student deferments, since they could easily be drafted. In the beginning, the men were usually arrested for draft-card burning, but over time the Justice Department chose not to prosecute everyone for fear of overwhelming the courts.

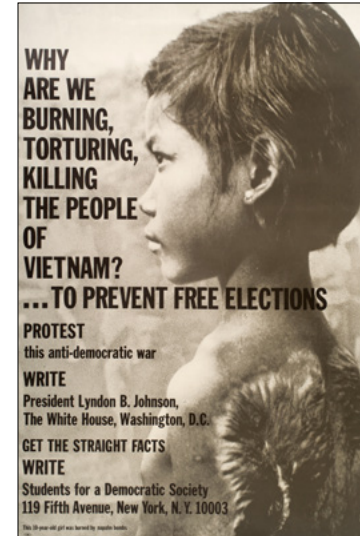
Unlike burning a draft card, marching in a demonstration was not against the law. But President Johnson believed student dissent was being stoked by Communist governments. So the FBI watched protestors closely and took names.

**Guiding Questions**

- What can you learn from these photos about students in the antiwar movement?
- Why do you think SDS used this photo on the poster? Do you think the poster is effective? How does it make you feel?



Student protesters marching down Langdon Street at UW-Madison, 1966. Photograph. University of Wisconsin Archives



Students for a Democratic Society poster, 1965. New-York Historical Society Library



Draft-card burning at the Pentagon, 1967. Photograph. Swarthmore College Peace Collection

# UNIT 3

## 1968

VIET  
NAM  
WAR  
1945-1975

# O

n both the war front and the home front, 1968 is considered the turning point of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. This unit explores the reasons: the fierce fighting during the Tet Offensive early in the year and the turmoil that later gripped the U.S.

**Cluster 5, The Tet Offensive**, focuses on the massive assault by the North Vietnamese during the lunar new year. Though quickly brought under control in most places, it convinced many Americans that the war was unwinnable.

**Cluster 6, The 1968 Election**, probes the explosive events at home that rocked the nation and the Democratic Party, which was sharply divided over the war.

January 31, 1968: The Tet Offensive begins.

February 27, 1968: Newsman Walter Cronkite describes the war as "mired in stalemate."

March 31, 1968: President Johnson announces he will not seek reelection.

April 4, 1968: Martin Luther King, Jr., is assassinated.

June 6, 1968: Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated.

August 26-29, 1968: The Democratic National convention is in chaos over the war.

November 1, 1968: Operation Rolling Thunder ends.

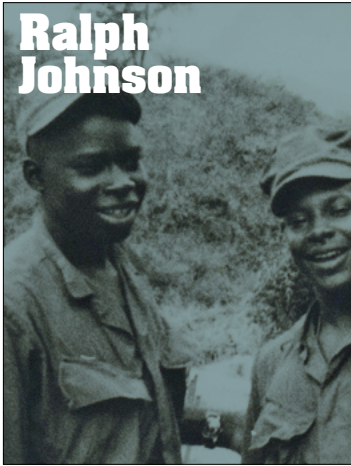
November 5, 1968: Richard M. Nixon is elected president.

UNIT 3 • 1968

# Cluster 5 • The Tet Offensive

*The unexpected assault from the North*

LIFE STORY



*An African American marine gives his life*

Resource

15

*American Views of Tet*

Intense attacks described by American personnel

Resource

16

*A North Vietnamese View of Tet*

A first-time soldier fights the Americans



Resource

17

*Walter Cronkite and the Stalemate*

Respected newsman challenges official reports of progress



Related Materials

- [Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Capsule](#)
- [The Online War Front Mural](#)
- [Appendix A: Map of Indochina](#)
- [Appendix D: War Statistics](#)

## UNIT 3 • CLUSTER 5 • The Tet Offensive

# Life Story • Ralph Johnson

**R**alph Henry Johnson (1949–1968) was a private first class in the U.S. Marines. He was killed in action in Vietnam when he was 19 years old. He had grown up in Charleston, South Carolina, one of 11 children. His sister, Helen Richards, recalled him as quiet, always helping others, “the good one.” They had several relatives in the army, but from childhood Ralph wanted to be a marine. He enlisted in 1967 and was assigned to the 1st Marine Division.

In January 1968, Johnson landed at Danang Air Base, the U.S. military facility closest to the border with North Vietnam. Alex Colvin arrived about two weeks later, and they quickly became friends, bonding especially over music. Colvin still remembers that whenever Johnson’s favorite song came on the radio—Smokey Robinson’s “I Second That Emotion”—he would get up and sing and dance, “just have the best time. To this day, whenever I hear that song, I think of my friend Ralph.”

Johnson and Colvin landed in Vietnam just before one of the fiercest periods in the war—the North’s massive multi-pronged assault on the South, known as the Tet Offensive ([Resources 15](#) and [16](#)). It proved to be the turning point in the war. American military leaders had expected a big push from the enemy, but they did not think it would come during Tet, the lunar New Year. A cease-fire was in effect to honor this important Vietnamese holiday. So when shelling could be heard

nearby on the night of January 29, one officer woke up and thought it was firecrackers going off in celebration of the holiday. Alex Colvin thought it might be the normal sounds of the war. But Danang and the area it protected were under attack from rockets and mortars. The airfield was struck, and soon the enemy hit the perimeter of the base itself. Then, in the early hours of January 31, multiple targets were hit in more than 100 cities and towns in South Vietnam.

United States and South Vietnamese forces ([Resource 7](#)) began a full-scale counterattack immediately and soon reclaimed major portions of the South. But fighting continued. In late February, CBS newsman Walter Cronkite visited Hue just after the fighting there ended and concluded that the U.S. was “mired in stalemate” and would not win this war ([Resource 17](#)). The enemy had demonstrated unexpected strength and determination.

In early March 1968, the Americans received intelligence that the North was rebuilding its road networks leading to Danang, and they expected another attack. On March 3, Ralph Johnson and Alex Colvin were part of a 15-man team helicoptered to Hill 146, deep in enemy territory where the roadwork was underway. Their mission was to survey the area in advance of a large attack by U.S. Marines. They began to take sniper fire on the second day. Early on March 5, 40 to 50 enemy fighters charged their hilltop position, firing automatic weapons, setting off explosions, and



*Ralph Johnson (left) and Alex Colvin, 1968. Photograph. Courtesy of Alex Colvin*

lobbing hand grenades. When one of the grenades landed near Johnson, he shouted a warning and threw himself on the device. He died instantly when it exploded, saving the life of the marine nearest him. The team continued to fight and, with air support, repelled the attack. Ralph Johnson was one of two marines who died on Hill 146. Many others were wounded, including Alex Colvin.

During the war, African Americans made up about 10% of the U.S. population, and they made up about 10% of

## UNIT 3 • CLUSTER 5 • The Tet Offensive

### Life Story • Ralph Johnson *continued*

the fighting force in the war. But in the early years of the escalation that began in 1965, black recruits were more likely to be assigned to combat units and so were more likely to die. They accounted for more than 20% of combat fatalities between 1965 and 1967. Civil rights leaders Martin Luther King, Jr., ([Resource 11](#)) and Stokely Carmichael ([Fort Hood Three](#)) spoke angrily against this disparity, as did other prominent African Americans. Under this pressure, the Department of Defense took corrective steps, and by the end of the war, the number of combat deaths among blacks in the army, averaged over the entire war, was in line with their numbers in the population. But in the marines, black combat deaths averaged about 13% over the length of the war, higher than their percentage of the population.

Ralph Johnson was one of 20 African Americans awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for service in Vietnam. In 1991, the V.A. Medical Center in Charleston, South Carolina, Johnson's hometown, was renamed in his honor. In 2016, Alex Colvin and Helen Richards were both present for the christening of a new navy ship, the *USS Ralph Johnson*.

### Guiding Questions

- What made the friendship between Johnson and Colvin so powerful?
- Why do you think Johnson threw himself on the grenade?



*Ship's crest, USS Ralph Johnson. United States Navy*

# Resource 15 • American Views of Tet

In November 1967, at President Johnson's request (**Presidential Capsule**), General William Westmoreland reassured the American people about the war. As commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, he said that the end was in view, there was light at the end of the tunnel. Within the administration, there were doubts about Westmoreland's figures but agreement that the enemy was no match for U.S.-led forces. So they and the American public were stunned by what happened just weeks later.

On January 21, 1968, the Marine Air Base at Khe Sanh was attacked by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). Led by General Vo Nguyen Giap, who had defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 (**Resource 2**), 20,000 NVA troops surrounded the base and shelled it relentlessly. As General Giap had predicted, the diversionary tactic worked. American leaders sent reinforcements to Khe Sanh, leaving other locations vulnerable. Danang Air Base was hit on January 29. Early on January 31, the NVA and the Viet Cong launched a much broader campaign against the South, hoping to prove their strength, unseat South Vietnam's ruler, and force the U.S. to withdraw. The assault coincided with the beginning of Tet, Vietnam's lunar New Year holiday, and is known as the Tet Offensive.

Other sites throughout South Vietnam were hit, including the U.S. embassy in Saigon. American and South Vietnamese troops retook control of most of South Vietnam quickly, but the especially brutal fighting in the city of Hue continued until late February. The siege at Khe Sanh ended when General Giap withdrew his forces in March. Two additional waves of Tet attacks came later in the year. From the military perspective, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces won these encounters. The Viet Cong was decimated as a fighting force. But the ferocity of the fighting left many in South Vietnam and the U.S. uncertain about their chances for winning the war (**Resource 17**).

## Guiding Questions

- Why was the Tet Offensive so surprising to the American public? Why did it cause Americans to lose confidence, even though the assault was quickly repelled in most places?
- What do these comments suggest about what Americans expected from the North Vietnamese?
- Most of these recollections were recorded long after the actual events. How does that affect your reading of this source?

*I don't want any damned dinbinphoo.*

— President Lyndon B. Johnson, ordering the military to hold Khe Sanh and prevent a loss akin to the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Tucker, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Viet Nam War*, Vol. 1, 1339.

*[T]he Tet Offensive started and Hue got overrun so we got orders to cut off the North Vietnamese supply lines so we could stop the siege of Hue. . . . [T]he battalion commander is flying around in a helicopter and he's going, "You have to charge that machine gun." The lieutenant . . . gets two guys to go with him, man, and as soon as they jumped out, all three of them got killed. . . . So everybody panics. Everybody's freaking out.*

— Bob Gabriel, 2nd Battalion of the 12th Cavalry. Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*, 299.

*On the first night of the Tet Offensive . . . there was shooting at the embassy [in Saigon. I got through to] George Jacobson, who was special assistant to the ambassador and had a house on the embassy grounds. . . . He was leaning out his second-story window. George said that VC sappers [commando infiltrators] had penetrated his house and he could hear people downstairs. There was shooting outside. . . .*

— Barry Zorthian, Director of the U.S. Public Affairs Office. Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*, 290.

*I started twenty-seven IVs one night with a flashlight. Rockets and mortars hit us several times. The guys who could dived under their beds. But some were hooked up to so many tubes they couldn't move, so you threw mattresses on top of them.*

— Diane Carlson Evans, Head Surgical Nurse, 71st Evacuation Hospital. The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, 2004.

*After Tet, it was clear there was no winning.*

— Raul, U.S. Army, Sergeant E5. Lea Ybarra, *Vietnam Veterans: Chicanos Recall the War*, 60.

**T**uan Van Ban was an infantry lieutenant in the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). In the early hours of January 31, 1968, his unit moved silently into position around the marine air base near Cam Lo, in Quang Tri Province. Some of the more experienced men were able to sleep, but Tuan was, he later said, “too excited to rest.” He had never been in a battle before.

The attack began in the darkness before dawn. It took only five minutes or so for the Americans to begin firing rockets and mortar shells toward the NVA position, but it was too late. NVA fighters were already inside the base, and Tuan was charging toward his target, the communications center. Bullets were flying everywhere.

The strike had to be short, quick, and intense. NVA soldiers were in and out before daybreak. Tuan did not know until later that his first battle was one of hundreds taking place across South Vietnam as part of the Tet Offensive.

### Guiding Questions

- How did NVA soldiers prepare for this attack?
- Why do you think they were not told about the broader Tet Offensive?

*Around midnight [on the opening night of the Tet Offensive] we moved as close as possible to the American perimeter. We just wore shorts and covered our bodies with dirt for camouflage. Uniforms can snag on barbed wire so we wore as little as possible. When everyone was in position we all dug foxholes and waited. . . . [S]mall munitions teams crawled forward to place explosives under the barbed wire. . . .*

*Weeks before . . . we had crawled and cut our way through the mines and barbed wire to get a close look at the base. We drew maps of the layout, including the positions of all the bunkers and buildings so our mortar men could preplan their targets. . . . In preparing our troops, we made sure they understood the importance of fighting as close to the enemy as possible. . . . [W]e wanted to take the battle right to the enemy bunkers and grab the Americans by the belt buckle. . . .*

*We launched the attack at five A.M. First we fired a flare. That was the signal to detonate the dynamite that blasted holes in the perimeter. At the same time our mortar men and machine gunners began firing. . . . Within seconds we blew a bugle and whistles to signal our troops to advance. All four hundred of us moved forward screaming, “Attack! Attack! Attack!”*

— Tuan Van Ban

“Tuan Van Ban.” Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 301-2.



Vo Anh Khanh, *Guerillas in the Mekong Delta prepare for the Tet Offensive, 1968*. Photograph. ©Vietnam News Agency

# Resource 17 • Walter Cronkite and the Stalemate

In the 1960s, when millions of Americans regularly watched the evening news, CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite was known as the most trusted man in America. In February 1968, after hearing troubling reports about the Tet Offensive, Cronkite went to Vietnam and donned military gear, as he had as a battlefield reporter in World War II. Saigon was again under U.S. control when he arrived, but he visited sections of the city still smoldering from the earlier Viet Cong attack. He went to Hue during the long, bloody siege of that city. He heard military officers describe in cold terms what victory would require: just another 200,000 troops, they said. Like most members of the press, Cronkite had supported the war in the beginning, but this trip changed his mind.

On February 27, 1968, back in New York, Cronkite anchored a *CBS Evening News* special about Vietnam. He said Khe Sanh Combat Base and the South Vietnam government might both fall, and that in other battles he did not see American victories, but standoffs. Journalists were expected to keep their opinions to themselves, but Cronkite ended with a risky personal statement. If the situation in Vietnam did not improve soon, he said, the U.S. should negotiate an end to the war.

*To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion.*

— Walter Cronkite

Walter Cronkite, *CBS Evening News*, February 27, 1968.

To Cronkite’s surprise, President Johnson (**Presidential Capsule**) did not call to complain. Later it was reported that the president had watched the broadcast and said, “If I’ve lost Cronkite, I’ve lost Middle America.” In fact, Cronkite opened the door for other journalists to voice their own misgivings about Vietnam. One used the word “doomed.”

Less than a year later, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wrote in the magazine *Foreign Affairs*: “The Tet offensive marked the watershed of the American effort. Henceforth, no matter how effective our actions, the prevalent strategy could no longer achieve its objectives within a period or with force levels politically acceptable to the American people. . . . This made inevitable an eventual commitment to a political solution and marked the beginning of the quest for a negotiated settlement.”



Walter Cronkite (holding microphone) during an interview with the commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, during the Battle of Hue City, 1968. Photograph. National Archives at College Park, MD

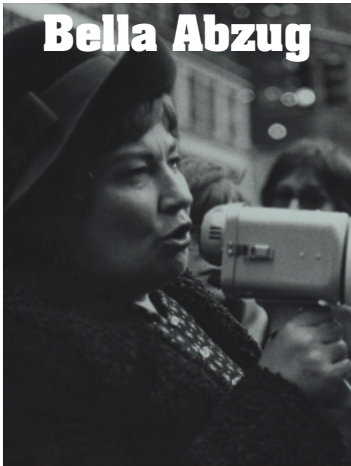
## Guiding Questions

- Why did Cronkite’s broadcast change so many minds in Middle America? What do you think the phrase “Middle America” meant?
- According to Henry Kissinger, how did the Tet Offensive change the war? How did his comment reflect the president’s concern about Cronkite’s “stalemate” broadcast?

# Cluster 6 • The 1968 Election

The U.S. election year is jolted by conflict over the war

LIFE STORY



**Bella Abzug**

*Democratic activist pushes the party toward antiwar position*

**Related Materials**

- Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Capsule
- Appendix E: Election Year 1968

**Resource 18**

*Inside the Convention*

Conflict among delegates at the Democratic Convention in Chicago



**Resource 19**

*Outside the Convention*

Police and protesters clash over war and politics



**Resource 20**

*The Election of Richard M. Nixon*

Promising to bring peace, Richard M. Nixon is elected president



## UNIT 3 • CLUSTER 6 • The 1968 Election

# Life Story • Bella Abzug

**A**ntiwar Americans were bitterly disappointed by Lyndon B. Johnson (**Presidential Capsule**), the president who had escalated the war, not ended it (**Resources 8 and 9**). At rallies, protestors chanted, “LBJ! LBJ! How many babies did you kill today?” But Johnson’s grip on the presidency still seemed unshakable, and everyone expected him to win another term, especially after the 1966 congressional elections, when all the peace candidates were defeated. Nevertheless, a small movement to replace the sitting president at the head of the Democratic ticket for 1968 soon began. Led by a feisty New Yorker named Allard Lowenstein, the campaign was known, bluntly, as “Dump Johnson.” Bella Abzug (1920–1998) became one of Lowenstein’s partners in this effort.

Another feisty New Yorker, Abzug was known for her hats, her abrasiveness, and her uncommon political savvy. She did not yet hold political office, but she was a civil rights and labor lawyer and one of the leaders of Women Strike for Peace (WSP). Founded in 1961 to protest the nuclear arms race, WSP increasingly focused on ending the Vietnam War. Its members were mostly moderate women who considered politics to be dirty business. But Abzug thrived on politics and believed it was the only way to make real change. She helped politicize Women Strike for Peace, and the organization gave her a platform as its national legislative chairwoman.

Abzug knew political organizing at every level. In 1964, she urged Democrats to make peace in Vietnam a campaign issue. They declined. The following year, she arranged for WSPers to meet with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where they argued for open meetings on Vietnam. But she was also a roll-up-your-sleeves political operative at the local level. “When I supported a candidate, I would supply people to go to the subway stops, to go to the supermarkets. But if he didn’t maintain his position, the next day there would be no people to go to the supermarkets or the subway stops.”

Dumping Johnson required finding a candidate who supported peace and would challenge LBJ, one of the most powerful politicians of the century. Robert Kennedy was the first choice. When he said no, Abzug helped organize the campaign of Senator Eugene McCarthy, the strongest antiwar politician who was willing to run.

Spring 1968 presented a series of hard jolts (**Appendix E**). McCarthy almost won the New Hampshire primary. President Johnson withdrew from the race. Riots broke out after Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed in Memphis. And Robert Kennedy, known as Bobby, announced that he would run, offering the Democrats a candidate who was respected in both civil rights and antiwar circles. Abzug joined his campaign and believed she influenced his thinking about Vietnam. But on June 6, 1968, Robert Kennedy died after being shot by a Palestinian



Dorothy Marder, *Bella Abzug in New York rallying support for George McGovern and demanding a ceasefire in Vietnam, 1972*. Photograph. Swarthmore College Peace Collection

nationalist, Sirhan Sirhan, who was angry over Kennedy’s support for Israel. The assassination was not related to the Vietnam War.

After Kennedy’s death, stunned peace activists again supported McCarthy. At that point, the goal was to prevent the nomination of Vice President Hubert

## UNIT 3 • CLUSTER 6 • The 1968 Election

### Life Story • Bella Abzug *continued*

Humphrey, who they believed would mean more of the same in Vietnam. Testifying at the national Democratic Platform Committee hearings in Washington, DC, Abzug stated flatly that WSP would never support a Humphrey campaign. She may also have been among those who asked for a peace plank in the party platform, language that would specifically link the Democrats to ending the war.

Abzug and other antiwar activists had clear goals for the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago: add a peace plank to the platform; nominate Eugene McCarthy; and hold peaceful demonstrations to show the strength of the antiwar movement. Instead, conflict roiled the convention hall (**Resource 18**), the streets exploded in brawls shown on television (**Resource 19**), and Hubert Humphrey became the Democratic Party's nominee. In the November election, he lost to Richard Nixon (**Presidential Capsule**), who had promised deeply rattled voters that he would end the war in Vietnam and restore law and order to American cities embroiled in racial unrest (**Resource 20**).

Bella Abzug was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1970. On January 3, 1971, her first day in office, throngs of women greeted her with signs that read, "Give 'em hell, Bella!" That day, she introduced a bill to withdraw American forces from Vietnam.

#### Guiding Questions

- What actions did Bella Abzug take to try to end the war?
- How did the tumultuous events of 1968 contribute to the outcome in Chicago?

# Resource 18 • Inside the Convention

The Democratic Party's left wing approached the opening of the Chicago convention disheartened and angry. Eugene McCarthy's campaign had fizzled, and with President Johnson's backing, Hubert Humphrey had emerged as the likely nominee. The platform committee had refused to include a peace plank that called for the unconditional end of the bombing in North Vietnam. Johnson (**Presidential Capsule**) wouldn't accept the plank, and, following his lead, Hubert Humphrey opposed it. And the recently chosen Republican nominee, Richard Nixon (**Presidential Capsule**), led in polls by 16 points.

On the first day—Monday, August 26, 1968—the convention began with Chicago's Mayor Richard J. Daley promising law and order. On day three, antiwar delegates began their last-ditch attempt to add a peace plank to the party platform. Allies of Johnson and Humphrey labeled it "a threat to any rational U.S. policy in Southeast Asia." Many in the hall believed the peace plank would sink Humphrey's already slim chances in the general election. After three hours of debate, it was rejected for good. When demonstrators outside heard the news, they became enraged. They charged toward Michigan Avenue, one of Chicago's major streets, where they knew a bank of television cameras had been set up. Inside the hall, horrified delegates watched the coverage of police wielding batons and spraying tear gas



Delegates' banner reads "Bobby We Miss You," 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 460035540198

(**Resource 19**). One speaker referred to "Gestapo tactics on the streets of Chicago." Hours later, Humphrey won the nomination on the first ballot. A large group of delegates angrily left the hall and joined the protestors outside.

The Democratic Party was in chaos over the Vietnam War.

## Guiding Questions

- Why was the Democratic Party in disarray leading to the convention in Chicago?
- How do the photographs reflect different conflicts on the convention floor?



Black crape is attached to the New Hampshire standard, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 6808280546



Vice President Hubert Humphrey (right) and his running mate, Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (left) with their wives, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 6808290602

# Resource 19 • Outside the Convention

**M**any antiwar groups planned to demonstrate outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Mayor Daley wanted them all to stay away. He denied permits for demonstrations, and he readied police, the National Guard, and state troopers to maintain tight control. He was bellicose in his instructions and in his public statements.

Nevertheless, about 10,000 people were on hand to protest. The first clashes with the authorities began even before August 26, when the convention officially opened. Then, on August 28, a turbulent and bloody confrontation dubbed the battle of Michigan Avenue was broadcast live by nearby television cameras. Over the days of the convention, many people were injured by police, including demonstrators, journalists, and bystanders. Police arrested many demonstrators, including several protest leaders who were charged with conspiracy and became known as the Chicago Seven.

The conflict outside the convention hall dwarfed the conflict inside. In newspaper and television coverage, Americans saw protesters throwing rocks and bottles, shouting obscenities, taunting police. And they saw helmeted and armed officers wielding billy clubs, throwing tear gas, spraying Mace at close range. Three months after the convention, a federal government report concluded that the police were mostly to blame for the violence in Chicago. But many Americans thought that the protesters were at fault and the police actions were justified.

## Guiding Questions

- What was the effect of Mayor Daley's pre-convention decisions? Why did he take these steps?
- How would the appearance and actions of people in the photographs—police, delegates, protesters—have affected antiwar and pro-war viewers at home?



(Top) Chicago police officers confront a demonstrator at Grant Park, August 25, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 6808251703

(Bottom) Protesters before being chased from Chicago's Lincoln Park, August 26, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 68082601171



(Top) As demonstrators are placed into police vans, Chicago police form a battle line against thousands of others, August 28, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 6808280140

(Bottom) Democratic Convention delegates and alternates, disappointed by the nomination of Hubert Humphrey, march along Michigan Avenue, August 29, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 6808290735

UNIT 3 • CLUSTER 6 • The 1968 Election

Resource 20 • The Election of Richard M. Nixon

**R**ichard Nixon (**Presidential Capsule**) became the Republican presidential candidate nearly three weeks before the Democrats held their divided, chaotic convention (**Resources 18 and 19**). But the turmoil in the Democratic Party was already obvious to Americans, and Nixon used it to his advantage. Accepting his party's nomination, he presented himself and Republicans as calm, capable leaders dedicated to law and order at home and to ending the war in Vietnam. This image was only strengthened after the Democrats met in Chicago.

In the fall, Hubert Humphrey's chances of victory were fading, and Democrats tried to prop him up. Eugene McCarthy finally endorsed Humphrey on October 29, and two days later, President Johnson (**Presidential Capsule**) announced a complete bombing halt, which North Vietnam had demanded before it would begin peace talks. The prospect of peace narrowed Nixon's lead in the polls, which worried him. Just days before the election, he secretly took steps to prevent peace talks from going forward. He worked through Republican insider Anna Chennault, a prominent Chinese-American with close ties to Asia. Through her, he sent a message to Nguyen Van Thieu, president of South Vietnam: do not enter peace talks now—you will get better terms if I win. Thieu took the message seriously and on November 1 declared he would not negotiate with the Viet Cong.

The momentum toward peace talks stalled, and Richard Nixon was elected president on November 5, 1968.

**Guiding Questions**

- How did Nixon distinguish himself and Republicans from Democrats? What language did Nixon use?
- Nixon promised an “honorable end” to the war. What do you think he meant?



Richard M. Nixon campaign button, 1968. Metal and plastic. New-York Historical Society



President Johnson and president-elect Nixon, November 11, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 681111030

*We are going to win because this great Convention has demonstrated to the nation that the Republican Party has the leadership, the platform and the purpose that America needs. . . . We are going to win because at a time that America cries out for the unity that this Administration has destroyed, the Republican Party—after a spirited contest for its nomination for President and for Vice President—stands united before the nation tonight. . . .*

*As we look at America, we see cities enveloped in smoke and flame. We hear sirens in the night. We see Americans dying on distant battlefields abroad. We see Americans hating each other; fighting each other; killing each other at home. . . . Did American boys die in Normandy, and Korea, and in Valley Forge for this? Listen to the answer. . . . It is another voice. It is the quiet voice in the tumult and the shouting. It is the voice of the great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans—the non-shouters; the non-demonstrators. . . .*

*I . . . promise action—a new policy for peace abroad; a new policy for peace and progress and justice at home. . . . We shall begin with Vietnam. We all hope in this room that there is a chance that current negotiations may bring an honorable end to that war. And we will say nothing during this campaign that might destroy that chance. But if the war is not ended when the people choose in November, the choice will be clear. . . . And I pledge to you tonight that the first priority foreign policy objective of our next Administration will be to bring an honorable end to the war in Vietnam.*

— Richard M. Nixon

Richard Nixon: “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida,” August 8, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25968> (accessed 6-8-17 by M. Waters).

# UNIT 4

## 1969-1975

VIET  
NAM  
WAR  
1965-1975

# D

espite many Americans' hopes, the war continued after 1968 and only slowly wound down. This unit examines these years in two sequential clusters, one focused on 1969 and 1970, and the other on the years leading to American withdrawal and the war's end.

**Cluster 7, Searching for an Exit**, explores the two years after the election of Richard Nixon, when Americans continued to struggle over the war in both personal and political ways.

**Cluster 8, The Long, Slow End**, carries the story forward, both on the war front and at home, as America's role ended and the war was eventually won by North Vietnam.

1969: Peace talks begin in Paris. The 1968 My Lai Massacre becomes public.

1970: President Nixon announces attacks in Cambodia. Four people are killed in protests at Kent State University in Ohio.

1971: The Pentagon Papers are published.

1972: President Nixon orders the "Christmas bombing" of North Vietnam.

1973: The Paris Peace Accords are signed, and the U.S. role in the war ends. War continues between North and South Vietnam.

1974: President Nixon resigns.

1975: North Vietnam defeats South Vietnam, and the war ends.

# Cluster 7 • Searching for an Exit

*Conflict at home continues as Americans seek a way out*

LIFE STORY



**Robert Hull**

*Pacifist son of prominent Air Force colonel*

## Resource 21

*Working-Class War*

A grieving father embittered by class disparities in the draft



## Resource 22

*The Vietnam Moratorium*

A campaign to bring together all factions of the antiwar movement



## Resource 23

*The Draft Lottery*

A new system for selecting draftees, meant to quiet protests



### Related Materials

- Richard M. Nixon Presidential Capsule
- Appendix D: War Statistics

# UNIT 4 • CLUSTER 7 • Searching for an Exit

## Life Story • Robert Hull

In 1960, when Bob Hull (1944– ) was a sophomore in high school, his father asked for a promise. He said it would soon be time for Bob to apply to college, and he wondered if he had considered the Air Force Academy. He said with the money they would save (tuition is free at the military academies), they could afford to buy Bob a sports car to take to school.

Bob's father was Colonel Robert R. Hull, Sr., USAF, the Launch Director for NASA's Mercury space program. The air force was his life. But Bob wasn't interested in engineering, or flying, or sports cars. He didn't say this, just pointed out that the academy would require math, which he struggled with. His father said okay, he could pick another school. "But will you promise me that wherever you go, you won't do anything to harm my career?" Bob wondered why his father would even ask, but he said yes.

In 1962, Bob left for Indiana University to major in psychology. During his four years in college, he straddled two worlds. He joined the Presbyterian Chapel, where many members, like those of other religious organizations, were questioning the war ([Resource 11](#)). He chaired their Vietnam Study Project. But he also regularly attended meetings of the Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corp (ROTC), rising to the rank of cadet officer. The school required ROTC for freshman and sophomore men, but Bob remained

all four years, as his father had urged. The day after graduation in 1966, he was commissioned an officer in the air force, a military man who leaned toward pacifism.

The air force needed psychologists with advanced degrees, so Bob enrolled at the University of Minnesota, in a program designed by the air force. He had little interest in his classes and spent many hours reading Gandhi, the Indian leader who preached nonviolent civil disobedience. He heard Martin Luther King, Jr., when he appeared on campus to again deliver his Riverside Church speech denouncing the war ([Resource 11](#)). Bob thought, "My God, there has to be a better way than what we're doing in Vietnam." He began to feel like a conscientious objector, a Selective Service System classification that excused men from military service based on their religious or moral beliefs. But in military culture, "conchie" were cowards, yellow-bellies. So Bob kept his feelings to himself to avoid harming his father's career. In fall 1967 he began active duty at Plattsburgh Air Force Base in New York. He was not sent to Vietnam because his psychology training made him more valuable at home.

At Plattsburgh, Bob continued to straddle two worlds. As part of his job, he selected the personnel who were deployed to Vietnam in support roles. They were not



Robert Hull (standing second from left) at Indiana University ROTC awards ceremony, ca. 1965. Photograph. Courtesy of Robert Hull



Col. Robert R. Hull Sr., (center, kneeling) with the Atlas-Mercury booster launch team, 1960s. Photograph. Courtesy of Robert Hull

## UNIT 4 • CLUSTER 7 • Searching for an Exit

### Life Story • Robert Hull *continued*

in combat, but some were killed when their bases were attacked. His convictions against the war only deepened. In October 1969, he saw television coverage of the demonstration at the Plattsburgh campus of the State University of New York (SUNY), one of many events held throughout the country in support of the Vietnam Moratorium (**Resource 22**). He hadn't known it was planned and didn't attend. "I did attend a protest around that time that was held at the Federal Building in downtown Plattsburgh, led by the SUNY Plattsburgh president, Dr. George Angell. I attended in civilian clothes. Even so, I was called into the Wing Commander's office for a dressing-down the next day. It turned out that some law enforcement folks (we think it was the FBI) had taken pictures of the protest." Events like the Moratorium prompted President Nixon (**Presidential Capsule**) to institute a lottery system for the military draft (**Resource 23**). He wrongly believed that antiwar protestors were mostly motivated by their opposition to the draft.

Colonel Hull's great ambition was to be promoted to brigadier general. But in spring 1970, he was passed over for the last time and made plans to retire. Bob felt he had honored his promise, and he filled out an application for conscientious objector status. Without consulting an adviser, he wrote several pages about his thinking, his promise to his father, and his conscience. He included a letter of resignation from the air force. Then he flew home to tell his parents.

He sat in his parents' living room near Vandenberg Air Force Base, in his captain's uniform, and tried to explain his decision. His father was enraged, and they argued for hours. "Finally, Dad put his hands on his desk and said, 'Well, I've always believed my country, right or wrong. You're no son of mine.'" His mother privately told Bob she agreed with her husband but would keep in touch. Bob ate dinner alone and left the next morning.

In early August, after a four-month wait, Bob heard from the air force: his application was denied and he had to serve out his term. He realized that he probably had not made a critical point forcefully enough: "You have to say you changed your mind *while on active duty*. That was true too." A few weeks later, Bob married Carole Poczka, a Canadian woman whom he'd met in Plattsburgh. As he served his final year at Plattsburgh, they searched for programs related to pacifism. In 1971, Bob enrolled in the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Newton, Kansas. He graduated in 1974 with a degree in peace studies.

The Vietnam War created many divisions in American life, between generations, between those who were pro-war and antiwar, between those whose sons fought and those whose sons were able to avoid the war (**Resource 21**). The rifts were sometimes long-lasting. For ten years after what Bob Hull calls their "big row," he and his father had a superficial relationship, with occasional visits and phone calls. "You know," Bob says, "*how 'bout*

*them Red Sox?*" But one Sunday in the early 1980s, when Bob was working as the secretary for peace and justice at Mennonite headquarters in Kansas, his father called. He had seen some red windbreakers he wanted to send to Bob's two sons. They had a space shuttle design on the back, with "Vandenberg AFB" written underneath. He could have them monogrammed with the boys' names. He had a couple of wooden plaques from his days as a test pilot, and he wanted to send them, too. He asked if that would be all right. "I think Mom had a lot to do with it. He was being careful. I said, 'Dad, send them,' and I started crying, and he started crying. That was the breakthrough. Later, when my mother was sick and he was the caregiver, we could deal with it together. It felt like acceptance, finally."

### Guiding Questions

- Many families were divided over the war. What made the Hulls' story unusual?
- Bob sensed "acceptance, finally" after the windbreaker conversation. What do you think his father felt?

# Resource 21 • Working-Class War

**B**ecause of inequities in the draft (**Resource 8**), most of the men who served in Vietnam were from working-class and poor families, and the casualty rates reflected their disproportionate numbers. One analysis found that the sons of Dorchester, Massachusetts, a white working-class section of Boston, were four times more likely to die in Vietnam than the sons of the city's wealthy suburbs.

Class divisions had always existed in American life, and they existed during the Vietnam War. But there was not always a sharp line between the privileged and the working class in terms of their attitudes toward Vietnam. Some privileged people believed in the war. Some working-class people did not. In fact, Americans with less formal education were more likely to be against the war than those with more years of schooling. The man quoted in this excerpt was a firefighter who did not support either the war or those who demonstrated against it. His son, Ralph, had died in Vietnam.

By the end of 1969, a new lottery system was in place for selecting those who would serve in uniform (**Resource 23**).

## Guiding Questions

- How did this firefighter think about patriotism?
- Why did he feel bitter?

*I'm bitter. You bet . . . I'm bitter. It's people like us who give up our sons for the country. The business people . . . the college types, the professors . . . their sons, they don't end up in the swamps over there, in Vietnam. No sir. They're deferred, because they're in school. Or they get sent to safe places. Or they get out with all those letters they have from doctors. . . . Let's face it: if you have a lot of money, or if you have the right connections, you don't end up on a firing line in the jungle over there, not unless you want to. Ralph had no choice. He didn't want to die. He wanted to live. They just took him – to "defend democracy," that's what they keep on saying. . . .*

*. . . The whole thing is a mess. The sooner we get the hell out of there the better. But what bothers me about the peace crowd is that you can tell from their attitude, the way they look and what they say, that they don't really love this country. Some of them almost seem glad to have a chance to criticize us. . . . To hell with them! Let them get out, leave, if they don't like it here! My son didn't die so they can look filthy and talk filthy and insult everything we believe in and everyone in the country—me and my wife and people here on the street, and the next street, and all over.*

— The father of a fallen soldier

Robert Coles, *The Middle Americans: Proud and Uncertain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971) as quoted in Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 42.



Hard hat demonstration, Wall Street, 1970. Photograph. ©Catherine Ursillo. All rights reserved

## UNIT 4 • CLUSTER 7 • Searching for an Exit

## Resource 22 • The Vietnam Moratorium

**H**aving promised American voters “peace with honor,” President Richard Nixon (**Presidential Capsule**) shifted the direction of U.S. military efforts in Vietnam. He hoped his administration could achieve what Johnson’s (**Presidential Capsule**) had not. Nixon began withdrawing American troops and implementing his “Vietnamization” strategy, which slowly transferred most of the ground fighting to South Vietnamese forces. At the same time, he expanded the air war, secretly bombing areas in Cambodia where the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong would regroup. He also secretly reopened negotiations with the North, which were unsuccessful.

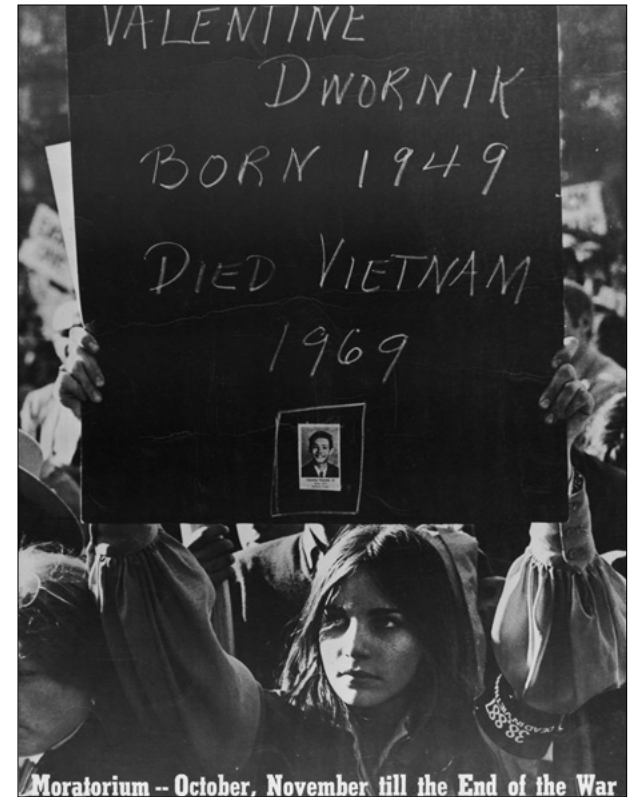
Nixon’s first months as president were marked by growing public discontent, and in some quarters fury, with the war. On October 15, 1969, between 1 and 2 million Americans took part in the Vietnam Moratorium, which had been planned to bring together “a broad cross section of Americans,” including people who disagreed about the best way to try to end the war. It was the first of a series of planned monthly events.

The word “moratorium” means a halt, a standstill. In cities and towns across the nation, people skipped work and school to attend silent vigils, discussions, and marches against the war. They were young and old, mod-

erates and radicals, students and teachers, veterans and workers and businesspeople. Some took part because they found the war unconscionable. Others believed it unwinnable or unnecessary. Some had lost a loved one. Many joined the call for peace for the first time. The antiwar demonstrations in the fall of 1969 showed the Nixon administration that wide segments of the public—people from every walk of life—would no longer support the war.

**Guiding Questions**

- Why do you think the marcher in the photo carried this sign? What do you think her armband meant?
- Why do you think the organizers hoped that a “broad section of Americans” would take part in the Moratorium?



*Moratorium -- October, November till the End of the War*  
Vietnam Moratorium poster, 1969. Photograph by Winston Vargas.  
Library of Congress, 2016648515

# Resource 23 • The Draft Lottery

**P**resident Nixon (**Presidential Capsule**) believed, as Lyndon Johnson (**Presidential Capsule**) had before him, that antiwar protesters were mostly driven by their opposition to the draft. In 1969, he took steps he hoped would quiet public unrest over the war. In June, he began to gradually withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam. In December, he turned the draft into a birthday-based lottery system, replacing the old system in which men could be called any time between the ages of 18 and 26. For 8 years, they lived with the possibility that they could be drafted.

The first lottery was held on December 1, 1969.

Young men gathered around televisions and radios as birthdates were selected at random and numbers were assigned to them. The first date pulled was September 14, so all the men born on that date between 1944 and 1950 had the number 1, which meant they would be first to be drafted. The system provided a measure of predictability, since those with low numbers probably would be called up, and those with high numbers—above the mid-200s—probably would not. For those in between, it was a guessing game.

The three men in this photograph were students at the University of San Francisco. When the numbers had been selected, Shelton Bunn had number 131, Roosevelt Alexander had number 264, and Mike Boland

had number 1. Because these men were in college, they were protected by student deferments. But if their student status changed—if they graduated, for example—they would lose their deferments. At that point, and for as long as they were of draft age, the number drawn for them in 1969 would determine their place in line for call-up to military duty.

Nixon's assumption was not correct. Peace activists had many different reasons besides the draft for opposing the war. They found it immoral, or futile, or a misuse of American resources, or an abuse of American power. The new draft system did not shut down protest over the war.

Student deferments were dropped in 1971, and the draft ended completely in January 1972. Today, the U.S. has an all-volunteer military. But men between ages 18 and 25 are still required to register with the Selective Service System, in case a future war requires reinstating the draft.

## Guiding Questions

- What did Nixon expect to happen when the lottery went into effect?
- How do you think young men felt about the new lottery system?



Jerry Telfer, Shelton Bunn (left), Roosevelt Alexander (center), and Mike Boland (right) listen to a radio broadcast of the draft lottery at Phelan Hall, University of San Francisco, 1969. Photograph. Courtesy of UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library

# Cluster 8 • The Long, Slow End

*The final years of a divisive war*

LIFE STORY



**Nancy Sanchez**

*A physical therapist at an army hospital in Vietnam*

**Related Materials**

- [Richard M. Nixon Presidential Capsule](#)
- [Gerald R. Ford Presidential Capsule](#)
- [Appendix D: War Statistics](#)

**Resource 24**

*The Pentagon Papers*

The shocking, behind-the-scenes history of the war



**Resource 25**

*The Paris Peace Accords*

The U.S. withdraws while North and South fight on

**Resource 26**

*The End and the Aftermath*

The war's final moments and lasting legacy



# UNIT 4 • CLUSTER 8 • The Long, Slow End

## Life Story • Nancy Sanchez

**R**oughly 10,000 American women, most of them nurses, volunteered in Vietnam. Nancy Sanchez (1931– ) was born in Puerto Rico, went to college in Texas, and then joined the army’s physical therapy training program. She became one of the few physical therapists employed in U.S. military hospitals, where she spent several years working with Korean War veterans. She arrived in Vietnam shortly after Christmas 1970.

Lieutenant Colonel Sanchez was assigned to the 95th Evacuation Hospital near Danang Air Base, one of the war zone’s major medical facilities. She helped injured patients regain strength and recover as much function as possible. She worked 10-hour days and weekends because choppers arrived constantly. “Sometimes at 4:00 in the morning, we air evac to the States via Japan about 40,” Sanchez wrote in a February 1971 letter, “and by the afternoon that same day, we have gotten 50 to 60 new patients.” When the nurses were overwhelmed with new arrivals, Sanchez helped them. They taught her to give morphine to dying men in terrible pain.

The hospital treated soldiers, civilians, and prisoners of war. Sanchez was even sent in secret to Cambodia, where she cared for Prime Minister Lon Nol after he suffered a stroke. On one of her stays in Cambodia, she bought a small portable radio. When she was back at the 95th, she turned on the Voice of America,

the international broadcaster of news and information funded by the U.S. government. She heard President Nixon (**Presidential Capsule**) say Americans could rest assured there were no marines in Laos. She may have been listening to the president’s April 7, 1971 speech: “[The] Laotian operation . . . was undertaken by South Vietnamese ground forces with American air support. . . . [T]he South Vietnamese demonstrated that without American advisers they could fight effectively against the very best troops North Vietnam could put in the field.”

Sanchez had just traveled through Laos and seen wounded U.S. marines being air-lifted to her hospital. The 95th was crammed with these men. “Here was the Commander-in-Chief, the President of the United States, denying their existence, and mine too,” she said in a 2004 interview. “I got so disgusted that I threw my little radio so hard on the wooden floor . . . that it was broken into pieces.” Sanchez was angry and disillusioned with American leaders, and increasingly, so was the American public, especially after the release of the Pentagon Papers (**Resource 24**).

A few weeks after arriving at the 95th, Sanchez was offered some equipment by a small clinic that was closing. She hitched a ride with two officers heading



*Nancy Sanchez with a patient, ca.1971. Photograph. Aida Nancy Sanchez Collection, The Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection*



*101st Airborne troopers rush a wounded comrade to a dust-off chopper on Hamburger Hill, 1969. Photograph. ©Topfoto/The Image Works*

## UNIT 4 • CLUSTER 8 • The Long, Slow End

### Life Story • Nancy Sanchez *continued*

in that direction, all three of them wearing flak jackets and helmets. On the road, they saw an army unit and got out to talk. One handsome young soldier told Sanchez he had only three more days in Vietnam. She took his picture. Her group had just started on their way again when they heard a tremendous explosion. The entire army unit had been blown to pieces, 65 soldiers killed by land mines in an instant. Sanchez went back to look for the handsome soldier and returned to the jeep sobbing.

The mines had been set by a very pregnant Vietnamese woman who broke her leg as she was running away. She was captured and brought to the ward for prisoners of war at the 95th, where Sanchez went in to evaluate and treat her. “As I approached her, she grabbed my neck and tried very hard to choke me, as if she wanted to kill me.” Sanchez fought back, but the woman didn’t release her grip until the Special Forces sergeant who guarded the room slapped her hard. He wanted to hit her again, as punishment for the deaths of 65 men, but Sanchez stopped him. An interpreter arrived and explained to the woman that Sanchez was trying to help. She calmed down and even smiled at Sanchez.

Sanchez ended her tour around Christmas 1971. A little more than a year later, in January 1973, the Paris Peace Accords ended the U.S. role in the war ([Resource 25](#)). In March 1973, the last American troops left Vietnam,

and the 95th Evacuation Hospital closed down, along with other facilities. The fighting continued between North and South until 1975, when the South Vietnamese government fell and Vietnam was united under Communist rule. Thirty-five years after Ho Chi Minh ([Life Story](#)) began the liberation movement in a secret cave in his country’s northern reaches, and six years after his death, Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City in his honor ([Resource 26](#)).

Nancy Sanchez spent her year in Vietnam tending to casualties, just as she had done before and after her tour. But she became a casualty herself. Returning home, she was assigned to work at the army medical center at Fort Gordon, Georgia. One day, about a year after leaving Vietnam, she was driving her car when she heard a helicopter overhead and became rigid with fear. She couldn’t press the accelerator or the brake. “This reaction did not last too long but it scared me enough to seek help.” After a single visit, a psychiatrist reassured her that she would be fine soon and she should just give herself time. “But some of the things that happened in Vietnam while I was there, I just won’t be able to forget for the rest of my life,” she said in a 2004 interview, when she was 73. Those “horrid experiences” still came back to her, even then.

Many people who returned from the Vietnam War, especially men who had been in combat roles, were

affected by anxiety, nightmares, flashbacks, moments of intense panic, and other symptoms. Wartime trauma, called “shell shock” during World War I, was well known. Doctors generally believed it was temporary and advised patients to “give it time.” But in the 1970s, veterans’ groups and mental health professionals campaigned for better understanding of the severe moral and psychological distress that can follow conflict and other trauma. In 1980, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was named and officially recognized by the psychiatric profession.

### Guiding Questions

- Why do you think Sanchez took care of, and protected, the Vietnamese woman who set the mines?
- What were the lasting impacts of the Vietnam War on Sanchez’s life?

# Resource 24 • The Pentagon Papers

In 1971, a top-secret history of American involvement in Vietnam, ordered by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara (**Life Story**), was leaked to the press. Daniel Ellsberg, one of the writers of the report, provided a copy to Neal Sheehan of the *New York Times*, which published three articles over three days, June 13–15, 1971. After the third appeared, President Nixon (**Presidential Capsule**) used a court order to prevent further publication. But the New York State federal court and the Supreme Court intervened, and the articles resumed in the *Times* and other newspapers.

The Pentagon Papers consisted of several thousand pages and included detailed internal conversations and decisions kept from the public. Readers learned, for example, that Lyndon Johnson (**Presidential Capsule**) knew in September 1964 that he would probably order the bombing of North Vietnam (**Resource 8**), but he postponed it in order to avoid losing votes in the upcoming presidential election. And the Tonkin Gulf incident (**Life Story** of Robert McNamara), which had been used to authorize U.S. military action, was North Vietnam’s response to secret American harassment, not an unprovoked hostile act.

One document released with the Pentagon Papers was this brief draft memorandum written to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara (**Life Story**) on March 24, 1965. Among U.S. aims in the war, the memo listed



Daniel Ellsberg speaking at a House panel investigating the Pentagon Papers, 1971. Photograph. Associated Press, 710728050

first the need to protect America’s reputation among its allies, an important and legitimate goal for the government. But the language of “humiliating defeat” suggested that the war was driven more by the need to protect American credibility than by the desire to safeguard the freedom of South Vietnam (SVN), which had long been the publicly stated goal. In the final line of the memo, the writer is acknowledging that if South Vietnam asked the U.S. to leave, it would be difficult to say no, even though it might endanger America’s “reputation as a guarantor.”

Americans at many levels felt misled and disillusioned by the revelations in the Pentagon Papers. Congress

## **Proposed Course of Action re: Vietnam Draft Memorandum, March 24, 1965**

*US aims:*

70%—To avoid a humiliating US defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor).

20%—To keep SVN (and then adjacent) territory from Chinese hands.

10%—To permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life.

ALSO—To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used.

NOT—To “help a friend,” although it would be hard to stay in if asked out.

“Proposed Course of Action re: Vietnam,” Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs John McNaughton to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Draft Memorandum, March 24, 1965. *The Pentagon Papers*, Gravel Edition, Volume 3 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 694-702.

passed the 1973 War Powers Act to prevent another vague war authorization like the Tonkin Gulf Resolution (**Appendix C**). The public’s trust in the government plummeted. Loss of faith in the country’s officials and institutions was a lasting casualty of the war.

## **Guiding Questions**

- Do you think Americans had a right to see the Pentagon Papers?
- Why do you think many Americans found this memo upsetting?

# Resource 25 • The Paris Peace Accords

**A**merica's role in the Vietnam War ended on January 27, 1973, with the signing of the peace agreement in Paris. Talks had begun in 1969 among the United States, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam (PRG). The PRG was the Viet Cong's political arm. These parties signed the Paris Peace Accords.

South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu authorized his minister of foreign affairs to sign the agreement, but he had grave concerns, as did President Nixon (**Presidential Capsule**). North Vietnamese soldiers had been in South Vietnam since the 1972 NVA campaign known as the Easter Offensive. The accords allowed them to remain. They also created confusion about whether the PRG or the Thieu government—referred to as the two South Vietnamese parties—was in charge. In fact, nothing was settled except the American exit, but Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, negotiators for the United States and North Vietnam, were jointly awarded the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize. Le Duc Tho refused his award. He argued that Kissinger, his co-winner, had violated the truce during the on-again, off-again negotiations by ordering days of intense bombing over Christmas 1972.

Despite the language about reconciliation and peace, North and South were soon at war again.

*The Parties participating in the Paris Conference in Viet-Nam . . . have agreed on the following provisions and undertake to respect and to implement them:*

### **Chapter I: The Vietnamese People's Fundamental Rights**

*Article 1. The United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Viet-Nam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Viet-Nam.*

### **Chapter II: Cessation of Hostilities – Withdrawal of Troops**

*Article 2. A cease-fire shall be observed throughout South Viet-Nam as of 2400 hours G.M.T. [Greenwich Mean Time], on January 27, 1973.*

*At the same hour, the United States will stop all its military activities against the territory of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. . . .*

*Article 3. (b) The armed forces of the two South Vietnamese parties shall remain in-place. . . .*

*Article 4. The United States will not continue its military involvement or intervene in the internal affairs of South Viet-Nam. . . .*

### **Chapter IV: The Exercise of the South Vietnamese People's Right to Self-Determination**

*Article 10. The two South Vietnamese parties undertake to respect the cease-fire and maintain peace in South Viet-Nam, settle all matters of contention through negotiations, and avoid all armed conflict. . . .*

*Article 12. Immediately after the cease-fire, the two South Vietnamese parties shall hold consultations . . . to set up a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord. . . .*

### **Chapter V: The Reunification of Viet-Nam and the Relationship Between North and South Viet-Nam**

*Article 15. The reunification of Viet-Nam shall be carried out step by step through peaceful means on the basis of discussions and agreements between North and South Viet-Nam. . . .*

*"Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring the Peace in Viet-Nam," Paris, January 27, 1973. Department of State Bulletin, February 12, 1973, 169–188.*

### **Guiding Questions**

- How did the Paris Peace Accords end America's role in the war?
- How were "the two South Vietnamese parties" supposed to resolve their differences?

**B**y April 1975, North Vietnamese troops were at Saigon’s door. South Vietnam’s President Thieu resigned. The North had won the war. This iconic photo (top) was taken as frightened South Vietnamese rushed the American embassy, hoping to be airlifted to a waiting U.S. ship. Many had worked closely with the U.S. and feared punishment from the victors. In the rush, however, many South Vietnamese were left behind, and just hours later, a Viet Cong flag flew over the presidential palace. Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

At home, Americans began to confront the war’s troubling aftermath.

Almost immediately, the toxic defoliant Agent Orange was banned in warfare because it caused disease and birth defects. Later, its manufacturers were required to pay damages to Americans injured by exposure.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was officially recognized in 1980 as a product of the moral and psychological stress of war.

The Refugee Act, passed in 1980, helped settle Southeast Asian immigrants who fled in the war’s aftermath.

Bruce Springsteen dedicated a 1981 concert to Vietnam veterans, celebrating an anguished population whose return home had been fraught with challenges.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial—The Wall—was dedicated in 1982, inscribed with the names of over 58,000 men and women who had died. Now considered powerfully moving, it was at first condemned as a “black gash of shame.”

In 1983, President Reagan required journalists to be embedded with U.S. troops during wartime, limiting the freedom with which reporters had moved in Vietnam.

In 1987, immigration to the U.S. was eased for the children of Vietnamese mothers and American fathers, who were scorned in Vietnam.

In 1994, President Clinton ended the U.S. trade embargo with Vietnam, and diplomatic relations soon resumed.

In 2016, President Obama pledged \$90 million over three years to clear Laos of unexploded bombs, which children often mistake for toys, with deadly results.

See **Appendix D** for a selection of Vietnam War statistics.

### Guiding Questions

- How do you think the people in these photographs were feeling about the United States?
- How do you think they saw the war’s outcome or thought about their futures?
- What patterns do you see in the steps Americans have taken in the aftermath of the war?



Hugh Van Es, *An Air America helicopter crew member helps evacuees at 18 Gia Long Street, Saigon, 1975.* Photograph. UPI Photo Service / Newscom



*A U.S. marine escorts a South Vietnamese helicopter pilot and his family to the USS Hancock during the evacuation of Saigon, 1975.* Photograph. National Archives at College Park, MD

# PRESIDENTIAL CAPSULES

# A

merica's long involvement in Vietnam was largely the consequence of actions taken by six presidents, from Harry S. Truman to Gerald R. Ford. Each is the subject of a one-page Presidential Capsule that traces his key decisions related to Vietnam and includes quotations that reflect how he thought about the war and America's role in the world.

**Harry S. Truman** (1945–1953)

**Dwight D. Eisenhower** (1953–1961)

**John F. Kennedy** (1961–1963)

**Lyndon B. Johnson** (1963–1969)

**Richard M. Nixon** (1969–1974)

**Gerald R. Ford** (1974–1977)

Abbie Rowe, *President John F. Kennedy and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson Outside the White House*, 1961. Photograph. White House Photographs, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston

“**W**e shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States.”

— Harry S. Truman: “Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine,” March 12, 1947. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12846>.

“In Korea, the Government forces, which were armed to prevent border raids and to preserve internal security, were attacked by invading forces from North Korea. . . . I have ordered United States air and sea forces to give the Korean Government troops cover and support. . . . I have ordered the 7th Fleet to prevent any [Chinese Communist] attack on Formosa. . . . I have also directed that United States Forces in the Philippines be strengthened and that military assistance to the Philippine Government be accelerated. I have similarly directed acceleration in the furnishing of military assistance to the forces of France and the Associated States in Indochina. . . .”

— Harry S. Truman: “Statement by the President on the Situation in Korea,” June 27, 1950. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13538>.

President Truman delivering Truman Doctrine address, 1947. Photograph. Copyright Unknown, Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library & Museum

# President Harry S. Truman

1945–1953



## KEY DECISIONS RELATED TO VIETNAM

- 1945:** Authorizes the use of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. Takes no position on French efforts to recolonize Vietnam.
- 1946:** Ignores Ho Chi Minh’s urgent request for American aid to resist French.
- 1947:** Delivers “Truman Doctrine” speech, committing U.S. assistance to democratic nations resisting Communism.
- 1948:** Begins funding French attempt to retake Indochina.
- 1950:** Increases aid to the French but sends no troops. Responds to 1949 Soviet atomic bomb test by ordering development of a U.S. hydrogen bomb, called a “superbomb.” Sends U.S. ground troops to South Korea in response to invasion by Communist North Korea.

“So, when the United States votes \$400 million to help that war, we are not voting for a giveaway program. We are voting for the cheapest way that we can to prevent the occurrence of something that would be of the most terrible significance for the United States of America — our security, our power and ability to get certain things we need from the riches of the Indonesian territory, and from southeast Asia.”

— Dwight D. Eisenhower: “Remarks at the Governors’ Conference, Seattle, Washington,” August 4, 1953. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9663>

“You have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the falling domino principle. You have a row of dominoes set up. You knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have the beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences.”

— Dwight D. Eisenhower: “The President’s News Conference,” April 7, 1954. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10202>

President Dwight D. Eisenhower (left) shakes hands with President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam, 1957. Photograph. Associated Press, 570508018

# President Dwight D. Eisenhower

1953–1961



## KEY DECISIONS RELATED TO VIETNAM

**1954:** Provides bombers and non-combat personnel to support France in First Indochina War, but refuses to intervene directly. Articulates the “domino theory” after France is defeated, warning of a cascade of nations falling to Communism. Forms the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization with the U.K., France, New Zealand, and Australia to defend Vietnam against Communism.

**1955:** Dispatches first American soldiers to Vietnam as advisers to South Vietnam’s army. Immediately recognizes the newly declared Republic of Vietnam, also known as South Vietnam.

**1956:** Increases the number of U.S. advisers in South Vietnam.

**1957:** Welcomes President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam to Washington and pledges continued support.

**1960:** With 900 U.S. advisers in Vietnam, warns incoming president, John F. Kennedy, of the dangers of Communism in Laos.

“P resident Roosevelt and President Truman and President Eisenhower had the same experience, they all made the effort to get along with the Russians. But every time, finally it failed. And the reason it failed was because the Communists are determined to destroy us, and regardless of what hand of friendship we may hold out or what arguments we may put up, the only thing that will make that decisive difference is the strength of the United States.”

— John F. Kennedy: “Speech by Senator John F. Kennedy, Democratic Rally, George Washington High School Stadium, Alexandria, VA,” August 24, 1960. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=74188>.

“In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisers, but they have to win it, the people of Vietnam, against the Communists.”

— John F. Kennedy: “Transcript of Broadcast With Walter Cronkite Inaugurating a CBS Television News Program,” September 2, 1963. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9388>.

Abbie Rowe, *President John F. Kennedy with Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Maxwell D. Taylor*, 1963. Photograph. White House Photographs, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston

# President John F. Kennedy

1961-1963



## KEY DECISIONS RELATED TO VIETNAM

**May 1961:** Announces new American policy to defeat Communism by partnering with, rather than just supporting, the Diem regime. Assures South Vietnam of more aid and advisers to build up the South’s army.

**Early 1962:** Authorizes escalated American involvement, including large-scale spraying of defoliants to deprive the enemy of food and hiding places.

**May 1963:** Begins to lose confidence in President Diem as South Vietnamese Army is ineffective and Buddhist protests continue.

**October 1963:** Tacitly agrees to coup removing Diem from power. Diem is overthrown and killed on November 2.

**November 22, 1963:** Assassinated in Dallas, Texas. American military personnel in Vietnam number 16,000.

“**N**ow, if this little nation goes down the drain and can't maintain her independence, ask yourselves, what is going to happen to all the other little nations? So somebody must stand there and try to help the little nations protect themselves from the nations who would provoke aggression.”

— Lyndon B. Johnson: “Remarks to the International Platform Association Upon Receiving the Association's Annual Award,” August 3, 1965. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27126>.

“Our purpose in Vietnam is to prevent the success of aggression. It is not conquest, it is not empire, it is not foreign bases, it is not domination. It is, simply put, just to prevent the forceful conquest of South Vietnam by North Vietnam.”

— Lyndon B. Johnson: “Remarks in New York City Upon Receiving the National Freedom Award,” February 23, 1966. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28101>.

“I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.”

— Lyndon B. Johnson: “The President's Address to the Nation Announcing Steps To Limit the War in Vietnam and Reporting His Decision Not To Seek Reelection,” March 31, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28772>.

Yoichi Okamoto, *President Lyndon B. Johnson meeting with Joint Chiefs of Staff around picnic table on LBJ Ranch front lawn, 1964*. Photograph. LBJ Library, White House Photo Office

# President Lyndon B. Johnson

1963–1969



## KEY DECISIONS RELATED TO VIETNAM

**1964:** Gains authority via the Tonkin Gulf Resolution to wage military campaign in Vietnam.

**1965:** Initiates intense bombing campaign called Operation Rolling Thunder in North Vietnam, sends marines to defend American bases, and doubles the draft call. By October, over 200,000 U.S. troops are in Vietnam.

**1966:** Slowly increases the number of U.S. forces and escalates the bombing campaign.

**1967:** Worried about the course of the war, polls his key advisers, called the Wise Men, about whether to stay in Vietnam or exit. They advise him to stay the course.

**1968:** In March, after the Tet Offensive, advised by Wise Men to find a way out of Vietnam. Announces he will not run for another term as president. Orders the end of bombing of North Vietnam, increases bombing of Laos.

“T

onight, American and South Vietnamese units will attack the headquarters for the entire Communist military operation in South Vietnam. This key control center has been occupied by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong for 5 years in blatant violation of Cambodia’s neutrality. This is not an invasion of Cambodia.”

— Richard Nixon: “Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia.” April 30, 1970. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2490>.

“We are united Americans—North, East, West, and South, both parties—in our desire for peace, peace with honor, the kind of a peace that will last . . . [W]e are on the eve of what could be the greatest generation of peace, true peace for the whole world, that man has ever known.”

— Richard Nixon: “Remarks on Being Reelected to the Presidency,” November 7, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3702>.

# President Richard M. Nixon

1969–1974



## KEY DECISIONS RELATED TO VIETNAM

**1968:** Promises during presidential campaign that the draft will end and that he will bring an honorable end to the war in Vietnam.

**1969:** Introduces a policy to “Vietnamize” the war to limit the U.S. role and transfer responsibilities to South Vietnam’s army. Begins the secret bombing of North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia.

**1970:** Announces ground attacks in Cambodia, setting off new protests, including one at Kent State University in Ohio, where four young people are killed.

**1971:** Uses a court order to prevent further publication of the Pentagon Papers, soon overruled by the New York State federal court and the U.S. Supreme Court.

**1972:** Orders the “Christmas bombing” of North Vietnam to assure President Thieu of ongoing U.S. support after peace talks collapse.

**1973:** Announces the Paris Peace Accords as “peace with honor.” Personally promises President Thieu that the U.S. will re-enter the war if North Vietnam breaks the agreement.

**1974:** Resigns from office under threat of impeachment for the Watergate scandal.

President Nixon confers Nov. 25, 1972, with Henry A. Kissinger in New York after the presidential adviser returned from a week of secret negotiations in Paris, 1972. Associated Press, 721126028

“**T**oday, America can regain the sense of pride that existed before Vietnam. But it cannot be achieved by refighting a war that is finished as far as America is concerned. As I see it, the time has come to look forward to an agenda for the future, to unify, to bind up the Nation’s wounds, and to restore its health and its optimistic self-confidence. . . . We, of course, are saddened indeed by the events in Indochina. But these events, tragic as they are, portend neither the end of the world nor of America’s leadership in the world.”

— Gerald R. Ford: “Address at a Tulane University Convocation,” April 23, 1975. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4859>.

# President Gerald R. Ford

1974-1977



## KEY DECISIONS RELATED TO VIETNAM

**August 8, 1974:** Inherits responsibility for failing South Vietnamese government when he becomes president after Nixon resignation.

**September 16, 1974:** Grants amnesty to those who evaded the draft during the Vietnam War and to military deserters if they declare their allegiance to the U.S. and work in a public service job for two years.

**December 1974:** Does not intervene when Hanoi begins a massive attack near Saigon.

**January 21, 1975:** States in a press conference that the U.S. is unwilling to reenter the war.

**April 1975:** Asks Congress for emergency military aid to South Vietnam. Congress approves humanitarian aid only.

*Secretary of State Henry Kissinger reports to President Gerald R. Ford on his tour of the Middle East and Europe at the White House in Washington, DC, 1975. Associated Press, 750219043*

# Glossary

**Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).** South Vietnam's army, which worked in tandem with U.S. forces.

**Cold War.** The hostile relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1990. Although the two sides did not engage directly in combat, sparing the world a nuclear confrontation, they competed for global influence and fought deadly proxy wars in Korea, Vietnam, and several other nations.

**Communism.** In theory, a political and economic system in which the state owns the means of production, such as factories and farms, and wealth is divided equally among citizens. As practiced in the Soviet Union during the Cold War, Communism was much feared in the west.

**demarcation line.** The boundary that divided North Vietnam from South Vietnam. Created by the Geneva Accords in 1954, after the First Indochina War, it ran just south of the 17th parallel, partly following the Ben Hai River.

**demilitarized zone (DMZ).** The no-combat zone created by the Geneva Accords in 1954. It extended about three miles on either side of the demarcation line and created a roughly six-mile buffer zone between North and South Vietnam, in which fighting was prohibited.

**Democratic Republic of Vietnam.** The Communist government of North Vietnam between 1954 and 1976.

**Dien Bien Phu.** A valley in northwestern Vietnam, where the French built a garrison and where, in 1954, they were defeated by the Viet Minh in the final battle of the First Indochina War.

**First Indochina War.** The conflict between the Vietnamese and the French, 1946–1954, which ended with French defeat and was formally settled by the Geneva Accords.

**Geneva Accords.** The 1954 agreement that formally ended the First Indochina War and divided Vietnam at the demarcation line.

**Hanoi.** The capital of North Vietnam during the war and of reunified Vietnam after 1975.

**hippies.** People who engaged in a new form of youth culture in the 1960s, rejected materialism, and challenged many traditional American standards about dress and behavior. Most people in the antiwar movement did not look like, or consider themselves, hippies.

**Hue.** Pronounced “whey,” a coastal city in South Vietnam, site of one of the bloodiest battles of the 1968 Tet Offensive.

**Indochina.** The name given by the French to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

**Khe Sanh.** A remote U.S. marine base in northwestern South Vietnam, site of a months-long siege by Northern forces beginning in mid-January 1968. American leaders believed the attack was meant to produce a decisive Communist victory, like the one at Dien Bien Phu against the French. But the North had planned the siege to divert American and ARVN forces away from the coming Tet Offensive, which targeted sites throughout South Vietnam.

**North Vietnam.** The name given to the northern part of Vietnam, above the demarcation line, after the 1954 Geneva Accords. The formal name was the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

**North Vietnamese Army (NVA).** The military forces of the Communist North. Also known as the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN).

**Paris Peace Accords.** The 1973 document that ended the U.S. role in the war but failed to prevent continuing conflict between North and South Vietnam.

**Republic of Vietnam.** The US-backed government of South Vietnam.

**Saigon.** The capital of South Vietnam during the war, renamed Ho Chi Minh City after the South Vietnamese government fell in 1975.

**Second Indochina War.** In some parts of the world, the name of the conflict known in the U.S. as the Vietnam War and in Vietnam as the American War.

**Socialist Republic of Vietnam.** The name adopted in 1976 after the end of the civil war and the reunification of North and South Vietnam.

**South Vietnam.** The part of Vietnam south of the demarcation line after the 1954 Geneva Accords, formally known as the Republic of Vietnam.

**Viet Cong (VC).** The guerilla fighters in the South who opposed the American-backed governments and/or supported the North. Also known as the National Liberation Front (NLF).

**Viet Minh.** Ho Chi Minh's liberation movement, and its army, during the war with the French.

# Appendix A • Map of Indochina



Map of Indochina, 1968. The William E. Potts Collection, the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

# Appendix B • Notice to the Reader

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## Notice to the Reader

### U.S. Edition of *People's War, People's Army*

*The author, General Vo Nguyen Giap, was the commanding general of the Vietminh army at Dien Bien Phu, and he is its commanding general now. The original publisher is in Communist territory and may be presumed to be a Communist instrumentality. It should be obvious, therefore, that much of the content of this book is sharply colored with Communist perspectives toward the situation and events described. We trust that the reader will provide his own discounts of this version of the political situation and behavior of the Free World powers involved, the degree of US responsibility for the French strategy, the alleged universality of the support of the Vietminh by the people of Indo-China, and the many other propaganda distortions and falsities.*

*This book is relevant and useful for those portions which describe General Giap's concepts of the strategy and tactics of guerrilla and revolutionary warfare, and his experience in an unquestionably effective application of those concepts. It does not necessarily follow that the US and its allies should copy all of his strategy and tactics in all comparable circumstances, but, at the minimum, they need to be understood. These concepts continue to appear in the same area and in other battlefields where the US has the problem of coping with Communist guerrilla and revolutionary warfare.*

Notice to the Reader, Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War, People's Army* (Washington, DC: Armed Services Technical Information Agency, U.S. Department of Defense, 1962), <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/AD0292744>.

# Appendix C • The Tonkin Gulf Resolution

## President Johnson's Message to Congress, August 5, 1964

*Last night I announced to the American people that the North Vietnamese regime had conducted further deliberate attacks against U.S. naval vessels operating in international waters, and I had therefore directed air action against gunboats and supporting facilities used in these hostile operations. This air action has now been carried out with substantial damage to the boats and facilities. Two U.S. aircraft were lost in the action.*

*After consultation with the leaders of both parties in the Congress, I further announced a decision to ask the Congress for a resolution expressing the unity and determination of the United States in supporting freedom and in protecting peace in southeast Asia.*

*These latest actions of the North Vietnamese regime has given a new and grave turn to the already serious situation in southeast Asia. Our commitments in that area are well known to the Congress. They were first made in 1954 by President Eisenhower. They were further defined in the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty approved by the Senate in February 1955.*

*This treaty with its accompanying protocol obligates the United States and other members to act in accordance with their constitutional processes to meet Communist aggression against any of the parties or protocol states.*

*Our policy in southeast Asia has been consistent and unchanged since 1954. I summarized it on June 2 in four simple propositions:*

*America keeps her word. Here as elsewhere, we must and shall honor our commitments.*

*The issue is the future of southeast Asia as a whole. A threat to any nation in that region is a threat to all, and a threat to us.*

*Our purpose is peace. We have no military, political, or territorial ambitions in the area.*

*This is not just a jungle war, but a struggle for freedom on every front of human activity. Our military and economic assistance to South Vietnam and Laos in particular has the purpose of helping these countries to repel aggression and strengthen their independence.*

*The threat to the free nations of southeast Asia has long been clear. The North Vietnamese regime has constantly sought to take over South Vietnam and Laos. This Communist regime has violated the Geneva accords for Vietnam. It has systematically conducted a campaign of subversion, which includes the direction, training, and supply of personnel and arms for the conduct of guerrilla warfare in South Vietnamese territory. In Laos, the North Vietnamese regime has maintained military forces, used Laotian territory for infiltration into South Vietnam, and most recently carried out combat operations—all in direct violation of the Geneva Agreements of 1962.*

*In recent months, the actions of the North Vietnamese regime have become steadily more threatening. . . .*

*As President of the United States I have concluded that I should now ask the Congress, on its part, to join in affirming the national determination that all such attacks will be met, and that the United States will continue in its basic policy of assisting the free nations of the area to defend their freedom.*

*As I have repeatedly made clear, the United States intends no rashness, and seeks no wider war. We must make it clear to all that the United States is united in its determination to bring about the end of Communist subversion and aggression in the area. We seek the full and effective restoration of the international agreements signed in Geneva in 1954, with respect to South Vietnam, and again in Geneva in 1962, with respect to Laos. . . .*

## Appendix C • The Tonkin Gulf Resolution *continued*

### Joint Resolution of Congress H.J. RES 1145 August 7, 1964

Eighty-eighth Congress of the United States of America  
AT THE SECOND SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday, the seventh day of January, one thousand nine hundred and sixty-four*

#### *Joint Resolution*

*To promote the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia.*

*Whereas naval units of the Communist regime in Vietnam, in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters, and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace; and*

*Whereas these attackers are part of deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression that the Communist regime in North Vietnam has been waging against its neighbors and the nations joined with them in the collective defense of their freedom; and*

*Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protest their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these people should be left in peace to work out their destinies in their own way: Now, therefore be it*

*RESOLVED by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

*That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.*

*Section 2. 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.*

*Section 3. This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress.*

The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Yale Law School, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/tonkin-g.asp#joint](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/tonkin-g.asp#joint). Our Documents, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=98&page=transcript>.

# Appendix D • War Statistics

## War Facts by 1965

- 184,000 U.S. force size
- 2,300 U.S. service deaths
- 1.64 million gallons of herbicides sprayed
- 24% of U.S. public says sending troops to Vietnam was a mistake (Gallup Poll)

## War Facts from 1966 to 1967

- 485,600 U.S. force size
- 17,700 U.S. service deaths
- 24,700 ARVN service deaths
- 143,600 VC/NVA service deaths
- \$32 billion spent
- 7 million gallons of herbicides sprayed
- 45% of U.S. public says sending troops to Vietnam was a mistake (Gallup Poll)

## War Facts 1968

- 536,100 U.S. force size
- 16,900 U.S. service deaths
- 27,900 ARVN service deaths
- 181,100 VC/NVA service deaths
- \$19 billion spent
- 1.4 million tons of bombs dropped
- 54% of U.S. public says sending troops to Vietnam was a mistake (Gallup Poll)

## War Facts from 1969 to 1973

- 536,100 → 24,200 U.S. force size reduction
- 21,200 U.S. service deaths
- 109,200 ARVN service deaths
- 496,300 VC/NVA service deaths
- \$56 billion spent
- 4.2 million tons of bombs dropped
- 60% of U.S. public says sending troops to Vietnam was a mistake (Gallup Poll)

## Estimated Total Service Deaths in the War

- 58,315 U.S.
- 162,000–220,000 ARVN
- 820,000–1.1 million VC/NVA
- 5,200 International Forces

**Note:** Most of these figures are rounded off, but 58,315 is the precise number of U.S. service people known to have died in the war.

*The Vietnam War: 1945–1975*, New-York Historical Society exhibition, October 4, 2017–April 22, 2018.



## Appendix E • Election Year 1968

*continued*

### Candidates

**A Democratic Candidate Eugene McCarthy**  
Senator Eugene McCarthy (D-MN) entered the presidential race in November 1967 to oppose President Johnson on the Vietnam War. McCarthy's strong antiwar message appealed to liberal voters and youth activists and made the war a central campaign issue.

In a speech to Democrats in Chicago, McCarthy articulated his revulsion toward the war: "The war in Vietnam . . . is central to all of the problems of America. . . . It is a war which is morally wrong."

**B Democratic Candidate Robert F. Kennedy**  
Struck by McCarthy's success on the campaign trail, New York senator Robert Kennedy announced in March 1968 that he, too, would challenge President Johnson. Senator Kennedy came out strongly against the war. "If we care so little about South Vietnam that we are willing to see the land destroyed and its people dead, then why are we there in the first place?" He also focused on poverty, racism, and other social ills. Kennedy attracted a broader base of support than McCarthy and gained in the polls.

**C Democratic Candidate Hubert H. Humphrey**  
Vice President Hubert Humphrey entered the race the month after President Johnson withdrew. Once known for his liberal views on civil rights and social reform, he was now a favorite of moderate and conservative Democrats. Humphrey did not compete in the primaries. He secured the Democratic nomination

by relying on support within the party establishment. While Humphrey supported immediate negotiations with North Vietnam, he struggled to overcome the public perception that he was a yes-man for Johnson's unpopular war.

**D Republican Candidate Richard M. Nixon**  
As vice president under Eisenhower, Richard Nixon had enthusiastically supported U.S. involvement in Vietnam. His campaign attacked the Democrats' handling of the war and promised to achieve an "honorable peace."

Domestically, Nixon campaigned hard on "law and order," trading on anxieties about disruptive civil rights and antiwar protests. He quickly gained traction over his fellow Republican, New York governor Nelson Rockefeller, who represented the party's more liberal wing. Nixon won the Republican nomination at the August convention.

**E Independent Candidate George Wallace**  
George Wallace, former Democratic governor of Alabama, entered the race in February 1968 as a third-party candidate. A fervent segregationist, he promised to restore law and order and oppose school busing and other forms of racial integration.

Regarding Vietnam, Wallace called for either all-out victory or a swift end to the war. After his running mate, General Curtis LeMay, implied that he would willingly use nuclear weapons there, Wallace's campaign faltered.

### Events

**1 The Tet Offensive**  
In the opening hours of the Tet Offensive, the chief of South Vietnam's National Police was photographed as he shot a Viet Cong suspect point-blank. In the U.S., alarming images and reports of the coordinated attacks on American and South Vietnamese government forces contributed to the sense of trauma and helped end Johnson's presidency.

**2 Clean for Gene Campaign**  
The first fellow Democrat to challenge President Johnson's reelection bid was Minnesota senator Eugene McCarthy. His main issue was opposition to the war. McCarthy's campaign attracted over 10,000 young organizers who got "Clean for Gene." The men cut their long hair and the women lowered their hemlines to better appeal to mainstream Americans by distancing themselves from youth culture.

**3 LBJ Withdraws**  
Johnson's presidency was in crisis. The Tet Offensive had shown that victory was not imminent. Democratic primary voters were choosing his challengers. And even elder statesmen—dubbed the Wise Men by the press—counseled him to seek a negotiated peace. On March 31, 1968, Johnson shocked the nation by announcing on TV that he would not run for reelection.

"With America's sons in the fields far away, with America's future under challenge right here at home, with our hopes and the world's hopes for peace in the balance every day, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office—the Presidency of your country."

## Appendix E • Election Year 1968 *continued*

### 4 **MLK Assassination**

On April 4, 1968, civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated while standing on a motel balcony in Memphis, Tennessee. The murder provoked despair and outrage. More than 100 cities erupted in riots and unrest. Racial strife flared on U.S. bases in Vietnam. Dr. King's assassination, and the ensuing social chaos revealed the nation's continuing racial divisions while deepening public disillusionment over violence at home and abroad.

The day before he died, Dr. King told his listeners: "I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!"

### 5 **Columbia University Strike**

In April 1968, Columbia University students occupied several school buildings for a week. They were protesting the university's military research and its plan to build a gymnasium that offered separate and unequal access to African American residents of Harlem. Violent police action resulted. Nearly 150 were injured (mostly students) and over 700 were arrested. Students called a campus-wide strike that lasted for the rest of the semester.

The Columbia strike was one of more than 100 campus uprisings in 1968 in protest of the war and racism. Shortly after the strike, FBI counterintelligence agents upped their surveillance and harassment of student antiwar protesters.

### 6 **RFK Assassination**

Slightly after midnight on June 5, 1968, an assassin's bullet felled Robert Kennedy at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles (an act unrelated to Vietnam). He had just won the California primary and was the antiwar candidate best positioned to win the presidency. His younger brother, Senator Edward Kennedy, spoke at his funeral: "My brother need not be idealized, or enlarged in death beyond what he was in life; to be remembered simply as a good and decent man, who saw wrong and tried to right it, saw suffering and tried to heal it, saw war and tried to stop it."

### 7 **Democratic National Convention**

Democrats who met in Chicago in late August to pick their candidate were badly split over the war. Antiwar delegates supported either Eugene McCarthy or last-minute entrant George McGovern. President Johnson's supporters backed Vice President Hubert Humphrey. Political passions turned loud and physical, and antiwar contingents felt badly betrayed by Humphrey's winning of the nomination.

Outside, the streets were thronged with antiwar protesters. Determined to thwart them, Mayor Richard Daley sent tear-gas-armed and baton-wielding police, state troopers, and National Guardsmen against the demonstrators. TV cameras captured the protesters' repeated chant, "The whole world is watching!"

### 8 **Nixon's Secret Deal**

As the election neared, Republican nominee Richard Nixon was ahead, but the Democrat Hubert Humphrey was closing in. When President Johnson announced that all bombing of North Vietnam would stop and four-party peace negotiations would begin, Nixon feared that Johnson's plans would influence the election.

The Nixon campaign secretly activated its conduit to South Vietnamese president Thieu. Republican Party operative Anna Chennault asked Thieu to

reject Johnson's peace talks and promised more favorable conditions under a Nixon presidency. On November 1, with that assurance, Thieu publicly rebuffed LBJ and the peace negotiations, curtailing Humphrey's surge in the polls. Nixon was elected by a slim margin in the popular vote on November 5.

### 9 **Old Enough to Fight, Old Enough to Vote**

Many of the people fighting in Vietnam, or canvassing for candidates, were too young to vote. This seeming contradiction galvanized political support for lowering the voting age from 21 to 18.

One advocacy group, known as Let Us Vote (LUV), counted 3,000 high school and 400 college chapters. The songwriters for The Monkees wrote LUV an anthem:

"We're old enough to lend a helping hand / Together we can build a better land."

In 1971, the campaign led to the adoption of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution, which made 18 the minimum voting age.

# Source Notes

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# STANDARDS

# New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies

## Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

## Standard 2: World History

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

## Standard 3: Geography

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth’s surface.

## Standard 4: Economics

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the United States and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and non-market mechanisms.

## Standard 5: Civics, Citizenship, and Government

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental systems of the United States and other nations; the United States Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

## Eighth Grade

### Key Ideas

<b>8.7 FOREIGN POLICY:</b> The period after World War II has been characterized by an ideological and political struggle, first between the United States and Communism during the Cold War, then between the United States and forces of instability in the Middle East. Increased economic interdependence and competition, as well as environmental concerns, are challenges faced by the United States.								
	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6	Part 7	Part 8
<b>8.7a</b> The Cold War was an ongoing struggle between the two nuclear superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. The Cold War shaped the reconstruction of national boundaries and political alliances across the globe.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>8.7b</b> The United States based its military and diplomatic policies from 1945 to 1990 on a policy of containment of Communism.	X	X	X		X	X		X
<b>8.9 DOMESTIC POLITICS AND REFORM:</b> The civil rights movement and the Great Society were attempts by people and the government to address major social, legal, economic, and environmental problems. Subsequent economic recession called for a new economic program.								
<b>8.9c</b> The Great Society programs of President Lyndon Johnson strengthened efforts aimed at reducing poverty and providing health care for the elderly, but the Vietnam War drained resources and divided society.			X	X			X	X

# STANDARDS

## New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies *continued*

### Tenth Grade

#### Key Ideas

<b>10.6 UNRESOLVED GLOBAL CONFLICT (1945–1991: THE COLD WAR):</b> The second half of the 20th century was shaped by the Cold War, a legacy of World War II. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as global superpowers engaged in ideological, political, economic, and military competition.								
	<b>Part 1</b>	<b>Part 2</b>	<b>Part 3</b>	<b>Part 4</b>	<b>Part 5</b>	<b>Part 6</b>	<b>Part 7</b>	<b>Part 8</b>
<b>10.6b</b> The Cold War was a period of confrontations and attempts at peaceful coexistence.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>10.7 DECOLONIZATION AND NATIONALISM (1900–2000):</b> Nationalist and decolonization movements employed a variety of methods, including nonviolent resistance and armed struggle. Tensions and conflicts often continued after independence as new challenges arose.								
<b>10.7a</b> Independence movements in India and Indochina developed in response to European control.	X							

### Eleventh Grade

#### Key Ideas

<b>11.9 COLD WAR (1945 – 1990):</b> In the period following World War II, the United States entered into an extended era of international conflict called the Cold War, which influenced foreign and domestic policy for more than 40 years.								
	<b>Part 1</b>	<b>Part 2</b>	<b>Part 3</b>	<b>Part 4</b>	<b>Part 5</b>	<b>Part 6</b>	<b>Part 7</b>	<b>Part 8</b>
<b>11.9a</b> After World War II, ideological differences led to political tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. In an attempt to halt the spread of Soviet influence, the United States pursued a policy of containment.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>11.10 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE/DOMESTIC ISSUES (1945 – present):</b> Racial, gender, and socioeconomic inequalities were addressed by individuals, groups, and organizations. Varying political philosophies prompted debates over the role of the federal government in regulating the economy and providing a social safety net.								
<b>11.10b</b> Individuals, diverse groups, and organizations have sought to bring about change in American society through a variety of methods.			X			X		

# STANDARDS Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies

## Grades 6-8

Key Ideas and Details	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6	Part 7	Part 8
1) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3) Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).			X					X
<b>Craft and Structure</b>								
4) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.				X	X	X		X
5) Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).				X	X	X		X
6) Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).	X	X		X			X	X

Key Ideas and Details	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6	Part 7	Part 8
<b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</b>								
7) Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8) Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.						X		
9) Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.		X				X		

# STANDARDS

## Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies *continued*

### Grades 9-10

Key Ideas and Details	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6	Part 7	Part 8
1) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3) Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Craft and Structure</b>								
4) Determine the meanings of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5) Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.			X	X		X		X

Key Ideas and Details	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6	Part 7	Part 8
6) Compare the points of view of two or more authors in their treatments of the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.		X		X	X		X	X
<b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</b>								
7) Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.				X				X
8) Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.		X		X		X		X
9) Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.		X		X			X	X

# STANDARDS

## Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies *continued*

### Grades 11-12

Key Ideas and Details	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6	Part 7	Part 8
1) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships between the key details and ideas.		X		X	X	X		X
3) Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.		X		X	X	X	X	X
<b>Craft and Structure</b>								
4) Determine the meanings of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
5) Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.			X	X		X		X

Key Ideas and Details	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6	Part 7	Part 8
6) Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.		X		X			X	X
<b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</b>								
7) Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, and in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. Distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.	X	X	X	X		X		X
8) Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.		X		X		X	X	X
9) Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies between sources.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

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**Cover Image**

Henri Huet, *American infantrymen looking up at tall jungle trees for Viet Cong snipers*, 1967. Photograph. Associated Press, 670615016



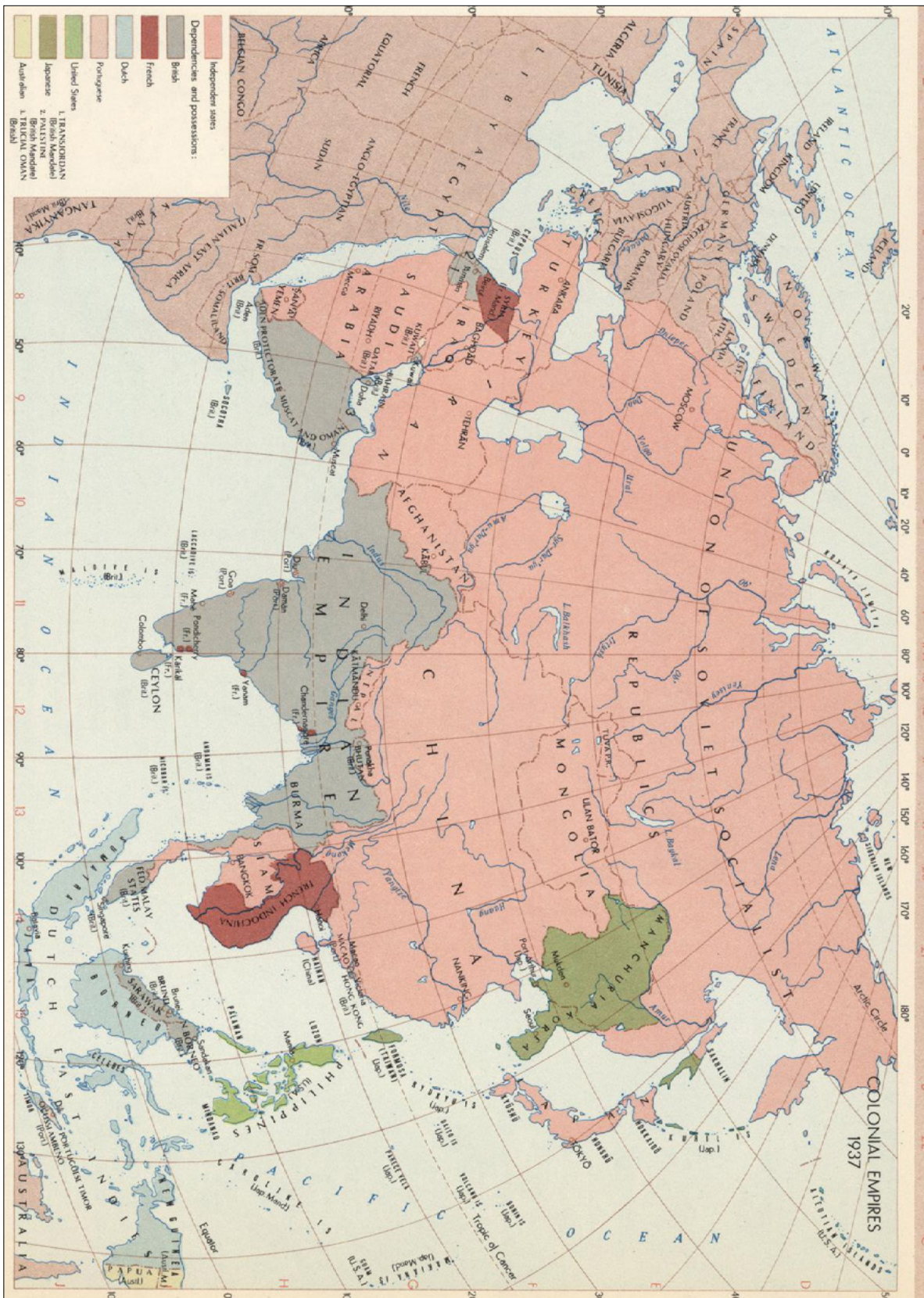
**Unit 1**

Horst Faas, *U.S. Army helicopters cover the advance of ARVN troops, 1965.* Photograph. Associated Press, 080723036671



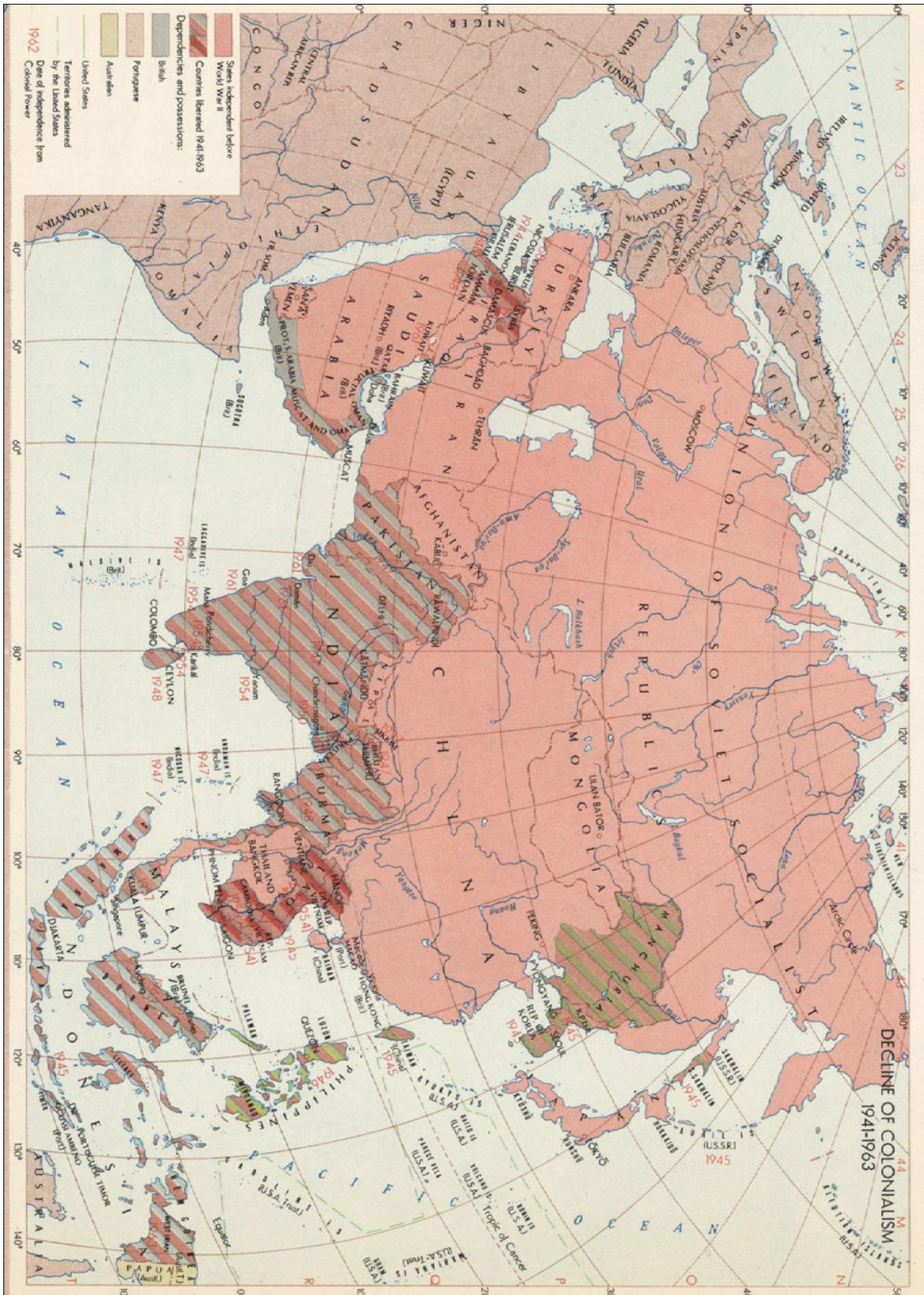
**Life Story: Ho Chi Minh**

*President Ho Chi Minh, 1957. Photograph. Associated Press, 5710111775*



**Resource 1: Map A**

Asia – Political. Pergamon World Atlas, 1968. Maps. First published by Polish Army Topography Service, 1967. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection



**Resource 1: Map B**

Asia – Political. Pergamon World Atlas, 1968. Maps. First published by Polish Army Topography Service, 1967. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection

**VIET  
NAM  
WAR** | 1945-1975 |

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HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**  
MUSEUM & LIBRARY  
MAKING HISTORY MATTER





**Resource 1: Map C**

Asia – Political. Pergamon World Atlas, 1968. Maps. First published by Polish Army Topography Service, 1967. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection

*The French and American military authorities believed that the fortified entrenched camp of Dien Bien Phu was impregnable. . . . General Navarre [the French commander] had over-estimated the Dien Bien Phu defenses. . . . Never did it enter his head that the whole fortified camp could be annihilated by our troops.*

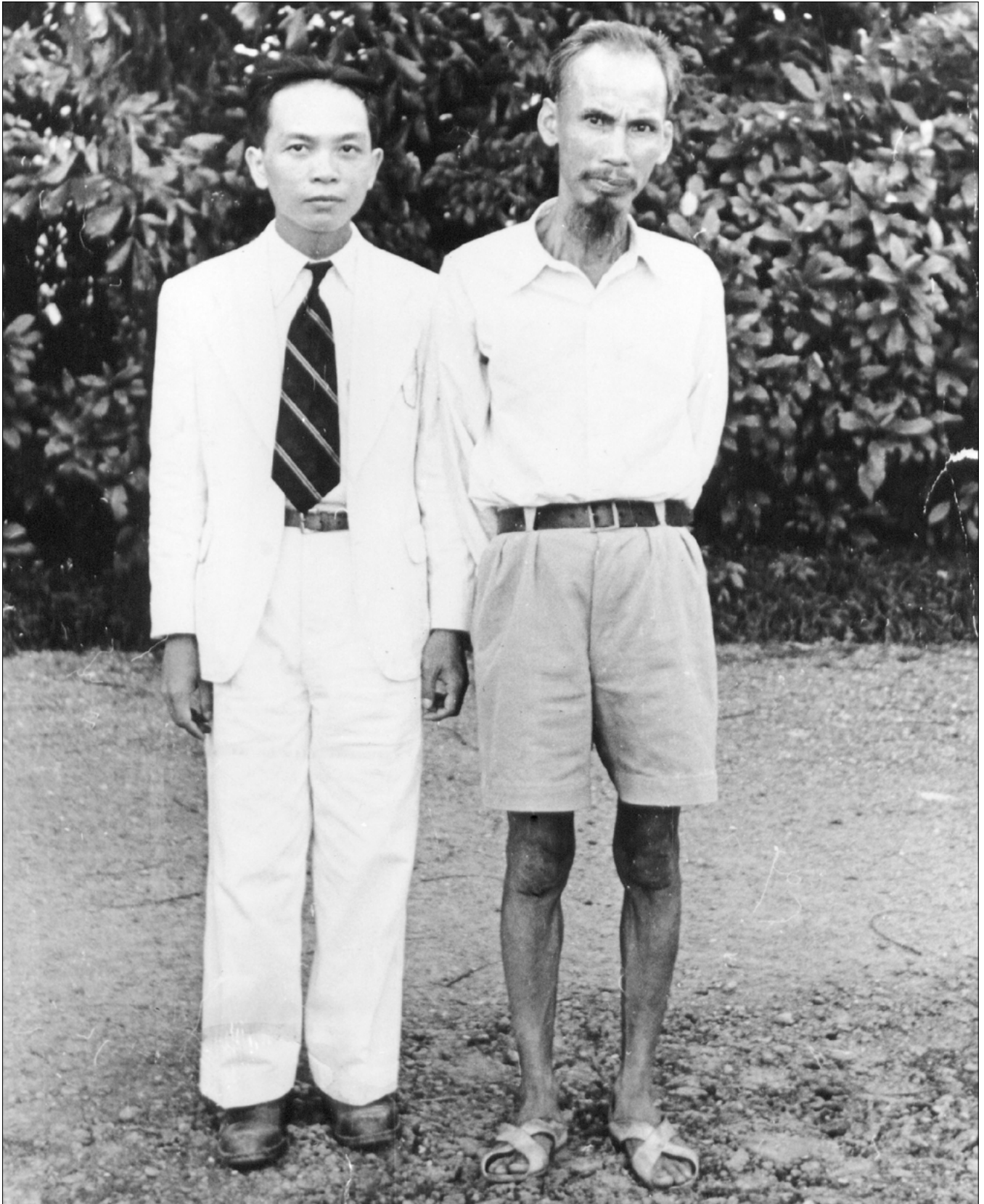
*[W]e had only very limited artillery fire and no mechanized or air forces. We overcame this difficulty by digging a whole network of trenches that . . . enabled our forces to deploy and move in open country under the rain of enemy napalm bombs and artillery shells. . . . Our troops cut through mountains and hacked away jungles to build roads and haul our artillery pieces to the approaches of Dien Bien Phu. Where roads could not be built, artillery pieces were moved by nothing but the sweat and muscle of our soldiers. . . .*

*[Our] combatants kept moving forward to carry out their tasks. One fell, but many others rushed forward like a sweeping rising tide that no force on earth could hold back. . . . The imperialists and traitors could never appreciate the strength of a nation, of a people. This strength is immense. It can overcome any difficulty, defeat any enemy.*

— Vo Nguyen Giap

**Resource 2A**

Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War, People's Army*. First English publication, Hanoi, 1961. Published by the Armed Services Technical Information Agency, U.S. Department of Defense, 1962, <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/AD0292744>.



**Resource 2B**

*Ho Chi Minh and General Giap*, 1950. Photograph. Associated Press, 687979592591



**Resource 3A**

*North Vietnamese Army troops attack Khe Sanh, 1968. Photograph. ©Vietnam News Agency*

*In the North, because of wartime food shortages, people had to mix cassava [an edible root] into their rice. In the Central Highlands [a strategically crucial region of South Vietnam] there was so little rice that we used to say that our cassava carried rice on its back. . . . From commanders down to ordinary soldiers we all grew cassava. . . . Once when we were feeling very optimistic we composed a song we called “The Cassava Offensive.” . . . There were lots of ups and downs, many hardships but a lot of joy.*

— Dang Vu Hiep, NVA officer, 1964-1975

**Resource 3B**

“Dang Vu Hiep,” Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 11.



**Resource 3C**

*Viet Cong tunnel*, 1967. Photograph. Adoc Photos

*When the revolution broke out I was just a kid. In 1962, the puppet soldiers came to my house and said, “Your father was a Viet Cong so we killed him. Go fetch his body.” He had gone to a meeting with his comrades. The southern soldiers surrounded the building and killed everyone. From then on, I decided to take revenge for my father’s death. . . . I wanted to do something to liberate my country and help people get enough food and clothing. I believed my mission in life was to continue my father’s cause, so in 1963, when I was seventeen, I joined the guerrillas.*

— Tran Thi Gung, the only woman in her unit

**Resource 3D**

“Tran Thi Gung,” Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 15.



**Life Story: Richard Olsen**

*Richard Olsen, 1963. Photograph. Courtesy of Richard Olsen*

# Collier's

15c

August 5, 1950



## HIROSHIMA, U.S.A.

*Can Anything Be Done About It?*

#### Resource 4

*Collier's Weekly*, cover, August 5, 1950. Painting: Chesley Bonestell, *Atom bomb hits New York City*, 1950. Oil on paper laid on board. New-York Historical Society, Gift of Chesley Bonestell

VIET  
NAM  
WAR  
| 1945-1975 |

NEW-YORK  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
MUSEUM & LIBRARY  
MAKING HISTORY MATTER

*Dear President Kennedy,*

*My brother, Specialist James Delmas McAndrew, was one of the seven crew members killed on January 11 in a Viet Nam helicopter crash. . . .*

*[My older brothers fought in World War II.] During those war years and even all during the Korean conflict we worried about all of them—but that was all very different. They were wars that our country were fighting, and everyone here knew that our sons and brothers were giving their lives for their country.*

*I can't help but feel that giving one's life for one's country is one thing, but being sent to a country where half our country never even heard of and being shot at without even a chance to shoot back is another thing altogether!*

*Please, I'm only a housewife who doesn't even claim to know all about the international situation—but we have felt so bitter over this—can the small number of our boys over in Vietnam possibly be doing enough good to justify the awful number of casualties? It seems to me that if we are going to have our boys over there, then we should send enough to have a chance—or else stay home. Those fellows are just sitting ducks in those darn helicopters. If a war is worth fighting—isn't it worth fighting to win?*

*Very sincerely,*

*Bobbie Lou Pendergrass*

**Resource 5A**

Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. White House Central Subject Files. National Security - Defense (ND). ND: 9-2-2: Condolence letters and communications: M: Executive. JFKWHCSF-0604-027. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKWHCSF-0604-027.aspx>.

Dear Mrs. Pendergrass,

*The questions which you posed in your letter can, I believe, best be answered by realizing why your brother – and other American men – went to Viet Nam in the first place. . . .*

*Americans are in Viet Nam because we have determined that this country must not fall under Communist domination. Ever since Viet Nam was divided, the Viet Nameese have fought valiantly to maintain their independence in the face of the continuing threat from the North. Shortly after the division eight years ago it became apparent that they could not be successful in their defense without extensive assistance from other nations of the Free World community. . . .*

*If Viet Nam should fall, it will indicate to the people of Southeast Asia that complete Communist domination of their part of the world is almost inevitable. Your brother was in Viet Nam because the threat to the Viet Nameese people is, in the long run, a threat to the Free world community, and ultimately a threat to us also. For when freedom is destroyed in one country, it is threatened throughout the world. . . .*

*I believe if you can see this as he must have seen it, you will believe as he must have believed, that he did not die in vain. Forty-five American soldiers, including your brother, have given their lives in Viet Nam. In their sacrifice they have earned the eternal gratitude of this Nation and other free men throughout the world. . . .*

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy

**Resource 5B**

Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. White House Central Subject Files. National Security - Defense (ND). ND: 9-2-2: Condolence letters and communications: M: Executive. JFKWHCSF-0604-027. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKWHCSF-0604-027.aspx>.



**Resource 6**

Malcolm Browne, *Self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc*, 1963. Photograph. Associated Press, 435461675395

*Everyone in my village who had sons began to doubt the government. In three short years Saigon had doubled the length of time our sons were expected to serve, and yet security in our village was worse than it ever had been. What were they doing with our boys? We got so little for our sacrifice. . . . I do not think the leaders in Saigon understood what a hardship it was to send your boys off to war. Field went unplowed. Rice went unplanted. Families fell apart.*

— Huynh van Hung, father of two draft-age sons, interviewed January 2004

**Resource 7A**

Robert K. Brigham, *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 8.



**Resource 7B**

René Burri, *ARVN troops in South Vietnam*, 1963. Photograph. Magnum Photos





**Resource 8A**

*Squadron training for Operation Rolling Thunder, 1965. Photograph. Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress*



**Resource 8B**

*New draftees*, July 29, 1965. Photograph. Herald Examiner Collection, Los Angeles Public Library



**Resource 8C**

*Vietnam U.S. Bomber Planes, 1965.* Photograph. Associated Press, 171222096516

Attention: ALL I.L.A. MEMBERS

IT'S YOUR FLAG THEY BURNED  
IT'S YOUR COUNTRY THEY DENOUNCED  
IT'S YOUR SERVICEMEN IN VIETNAM THEY VILIFIED



CENTRAL PARK, N.Y.C., APRIL 15, 1967

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO MARCH  

---

**"SUPPORT OUR MEN IN VIETNAM"**  

---

**SATURDAY, MAY 13, 1967 - 11 A. M.**

I.L.A. Assemble Area: E. 95<sup>TH</sup> St. & Lexington Avenue

PARADE HEADQUARTERS

I.L.A. • 17 Battery Place, New York, N.Y. 10004 • HA 5-1200

**Resource 9**

*Support Our Men in Vietnam poster, 1967. New-York Historical Society*



**Resource 10**

Dinh Thuy, *Bicyclists carry food and ammunition down the Ho Chi Minh Trail*, 1966. ©Vietnam News Agency

# THE FORT HOOD THREE



THE CASE OF THE THREE  
G.I.'S WHO SAID "NO" TO  
THE WAR IN VIETNAM

25¢

**Life Story: The Fort Hood Three**

Fort Hood Defense Committee pamphlet, cover, 1966. New-York Historical Society Library



**Resource 11A**

John C. Goodwin, *Religious leaders protest the Vietnam War*, 1968. Photograph. Courtesy of David Goodwin and Benjamin Goodwin

*Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. . . . And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. . . .*

*For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence. For nine years we vigorously supported the French in their abortive effort to recolonize Vietnam. . . . After the French were defeated, it looked as if independence and land reform would come again through the Geneva Agreement. But instead there came the United States, determined that Ho should not unify the temporarily divided nation, and the peasants watched again as we supported one of the most vicious modern dictators, our chosen man, Premier Diem. . . . When Diem was overthrown they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictators seemed to offer no real change, especially in terms of their need for land and peace. The only change came from America as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept, and without popular support. . . .*

*If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. . . . [W]e must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways. In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war.*

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Resource 11B**

From "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," Martin Luther King, Jr. at Riverside Church, April 4, 1967. [http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc\\_beyond\\_vietnam/](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_beyond_vietnam/) (accessed 5/7/17 by M. Waters).



**Resource 12A**

Harry Harris, "Lazy dog" bomb, 1967. Photograph. Associated Press, 860767326340

*I arrived in Hanoi on February 21, 1966, and travelled in five provinces under heavy bombardment. . . . I saw the result of 650 sorties per week, bombs of 1,000 pounds, napalm, phosphorous and a fiendish weapon known as the “lazy dog”. . . . A “lazy dog” is a grenade-like bomb containing 250 slivers of razor-sharp steel. There are forty such bombs in a cylinder; 10,000 pieces of steel in a sudden storm of hail, lacerating anyone exposed or seeking shelter from the half-ton bombs. The “lazy dog” has been dropped continuously on the most heavily populated areas of North Vietnam.*

— Bertrand Russell

**Resource 12B**

Bertrand Russell, *War Crimes in Vietnam* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967) 134.



**Resource 12C**

*American women in Hanoi, 1967. Photograph. Associated Press, 392067023313*



**Resource 13A**

*The beginning of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, April 15, 1967. Photograph. Courtesy of Vietnam Veterans Against the War*



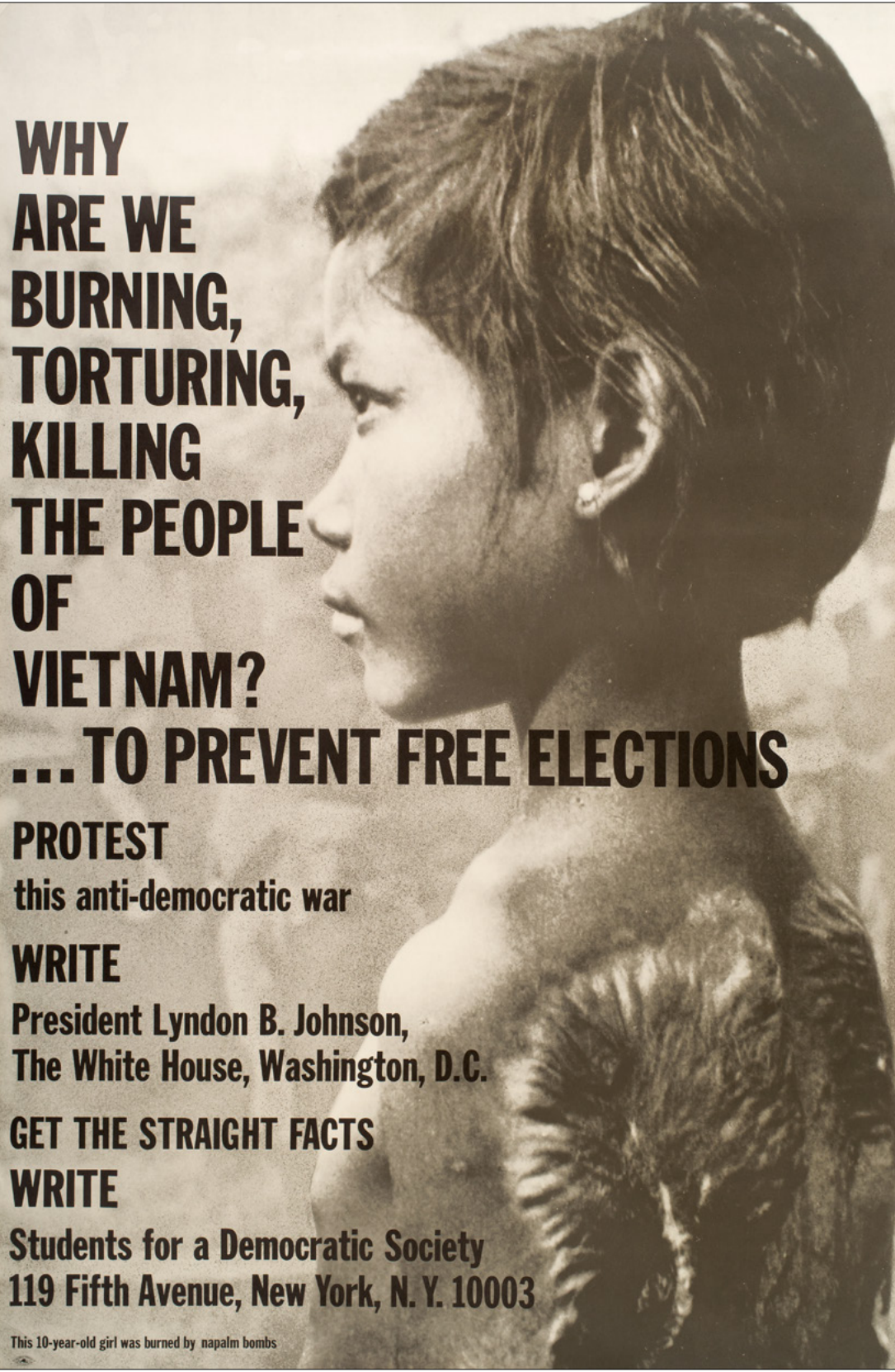
**Resource 13B**

*Vietnam Veterans Against the War march in San Francisco, 1972. Photograph. Swarthmore College Peace Collection*



**Resource 14A**

Student protesters marching down Langdon Street at UW-Madison, 1966. Photograph. University of Wisconsin Archives



**WHY  
ARE WE  
BURNING,  
TORTURING,  
KILLING  
THE PEOPLE  
OF  
VIETNAM?  
... TO PREVENT FREE ELECTIONS**

**PROTEST**

this anti-democratic war

**WRITE**

President Lyndon B. Johnson,  
The White House, Washington, D.C.

**GET THE STRAIGHT FACTS**

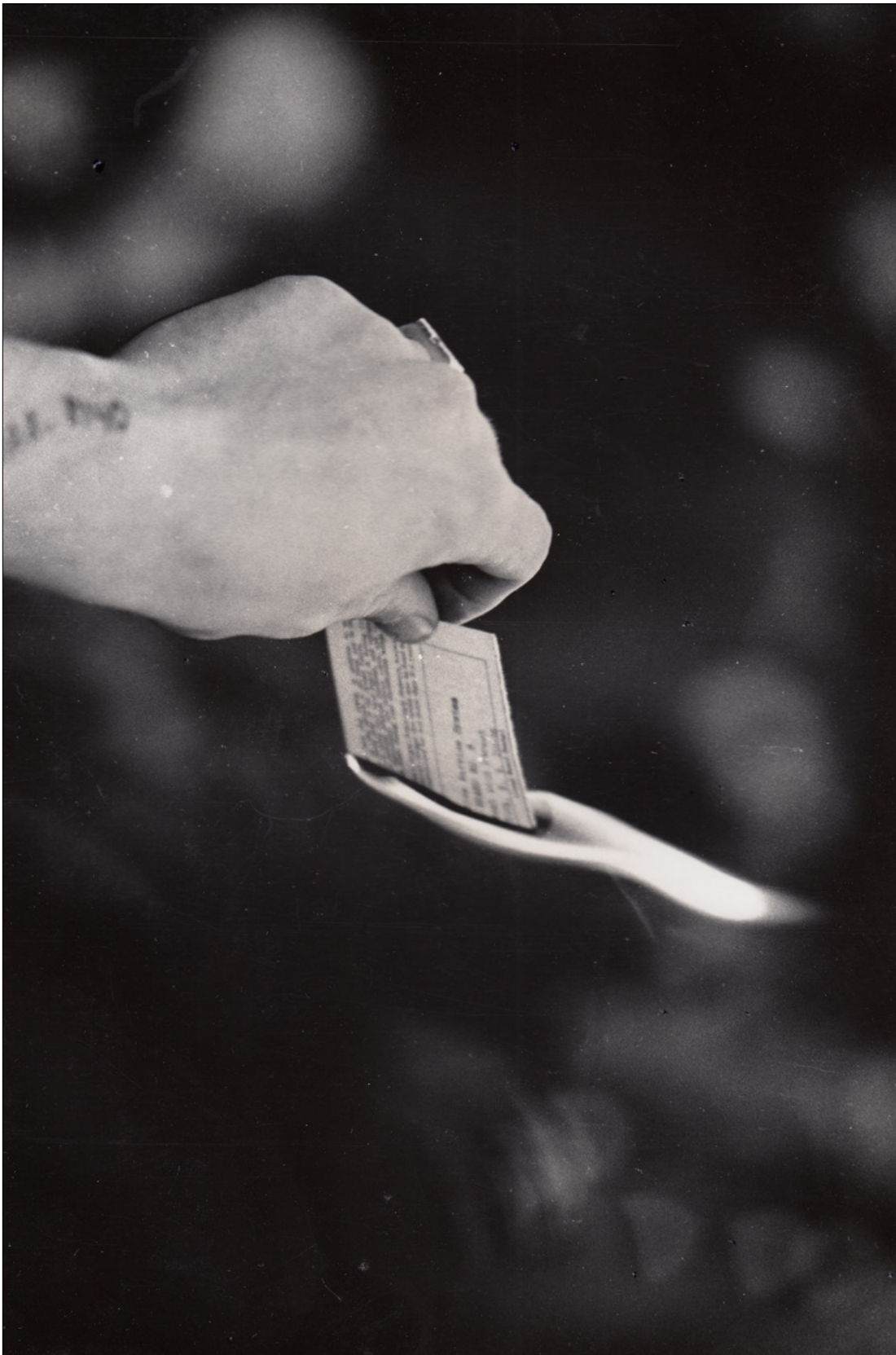
**WRITE**

Students for a Democratic Society  
119 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10003

This 10-year-old girl was burned by napalm bombs

**Resource 14B**

*Students for a Democratic Society poster, 1965. New-York Historical Society Library*



**Resource 14C**

*Draft-card burning at the Pentagon, 1967. Photograph. Swarthmore College Peace Collection*



**Life Story: Ralph Johnson**

*Ralph Johnson (left) and Alex Colvin, 1968. Photograph. Courtesy of Alex Colvin*



**Life Story: Ralph Johnson**

*Ship's crest, USS Ralph Johnson. United States Navy*

*I don't want any damned dinbinphoo.*

—President Lyndon B. Johnson, ordering the military to hold Khe Sanh and prevent a loss akin to the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Tucker, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War*, Vol. 1, 1339.

*[T]he Tet Offensive started and Hue got overrun so we got orders to cut off the North Vietnamese supply lines so we could stop the siege of Hue. . . . [T]he battalion commander is flying around in a helicopter and he's going, "You have to charge that machine gun." The lieutenant . . . gets two guys to go with him, man, and as soon as they jumped out, all three of them got killed. . . . So everybody panics. Everybody's freaking out.*

—Bob Gabriel, 2nd Battalion of the 12th Cavalry. Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*, 299.

*On the first night of the Tet Offensive . . . there was shooting at the embassy [in Saigon. I got through to] George Jacobson, who was special assistant to the ambassador and had a house on the embassy grounds. . . . He was leaning out his second-story window. George said that VC sappers [commando infiltrators] had penetrated his house and he could hear people downstairs. There was shooting outside. . . .*

—Barry Zorthian, Director of the U.S. Public Affairs Office. Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*, 290.

*I started twenty-seven IVs one night with a flashlight. Rockets and mortars hit us several times. The guys who could dived under their beds. But some were hooked up to so many tubes they couldn't move, so you threw mattresses on top of them.*

—Diane Carlson Evans, Head Surgical Nurse, 71st Evacuation Hospital. The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, 2004.

*After Tet, it was clear there was no winning.*

—Raul, U.S. Army, Sergeant E5. Lea Ybarra, *Vietnam Veterans: Chicanos Recall the War*, 60.

#### Resource 15

*Around midnight [on the opening night of the Tet Offensive] we moved as close as possible to the American perimeter. We just wore shorts and covered our bodies with dirt for camouflage. Uniforms can snag on barbed wire so we wore as little as possible. When everyone was in position we all dug foxholes and waited. . . . [S]mall munitions teams crawled forward to place explosives under the barbed wire. . . .*

*Weeks before . . . we had crawled and cut our way through the mines and barbed wire to get a close look at the base. We drew maps of the layout, including the positions of all the bunkers and buildings so our mortar men could preplan their targets. . . . In preparing our troops, we made sure they understood the importance of fighting as close to the enemy as possible. . . . [W]e wanted to take the battle right to the enemy bunkers and grab the Americans by the belt buckle. . . .*

*We launched the attack at five A.M. First we fired a flare. That was the signal to detonate the dynamite that blasted holes in the perimeter. At the same time our mortar men and machine gunners began firing. . . . Within seconds we blew a bugle and whistles to signal our troops to advance. All four hundred of us moved forward screaming, "Attack! Attack! Attack!"*

— Tuan Van Ban

**Resource 16A**

"Tuan Van Ban." Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 301-2.



**Resource 16B**

Vo Anh Khanh, *Guerillas in the Mekong Delta prepare for the Tet Offensive*, 1968. Photograph. ©Vietnam News Agency

*To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion.*

— Walter Cronkite

**Resource 17A**

Walter Cronkite, *CBS Evening News*, February 27, 1968.



**Resource 17B**

*Walter Cronkite (holding microphone) during an interview with the commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, during the Battle of Hue City, 1968. Photograph. National Archives at College Park, MD*



**Life Story: Bella Abzug**

Dorothy Marder, *Bella Abzug in New York rallying support for George McGovern and demanding a ceasefire in Vietnam, 1972*. Photograph. Swarthmore College Peace Collection



**Resource 18A**  
*Delegates' banner reads "Bobby We Miss You," 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 460035540198*



**Resource 18B**

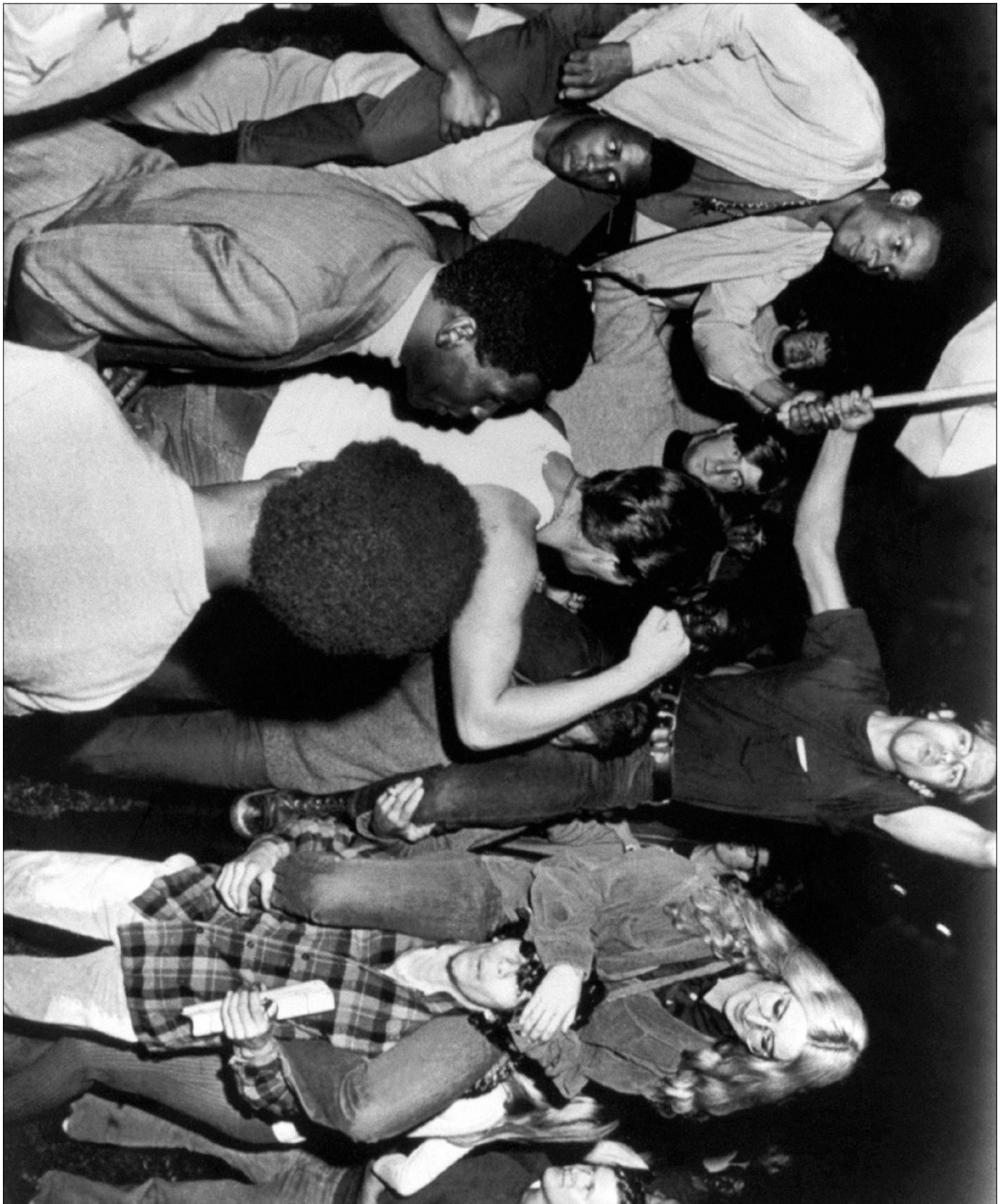
*Black crepe is attached to the New Hampshire standard, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 6808280546*





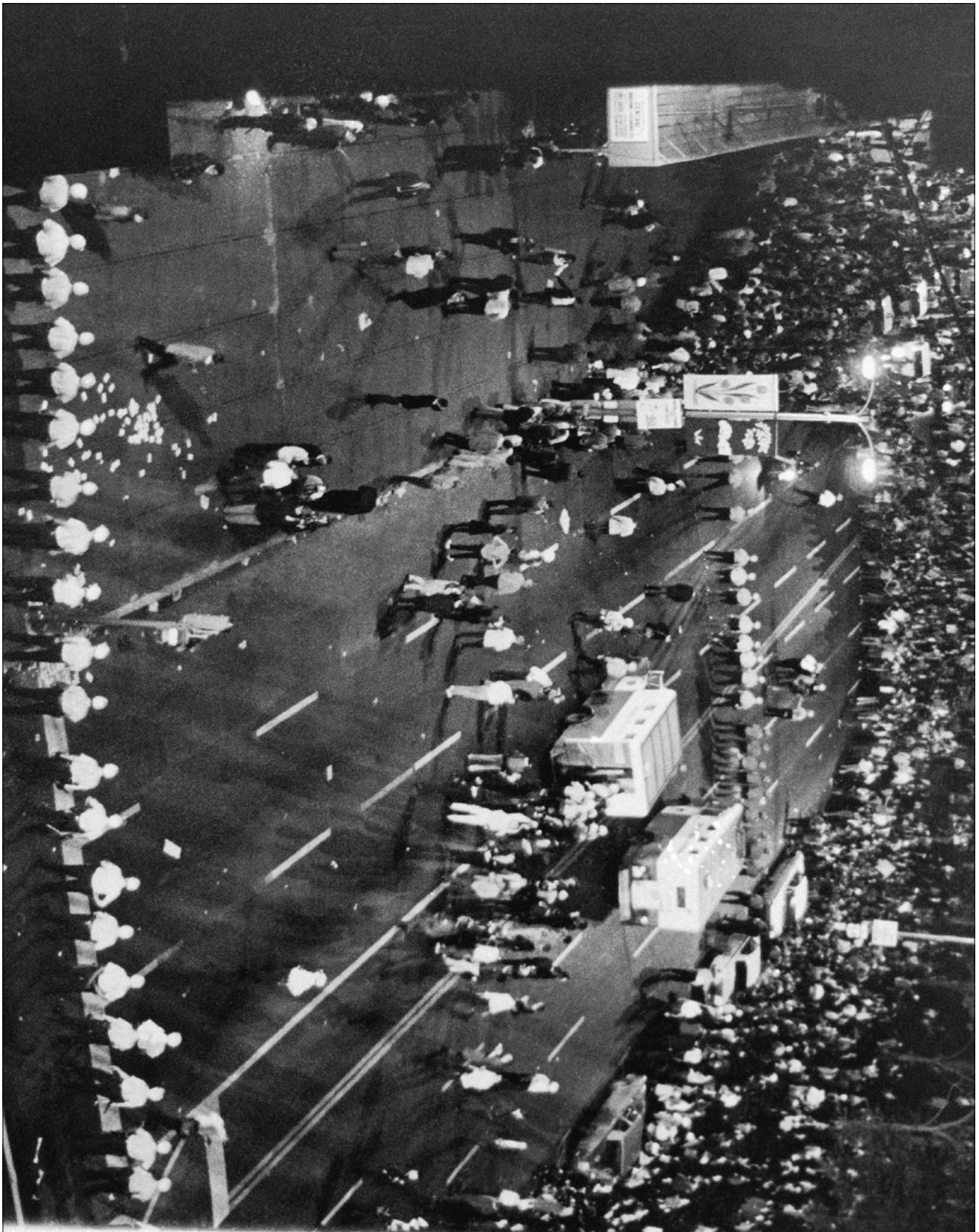
**Resource 19A**

*Chicago police officers confront a demonstrator at Grant Park, August 25, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 6808251703*



**Resource 19B**

*Protesters before being chased from Chicago's Lincoln Park, August 26, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 68082601171*



**Resource 19C**

*As demonstrators are placed into police vans, Chicago police form a battle line against thousands of others, August 28, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 6808280140*



**Resource 19D**

*Democratic convention delegates and alternates, disappointed by the nomination of Hubert Humphrey, march along Michigan Avenue, August 29, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 6808290735*



**Resource 20A**

*Richard M. Nixon campaign button, 1968. Metal and plastic. New-York Historical Society*



**Resource 20B**

*President Johnson and president-elect Nixon, November 11, 1968. Photograph. Associated Press, 681111030*

*We are going to win because this great Convention has demonstrated to the nation that the Republican Party has the leadership, the platform and the purpose that America needs. . . . We are going to win because at a time that America cries out for the unity that this Administration has destroyed, the Republican Party—after a spirited contest for its nomination for President and for Vice President—stands united before the nation tonight. . . .*

*As we look at America, we see cities enveloped in smoke and flame. We hear sirens in the night. We see Americans dying on distant battlefields abroad. We see Americans hating each other; fighting each other; killing each other at home. . . . Did American boys die in Normandy, and Korea, and in Valley Forge for this? Listen to the answer. . . . It is another voice. It is the quiet voice in the tumult and the shouting. It is the voice of the great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans—the non-shouters; the non-demonstrators. . . .*

*I . . . promise action—a new policy for peace abroad; a new policy for peace and progress and justice at home. . . . We shall begin with Vietnam. We all hope in this room that there is a chance that current negotiations may bring an honorable end to that war. And we will say nothing during this campaign that might destroy that chance. But if the war is not ended when the people choose in November, the choice will be clear. . . . And I pledge to you tonight that the first priority foreign policy objective of our next Administration will be to bring an honorable end to the war in Vietnam.*

— Richard M. Nixon

**Resource 20C**

Richard Nixon: "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida," August 8, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25968> (accessed 6-8-17 by M. Waters).



**Life Story: Robert Hull**

*Robert Hull (standing second from left) at Indiana University ROTC awards ceremony, ca. 1965. Photograph. Courtesy of Robert Hull*



**Life Story: Robert Hull**

Col. Robert R. Hull Sr., (center, kneeling) with the Atlas-Mercury booster launch team, 1960s. Photograph. Courtesy of Robert Hull

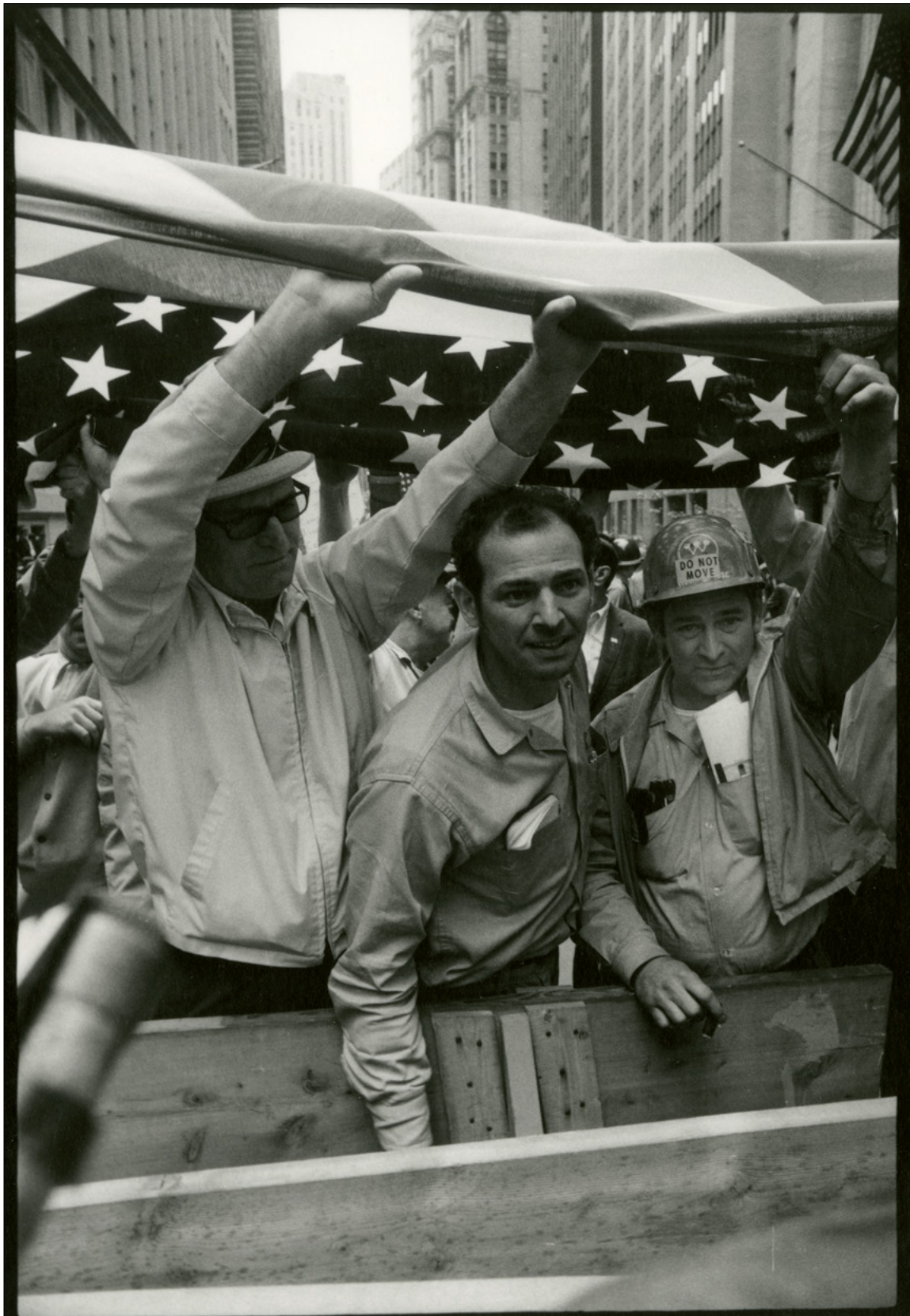
*I'm bitter. You bet . . . I'm bitter. It's people like us who give up our sons for the country. The business people . . . the college types, the professors . . . their sons, they don't end up in the swamps over there, in Vietnam. No sir. They're deferred, because they're in school. Or they get sent to safe places. Or they get out with all those letters they have from doctors. . . . Let's face it: if you have a lot of money, or if you have the right connections, you don't end up on a firing line in the jungle over there, not unless you want to. Ralph had no choice. He didn't want to die. He wanted to live. They just took him—to "defend democracy," that's what they keep on saying. . . .*

*. . . The whole thing is a mess. The sooner we get the hell out of there the better. But what bothers me about the peace crowd is that you can tell from their attitude, the way they look and what they say, that they don't really love this country. Some of them almost seem glad to have a chance to criticize us. . . . To hell with them! Let them get out, leave, if they don't like it here! My son didn't die so they can look filthy and talk filthy and insult everything we believe in and everyone in the country—me and my wife and people here on the street, and the next street, and all over.*

— The father of a fallen soldier

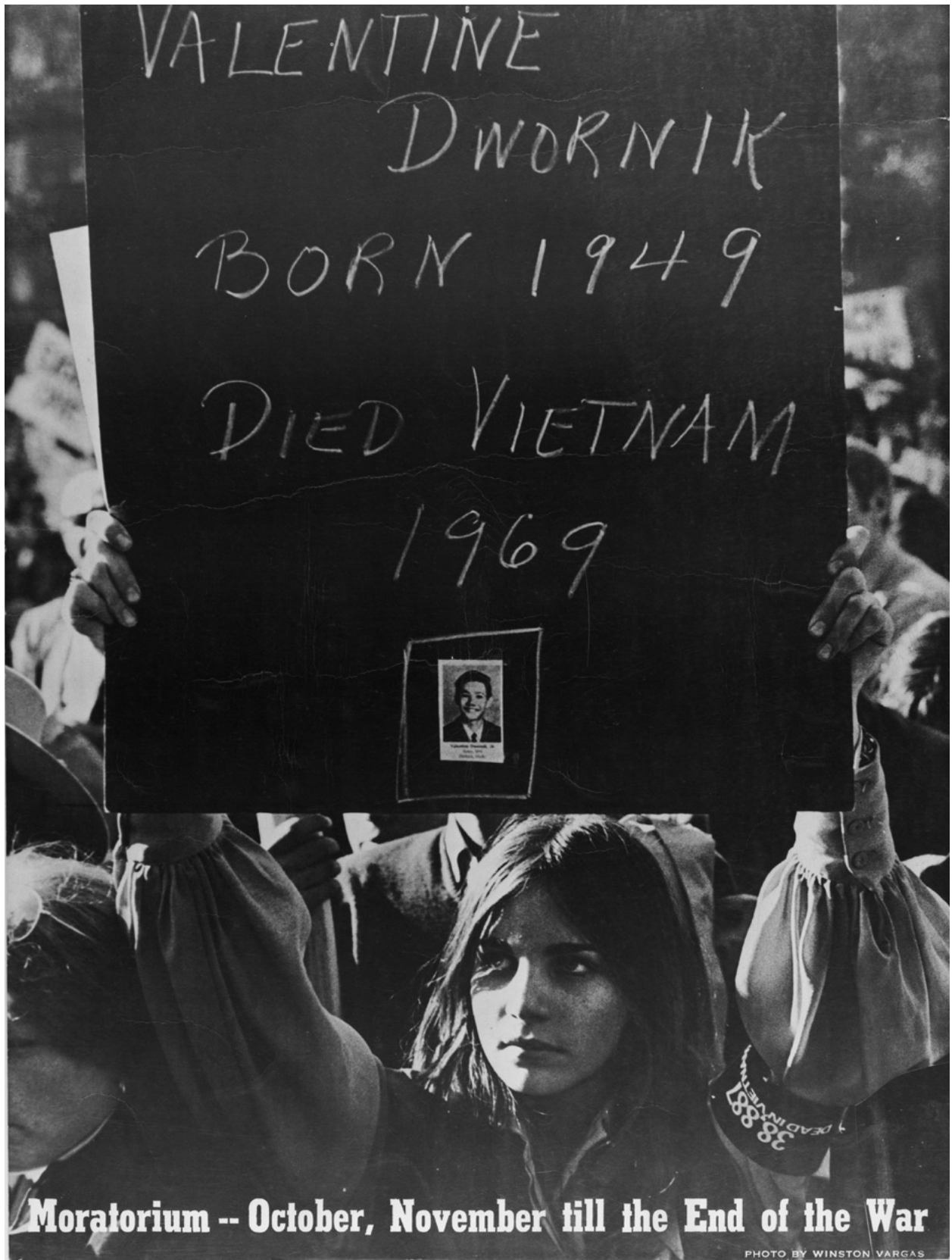
**Resource 21A**

Robert Coles, *The Middle Americans: Proud and Uncertain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971) as quoted in Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 42.



**Resource 21B**

*Hard hat demonstration, Wall Street, 1970. Photograph. ©Catherine Ursillo. All rights reserved*



**Resource 22**

*Vietnam Moratorium poster, 1969. Photograph by Winston Vargas. Library of Congress, 2016648515*



**Resource 23**

Jerry Telfer, Shelton Bunn (left), Roosevelt Alexander (center), and Mike Boland (right) listen to a radio broadcast of the draft lottery at Phelan Hall, University of San Francisco, 1969. Photograph. Courtesy of UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library



**Life Story: Nancy Sanchez**

*Nancy Sanchez with a patient, ca.1971.* Photograph. Aida Nancy Sanchez Collection, The Women's Memorial Foundation Collection



**Life Story: Nancy Sanchez**

101st Airborne troopers rush a wounded comrade to a dust-off chopper on Hamburger Hill, 1969. Photograph. ©Topfoto/The Image Works



**Resource 24A**

*Daniel Ellsberg speaking at a House panel investigating the Pentagon Papers, 1971. Photograph. Associated Press, 710728050*

**Proposed Course of Action re: Vietnam  
Draft Memorandum, March 24, 1965**

*US aims*

*70%—To avoid a humiliating US defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor).*

*20%—To keep SVN (and then adjacent) territory from Chinese hands.*

*10%—To permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life.*

*ALSO—To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used.*

*NOT—To “help a friend,” although it would be hard to stay in if asked out.*

**Resource 24B**

“Proposed Course of Action re: Vietnam,” Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs John McNaughton to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Draft Memorandum, March 24, 1965. *The Pentagon Papers*, Gravel Edition, Volume 3 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 694-702.

*The Parties participating in the Paris Conference in Viet-Nam . . . have agreed on the following provisions and undertake to respect and to implement them:*

### **Chapter I: The Vietnamese People's Fundamental Rights**

*Article 1. The United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Viet-Nam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Viet-Nam.*

### **Chapter II: Cessation of Hostilities – Withdrawal of Troops**

*Article 2. A cease-fire shall be observed throughout South Viet-Nam as of 2400 hours G.M.T. [Greenwich Mean Time], on January 27, 1973.*

*At the same hour, the United States will stop all its military activities against the territory of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. . . .*

*Article 3. (b) The armed forces of the two South Vietnamese parties shall remain in-place. . . .*

*Article 4. The United States will not continue its military involvement or intervene in the internal affairs of South Viet-Nam. . . .*

### **Chapter IV: The Exercise of the South Vietnamese People's Right to Self-Determination**

*Article 10. The two South Vietnamese parties undertake to respect the cease-fire and maintain peace in South Viet-Nam, settle all matters of contention through negotiations, and avoid all armed conflict. . . .*

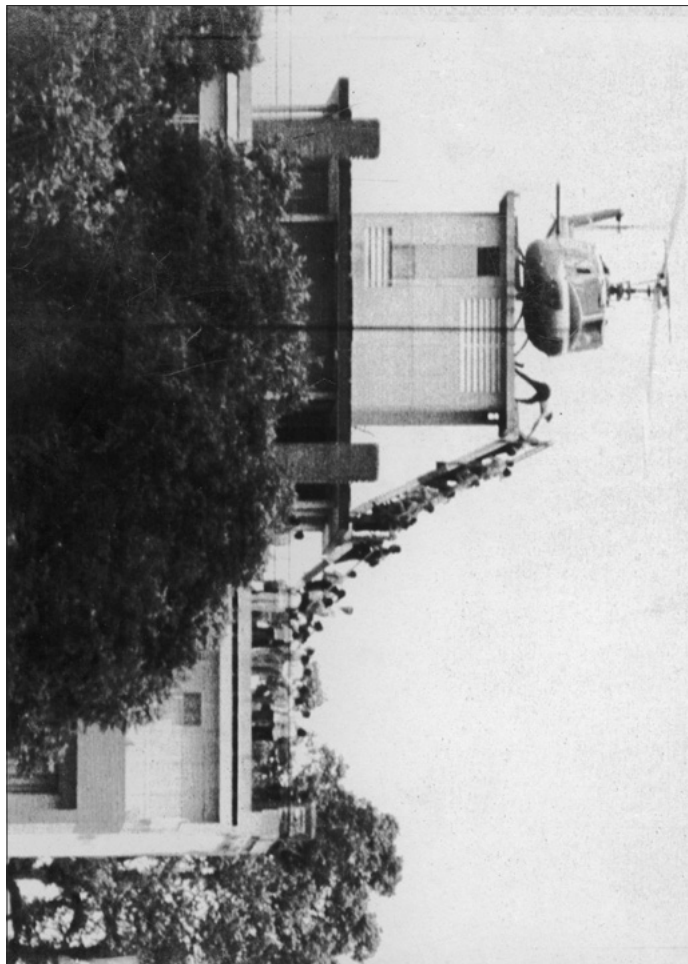
*Article 12. Immediately after the cease-fire, the two South Vietnamese parties shall hold consultations . . . to set up a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord. . . .*

### **Chapter V: The Reunification of Viet-Nam and the Relationship Between North and South Viet-Nam**

*Article 15. The reunification of Viet-Nam shall be carried out step by step through peaceful means on the basis of discussions and agreements between North and South Viet-Nam. . . .*

#### **Resource 25**

"Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring the Peace in Viet-Nam," Paris, January 27, 1973. Department of State *Bulletin*, February 12, 1973, 169–188.



**Resource 26A**

Hugh Van Es, *An Air America helicopter crew member helps evacuees at 18 Gia Long Street, Saigon, 1975*. Photograph. UPI Photo Service / Newscom



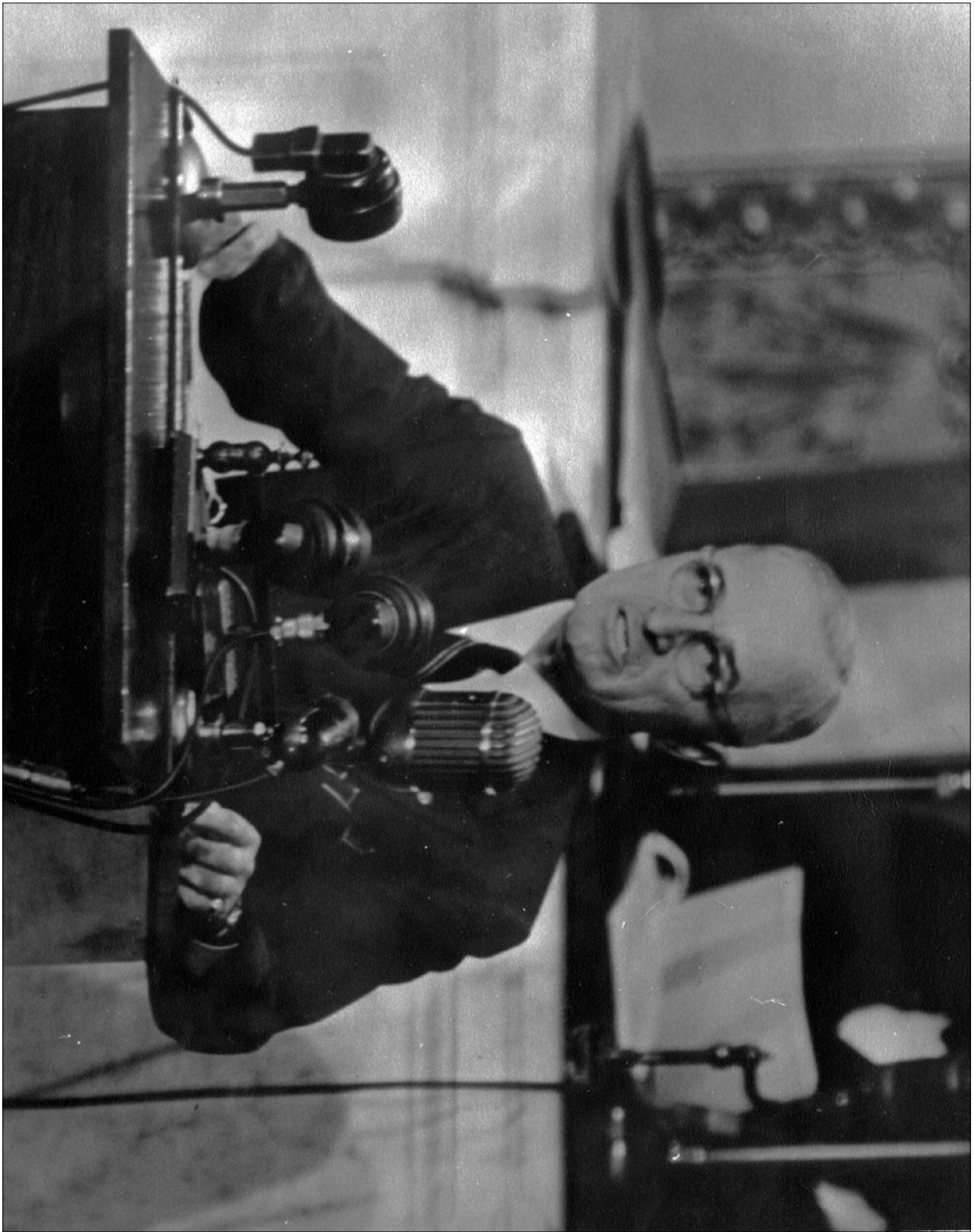
**Resource 26B**

A U.S. Marine escorts a South Vietnamese helicopter pilot and his family to the USS Hancock during the evacuation of Saigon, 1975. Photograph. National Archives at College Park, MD



**Presidential Capsules**

Abbie Rowe, *President John F. Kennedy and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson Outside the White House, 1961*. Photograph. White House Photographs, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston



**President Harry S. Truman**

*President Truman delivering Truman Doctrine address, 1947. Photograph. Copyright Unknown, Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library & Museum*



**President Dwight D. Eisenhower**

President Dwight D. Eisenhower (left) shakes hands with President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam, 1957. Photograph. Associated Press, 570508018



**President John F. Kennedy**

Abbie Rowe, *President John F. Kennedy with Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Maxwell D. Taylor, 1963.*  
Photograph. White House Photographs, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston



**President Lyndon B. Johnson**

Yoichi Okamoto, *President Lyndon B. Johnson meeting with Joint Chiefs of Staff around picnic table on LBJ Ranch front lawn, 1964.* Photograph. LBJ Library, White House Photo Office



**President Richard M. Nixon**

*President Nixon confers Nov. 25, 1972, with Henry A. Kissinger in New York after the presidential adviser returned from a week of secret negotiations in Paris, 1972. Associated Press, 721126028*



**President Gerald R. Ford**

*Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (right) reports to President Gerald R. Ford on his tour of the Middle East and Europe at the White House in Washington, DC, 1975. Associated Press, 750219043*