

The land of vietnam: advantages and disadvantages to the war



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The Land and Climate of Vietnam gave many disadvantages and advantages to the war. Due to the nature of Vietnam, climate and land was an important aspect to the war. The complexity of Vietnam made it hard for the Americans to understand the land. That made them change their tactics. It proved to be a problem for Americans.

Vietnam forms the eastern side of the Indochinese peninsula. The country extends some twelve hundred miles south from the China frontier to the Gulf of Thailand and covers an area somewhat larger than California (Doyle and Lipsman). There are small pockets of desert in Vietnam, but half of the country is jungle. And nearly four-fifths of the land is covered by trees and tropical vegetation. Vietnam has been compared to two rice baskets balanced on either end of a bamboo carrying pole (Doyle and Lipsman). The "rice baskets" are deltas of the Red River in the north and the Mekong River in the south. A delta is a plain formed by soil deposited near a river's mouth as it flows into the sea. The "bamboo pole" is the Annamite Chain, a mountain range that is steep and rugged (Doyle and Lipsman 37). Understanding the land of Vietnam is important as to the animal life.

The animals in Vietnam caused worry to everyone. There were thirty-one types of snakes in Vietnam. Most of the snakes were extremely poisonous. In fact, only two of the thirty-one types of snakes were not poisonous. The green bamboo Viper, for example, is the size of an American garter snake (Lehrack). Its bite will paralyze a healthy man in two minutes and kill him in five minutes. It proved to be a huge problem in Vietnam, as many soldiers died from snakes. G. I.'s referred to the bamboo viper as a "two step Charlie" because after being bitten by one, the unlucky G. I. supposedly took two

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steps and then fell over dead (Lehrack). But it was not all animals; some were insects. The mosquitos were heavy in Vietnam, especially at night. Mosquitos carried malaria, the most common of South Vietnam's many diseases. According to author expert Lehrack,

“ As spring became summer, a serious problem arose with malaria. Between June and September, when the battalion moved to Cam Lo, 206 of its members contracted the disease. Many others came down with FUO, fever of unknown origin. There were times when this and other diseases removed more Marines from the ranks of the able-bodied than did the enemy” (Lehrack).

Wild tigers and leopards inhabited the jungles of South Vietnam. Large cats occasionally attacked soldiers, but the number of incidents was low. As Marine Lee Ashburn recalled,

“ One of the more bizarre episodes of the war involved wildlife and U. S Marines (Lehrack). In April 1967, Corporal David Schwirian, a squad leader from Captain Ripley's Lima Company, was manning an ambush site north of Route 9 in the middle of the night when a large tiger pounced on him. The big cat pinned the corporal's weapon hand to the ground by standing on it and began tearing big chunks of flesh from his other arm and shoulder...The wound was serious enough to end Corporal Schwirian's tour in Vietnam. The tiger escaped and it, or one like it, claimed another victim about a year later, when a Marine from another battalion was killed by a tiger within a few hundred meters of the spot where Corporal Schwirian had been attacked” (Lehrack).

Both animals and climate had negative impacts to the war.

The extreme climate in Vietnam shows how unique the land is. Between May and October, the summer monsoon blows from the Southwest off the Indian Ocean. This monsoon brings tremendous heat and typhoons along with heavy rains. Temperatures of over a hundred degrees are normal in Vietnam. As soldiers walked down the stairs, sweat seeped from every pore of their bodies (Marrin). Temperature soar to 115 degrees Fahrenheit in the sun, causing the air to shimmer. “ The place smelled like an old urinal. Sweaty, stale and dank. All the nasty smells you can imagine,” a soldier wrote (Marrin 122).

The soldiers of Vietnam had many land and climate advantages over United States. The Vietnamese knew their land and made hideouts. But when the American’s were exploring Vietnam, they discovered many obstacles. At first, they crossed flooded rice paddies through waist-deep mud. The mud sucks at their boots, nearly pulling them off as they lift their feet. “ Move your feet, the body will follow,” the sergeant said (Marrin 134). After several hours of this, they reach the edge of the jungle. Indeed, the men have stepped into a green hell. The jungle is so thick that they must cut away the brush with a machete. Men trip on roots, fall, and lie panting under their heavy packs. Vietnam’s land shows how difficult it was for U. S soldiers to adapt.

Americans had very little advantages over Vietnam. First off, the U. S. provided more governmental funding towards the military and artillery alike. They used that money to build different weapons to combat the Vietnamese.

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For example, the flamethrower, was a destructive weapon that were used to destroy forts, bunkers, and vehicles. These flamethrowers project a stream of flammable liquid and allow soldiers to control a stream of fire. They were also used to inflict psychological terror on enemy soldiers who were terrified of being burned alive. Also, the M16 was an advanced rifle for the. It proved to be a game changer as U. S. soldiers were inexperienced going into the war.

The topics I explained shows how the land of Vietnam gives advantages and disadvantages to the war. The Americans had a troubled time adapting to the climate but eventually did. The Vietnamese were ready at their homeland but fell short because of money. Climate proves once again to be an important aspect the outcome of the Vietnam War.

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