

POST WORLD WAR II / PRE-AMERICAN WAR VIETNAM

1945

Ho Chi Minh Creates Provisional Government

Following the surrender of Japan to Allied forces, Ho Chi Minh and his People's Congress create the National Liberation Committee of Vietnam to form a provisional government. Japan transfers all power to Ho's Vietminh.

Ho declares independence of Vietnam

First American Dies in Vietnam

Lt. Col. A. Peter Dewey, head of American OSS mission, was killed by Vietminh troops while driving a jeep to the airport. Reports later indicated that his death was due to a case of mistaken identity -- he had been mistaken for a Frenchman.

Roosevelt Dies

US Drops Atomic Bombs on Japan

Making good on his threat to unleash "a rain of ruin the like of which has never been seen on earth," President Harry Truman authorizes the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan -- one on Hiroshima on August 6, and a second on Nagasaki on August 9. The Japanese surrender within days.

1946

French and Vietminh Reach Accord

France recognizes Vietnam as a "free state" within the French Union. French troops replace Chinese in the North.

Negotiations between Vietnamese and French breakdown

Indochina War Begins

Following months of steadily deteriorating relations, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam launches its first concerted attack against the French.

1947

Vietminh move North of Hanoi

Valluy Fails to Defeat Vietminh

French General Etienne Valluy attempts, and fails, to wipe out the Vietminh in one stroke.

Marshall Plan Announced

Speaking at Harvard commencement exercises, Secretary of State George C. Marshall lays out the details of a Truman Administration plan to assist Europe in rebuilding in the aftermath of World War II.

1948

Elysee Agreement Signed

Bao Dai and President Vincent Auriol of France sign the Elysee Agreement. As part of the agreement the French pledge to assist in the building of a national anti-Communist army.

1950

Chinese & Soviets offer Vietminh weapons

US Pledges \$15M to Aid French

The United States sends \$15 million dollars in military aid to the French for the war in Indochina. Included in the aid package is a military mission and military advisors.

Truman Commits US American Troops to Korea

When Communist forces from North Korea invade the Republic of South Korea on June 25, President Truman appeals to the United Nations to take action. The UN quickly brands North Korea the aggressor, and Truman follows up by sending US air and naval support to Korea immediately thereafter.

1951

Ho Chi Minh creates Workers Party

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1953

France grants Laos full independence

Vietminh forces push into Laos

Rosenbergs Executed for Treason

Battle of Dienbienphu

A force of 40,000 heavily armed Vietminh lay siege to the French garrison at Dienbienphu. Using Chinese artillery to shell the airstrip, the Vietminh make it impossible for French supplies to arrive by air. It soon becomes clear that the French have met their match.

Geneva Convention Begins

Delegates from nine nations convene in Geneva to start negotiations that will lead to the end of hostilities in Indochina. The idea of partitioning Vietnam is first explored at this forum. Vietminh General Ta Quang Buu and French General Henri Delteil sign the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam. As part of the agreement, a provisional demarcation line is drawn at the 17th parallel which will divide Vietnam until nationwide elections are held in 1956. The United States does not accept the agreement, neither does the government of Bao Dai.

Eisenhower Cites "Domino Theory" Regarding Southeast Asia

Responding to the defeat of the French by the Vietminh at Dienbienphu, President Eisenhower outlines the Domino Theory: "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."

1955

Diem Urged to Negotiate with North

Diem refuses to accept the Geneva accords and refuses to participate in National elections. China and Soviet Union pledge support to Hanoi. Britain, France, and United States covertly urge Diem to respect Geneva accords and conduct discussions with the North.

Diem Becomes President of Republic of Vietnam

Diem defeats Bao Dai in rigged election and proclaims himself President of Republic of Vietnam.

1956

US Training South Vietnamese

The US Military Assistance Advisor Group (MAAG) assumes responsibility, from French, for training South Vietnamese forces.

Election Deadline Passes

Deadline for nationwide elections set at Geneva Convention passes. No elections are held.

1957

Communist Insurgency into South Vietnam

Communist insurgent activity in South Vietnam begins. Guerrillas assassinate more than 400 South Vietnamese officials. Thirty-seven armed companies are organized along the Mekong Delta.

Terrorist Bombings Rock Saigon

Thirteen Americans working for MAAG and US Information Service are wounded in terrorist bombings in Saigon.

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1958

Weapons Moving Along Ho Chi Minh Trail

North Vietnam forms Group 559 to begin infiltrating cadres and weapons into South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Trail will become a strategic target for future military attacks.



(1959 Ho Chi Minh Trail)

1960

Vietcong formed

Soviets Shoot Down US Spy Plane, Capture Pilot

On the eve of a US-Soviet summit, U2 pilot Francis Gary Powers is shot down while flying a spy mission over the Soviet Union. Powers is taken prisoner, the Eisenhower administration is forced to own up to the mission, and Khrushchev cancels the summit.

Kennedy elected President of the United States

1961

Battle of Kienhoa Province

400 guerillas attack village in Kienhoa Province, and are defeated by South Vietnamese troops.

Vice President Johnson Tours Saigon

During a tour of Asian countries, Vice President Lyndon Johnson visits Diem in Saigon. Johnson assures Diem that he is crucial to US objectives in Vietnam and calls him "the Churchill of Asia."

Kennedy Authorizes Green Berets

President Kennedy authorizes "Green Berets," -- a Special Forces operation activated at Fort Bragg, NC. The Special Forces will specialize in counterinsurgency.

Bay of Pigs Debacle

A plot to invade Cuba and overthrow Fidel Castro goes miserably wrong when air support at the Bay of Pigs fails to materialize. Kennedy's leadership skills are called into question, and Kennedy himself develops doubts about heeding the advice of the military.

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Mansfield Voices Doubt on Vietnam Policy

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield reports back to JFK from Saigon his opinion that Diem has wasted the two billion dollars America had spent there.

Operation Ranchhand

The goal of Ranchhand is to clear vegetation alongside highways, making it more difficult for the Vietcong to conceal themselves for ambushes. As the war continues, the scope of Ranchhand increases. Vast tracts of forest are sprayed with "Agent Orange," an herbicide containing the deadly chemical Dioxin. Guerrilla trails and base areas are exposed, and crops that might feed Vietcong units are destroyed.

US-Soviet Showdown Over Cuban Missile Crisis

Photos taken from a US spy plane reveal the Soviets placing offensive missiles on Cuban soil. Sensing a direct challenge to US resolve, Kennedy orders a naval quarantine around Cuba to prevent the Soviets from delivering additional missiles.

1963

Battle of Ap Bac

Vietcong units defeat South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) in Battle of Ap Bac

Buddhists Protest Against Diem

Tensions between Buddhists and the Diem government are further strained as Diem, a Catholic, removes Buddhists from several key government positions and replaces them with Catholics. Buddhist monks protest Diem's intolerance for other religions and the measures he takes to silence them. In a show of protest, Buddhist monks start setting themselves on fire in public places.

Diem Overthrown, Murdered

With tacit approval of the United States, operatives within the South Vietnamese military overthrow Diem. He and his brother Nhu are shot and killed in the aftermath.

Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* published in U.S.

President Kennedy Assassinated in Dallas

Kennedy's death meant that the problem of how to proceed in Vietnam fell squarely into the lap of his vice president, Lyndon Johnson.

1964

General Nguyen Khanh Seizes Power in Saigon

In a bloodless coup, General Nguyen Khanh seizes power in Saigon. South Vietnam junta leader, Major General Duong Van Minh, is placed under house arrest, but is allowed to remain as a figurehead chief-of-state.

April - June 1964

American air power in Southeast Asia is massively reinforced. Two aircraft carriers arrive off the Vietnamese coast prompted by a North Vietnamese offensive in Laos.

July 30, 1964

On this night, South Vietnamese commandos attack two small North Vietnamese islands in the Gulf of Tonkin. The U.S. destroyer Maddox, an electronic spy ship, is 123 miles south with orders to electronically simulate an air attack to draw North Vietnamese boats away from the commandos.

August 4, 1964

The captain of the U.S.S. Maddox reports that his vessel has been fired on and that an attack is imminent. Though he later says that no attack took place, six hours after the initial report, a retaliation against North Vietnam is ordered by President Johnson. American jets bomb two naval bases, and destroy a major oil facility. Two U.S. planes are downed in the attack.

August 7, 1964

The U.S. congress passes the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, giving President Johnson the power to take whatever actions he sees necessary to defend Southeast Asia.