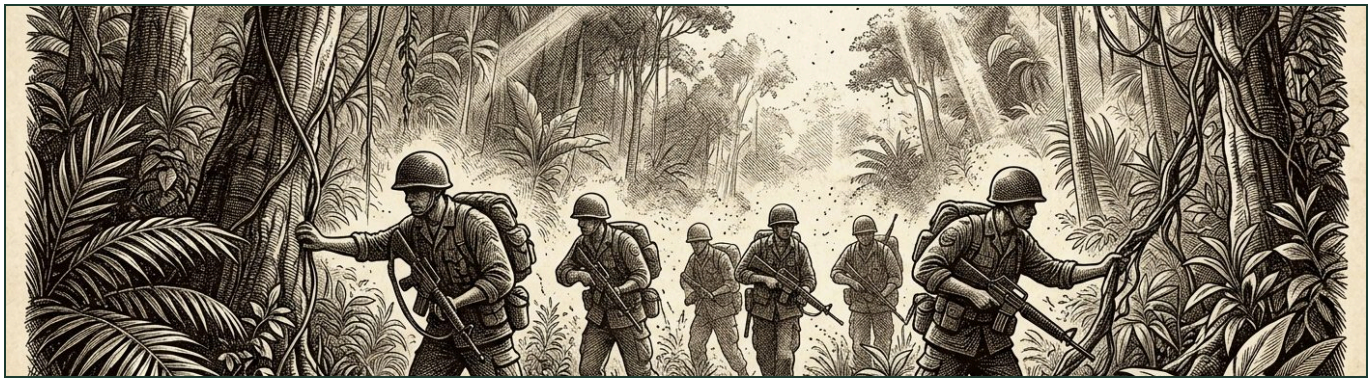


1954 – 1975

Vietnam War Timeline

The Vietnam War was a long and deeply divisive conflict in which the United States spent two decades trying to prevent a communist takeover of South Vietnam – and ultimately failed.

1954 — Vietnam Divided

After France is defeated at Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam is temporarily divided at the 17th parallel into communist North Vietnam and non-communist South Vietnam.

> **Why it mattered:** *The division set the stage for a civil war — and for the United States to replace France in trying to prevent a communist takeover of the south.*

1955 — US Advisors Arrive

President Eisenhower sends American military advisors to help train South Vietnam's army.

> **Why it mattered:** *US involvement began small but the commitment to keeping South Vietnam non-communist would grow steadily over the next decade into a full-scale war.*

1964 — Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

After reported attacks on US Navy ships in the Gulf of Tonkin, Congress passes a resolution giving President Johnson sweeping authority to escalate military action in Vietnam.

> **Why it mattered:** *The resolution became the legal basis for sending hundreds of thousands of US troops to Vietnam without a formal declaration of war.*

1965 — First US Combat Troops

President Johnson sends the first US combat troops to Vietnam; by year's end, nearly 200,000 American soldiers are in the country.

> **Why it mattered:** *The US was now fighting the war directly, not just advising, and American casualties began to mount alongside South Vietnamese ones.*

Vietnam War Timeline *continued*

1968 — **Tet Offensive**

North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces launch a massive surprise attack on more than 100 South Vietnamese cities during the Tet holiday.

> **Why it mattered:** *Though US forces repelled the attacks, the scale of the offensive shocked Americans who had been told the war was nearly won — and decisively turned public opinion against the war.*

1969 — **Vietnamization**

President Nixon begins withdrawing US troops and shifting the fighting to South Vietnamese forces, a policy he calls Vietnamization.

> **Why it mattered:** *Vietnamization acknowledged the US could not win militarily and began the long withdrawal — but the war continued for six more years.*

1970 — **Kent State Shootings**

National Guard soldiers kill four students during an antiwar protest at Kent State University in Ohio.

> **Why it mattered:** *Kent State intensified the antiwar movement and deepened the painful divide at home — support for continued US involvement collapsed further.*

1973 — **Paris Peace Accords**

The United States and North Vietnam sign a peace agreement; US combat troops withdraw from Vietnam.

> **Why it mattered:** *The accords ended direct US military involvement, but fighting between North and South Vietnam continued almost immediately.*

1974 — **South Vietnam Weakens**

With US troops gone and Congress cutting military aid, South Vietnam struggles to hold off North Vietnamese advances.

> **Why it mattered:** *Without American support, South Vietnam's government and military steadily weakened — the final collapse was approaching.*

1975 — **Fall of Saigon**

North Vietnamese forces capture Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, on April 30; the last Americans are evacuated by helicopter from the US embassy roof.

> **Why it mattered:** *The fall of Saigon ended the war with a complete North Vietnamese victory. Vietnam was reunified under communist rule, and more than 58,000 Americans had died in the conflict.*