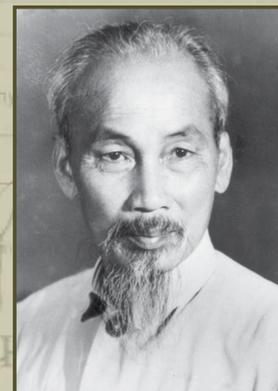




THE UNITED STATES ROAD TO WAR IN VIETNAM

1945
SEPTEMBER 2

Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese nationalist who admired the works of Marx and wanted to establish a socialist state in his country, issues a "Declaration of Independence," borrowing language from the U.S. Declaration and stating, "...we, members of the Provisional Government, representing the whole Vietnamese people, declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with France." Although France would initially acknowledge this Declaration of Independence, the stage was set for what would become a decade long conflict between France and Ho Chi Minh's communist-backed Viet Minh forces.



1950
JANUARY 14



The People's Republic of China formally recognized Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam and began sending military advisers, modern weapons and equipment to the Viet Minh. Later in January, the Soviet Union extended diplomatic recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

1950
FEBRUARY 27

President Truman signs NSC 64, a memorandum that recommended "that all practicable measures be taken" to check further communist expansion in Southeast Asia.



1950
MAY 8

United States announces that it was "according economic aid and military equipment to the associated states of Indochina and to France in order to assist them in restoring stability and permitting these states to pursue their peaceful and democratic development."

1950
SEPTEMBER 17

United States establishes the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), Indochina, in Saigon. Its primary function was to manage American military aid to and through France to the Associated States of Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) to combat communist forces.

1954
MAY 7



The conflict between French forces and the Viet Minh culminated in the battle at Dien Bien Phu. Between March 13 and May 6, 1954, CIA contracted pilots and crews made 682 airdrops to the beleaguered French forces. On May 7, French forces surrendered to the Viet Minh after a 55 day battle, marking the end to France's attempt to hold on to its colonial possession.

1954
JULY 20

The French defeat at Dien Bien Phu led to the Geneva Accords which established a cease-fire in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam and divided the country into a North and South Vietnam with a demilitarized zone along the 17th Parallel. French forces had to withdraw south of the parallel, the Viet Minh withdrew north of it. Within two years, a general election was to be held in both north and south for a single national government.



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1954
SEPTEMBER 8

Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) is formed as a military alliance to check communist expansion, and included France, Great Britain, United States, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan.



1955
NOVEMBER 1



By 1955, France had given up its military advisory responsibilities in South Vietnam, and the United States assumed the task. To appropriately focus on its new role, on November 1 the United States redesignated MAAG, Indo-china as MAAG, Vietnam and created a MAAG, Cambodia. MAAG, Vietnam then became the main conduit for American military assistance to South Vietnam and the organization responsible for advising and training the South Vietnamese military.

1961
NOVEMBER 11

In the face of South Vietnam's failure to defeat the communist insurgency and the increasing possibility that the insurgency might succeed, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara recommend to President John F. Kennedy, "to commit ourselves to the objective of preventing the fall of South Viet-Nam to Communism and that, in so doing so, ...recognize that...the United States and other SEATO forces may be necessary to achieve this objective."



1961
NOVEMBER 22

President Kennedy substantially increased the level of U.S. military assistance to Vietnam. National Security Action Memorandum 111, dated November 22, stated that: "The U.S. Government is prepared to join the Viet-Nam Government in a sharply increased joint effort to avoid a further deterioration in the situation in South Viet Nam."

1961
DECEMBER 11



Kennedy's decision resulted in sending to South Vietnam the USNS Core with men and materiel aboard (32 Vertol H-21C Shawnee helicopters and 400 air and ground crewmen to operate and maintain them). Less than two weeks later, the helicopters, flown by U.S. pilots, would provide combat support in an operation west of Saigon.

1962
FEBRUARY 8

Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) is created and commanded by General Paul D. Harkins. Henceforth, MACV directed the conduct of the war and supervised Military Assistance and Advisory Group-Vietnam.





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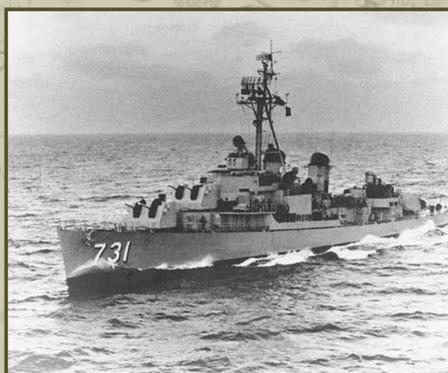
1963
NOVEMBER 22

President Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as President, following the assassination of President Kennedy. U.S. policy vis-a-vis Vietnam would change dramatically under Johnson's Administration.



1964
AUGUST 7

On August 2, 1964, North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the USS Maddox, a Navy destroyer, off the coast of North Vietnam. Two days later, a second attack was reported on another destroyer, although it is now accepted that the second attack did not occur. In the wake of these attacks, President Lyndon Johnson presented a resolution to Congress, which voted overwhelmingly in favor on August 7. The Tonkin Gulf Resolution stated that "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."



1965
MARCH 2

U.S. military aircraft begin attacking targets throughout North Vietnam in the strategic bombing campaign—Operation ROLLING THUNDER.



1965
MARCH 8

As the situation deteriorated in South Vietnam and the United States ramped up its air war activities there, the Da Nang air base in northern South Vietnam became both significant to those activities and vulnerable to attack by communist insurgents, the Viet Cong. To defend the air base, but specifically not to carry out offensive operations against the Viet Cong, President Johnson authorized the landing of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, about 5,000 strong, at Da Nang on March 8.



1965
JULY 28

By May 1965, the situation had so deteriorated in South Vietnam that General William C. Westmoreland concluded that American combat troops had to enter the conflict as combatants, or else South Vietnam would collapse within six months. Johnson announced his decision at a press conference on July 28: "We will not surrender and we will not retreat...we are going to continue to persist, if persist we must, until death and desolation have led to the same [peace] conference table where others could now join us at a much smaller cost." On the same day he ordered the 1st Cavalry Division, Airmobile to Vietnam, with more units to follow. The United States was now fully committed.



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