

Vietnam war

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Vietnam War The Vietnam War was a military struggle starting in 1959 and ending in 1975. It began as an attempt by the Vietcong (Communist Guerrillas) to overthrow the Southern Vietnam Government. This research paper will discuss the Vietnam War, US involvement in this war, and significant battles. Following the surrender of Japan to the Allies in August 1945, Vietminh guerrillas seized the capital city of Hanoi and forced the abdication of Emperor Bao Dai. On September 2 they declared Vietnam to be independent and announced the creation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, commonly called North Vietnam, with Ho Chi Minh as president. France officially recognized the new state, but the subsequent inability of the Vietminh and France to reach satisfactory political and economic agreements led to armed conflict beginning in December 1946. " Northern Vietnam was determined to gain it's freedom" (Davis 12). With French backing Bao Dai set up the state of Vietnam, commonly called South Vietnam, on July 1, 1949, and established a new capital at Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City). " Where as the Southern Vietnam government seemed content to be a sort of a colony" (Davis 12). The following year, the U. S. officially recognized the Saigon government, and to assist it. President Harry S. Truman dispatched a military assistance advisory group to train South Vietnam in the use of U. S. weapons. In April 1961, a treaty of amity and economic relations was signed with South Vietnam, and in December, President John F. Kennedy pledged to help South Vietnam maintain its independence. Subsequently, U. S. economic and military assistance to the Diem government increased significantly. In December 1961, the first U. S. troops, consisting of 400 uniformed army personnel, arrived in Saigon in order to operate two

helicopter companies; the U. S. proclaimed, however, that the troops were not combat units as such. A year later, U. S. military strength in Vietnam stood at 11, 200. By the end of 1965 American combat strength was nearly 200, 000. In February 1965, U. S. planes began regular bombing raids over North Vietnam. A halt was ordered in May in the hope of initiating peace talks, but when North Vietnam rejected all negotiations, the bombings were resumed. From February 1965 to the end of all-out U. S. involvement in 1973, South Vietnamese forces mainly fought against the Vietcong guerrillas. While U. S. and allied troops fought the North Vietnamese in a war of attrition marked by battles in such places as the Ia Dang Valley, Dak To, Loc Ninh, and Khe Sanh-all victories for the non-Communist forces. During his 1967-68 campaign, the North Vietnamese strategist, Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, launched the famous Tet offensive, a coordinated series of fierce attacks on more than 100 urban targets. Despite its devastating psychological effect, the campaign, which Giap hoped would be successful, failed, and Vietcong forces were ultimately driven back from most of the positions they had gained. In the fighting, North Vietnam lost 85, 000 of its best troops. In 1969, within a few months after taking office, Johnson's successor, President Richard M. Nixon, announced that 25, 000 U. S. troops would be withdrawn from Vietnam by August 1969. Another cut of 65, 000 troops was ordered by the end of the year. The program, known as Vietnamization of the war, came into effect, as President Nixon emphasized additional responsibilities of the South Vietnamese. Neither the U. S. troop reduction nor the death of North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh, on Sept. 3, served to break the stalemate in Paris; the North Vietnamese delegates insisted upon complete U. S.

withdrawal as a condition for peace. In April 1970, U. S. combat troops entered Cambodia following the occurrence there of a political coup. Within three months, the U. S. campaign in Cambodia ended, " It was as if the American military had just gone into Cambodia to waist time" (Davis 53), but air attacks on North Vietnam were renewed. By 1971 South Vietnamese forces were playing an increasing role in the war, fighting in both Cambodia and Laos as well as in South Vietnam. At this point, however, the Paris talks and the war itself were overshadowed by the presidential election in South Vietnam. The chief contestants were Nguyen Van Thieu, who was running for reelection, Vice-President Nguyen Cao Ky, and Gen. Duong Van Minh. Both Ky and Minh, after charging that the election had been rigged, withdrew, and Thieu won another 4-year term. Through the later months of 1971, American withdrawal continued so rapidly that " it seemed like there was a plague in Vietnam" (Sims 83). It coincided, however, with a new military buildup in North Vietnam, thought to be in preparation for a major drive down the Ho Chi Minh Trail into Laos and Cambodia. " You could just tell the Northern Vietnam Army was getting ready for the last great drive of the war" (Sims 85). Heavy U. S. air attacks followed throughout the Indochina war sector. On the ground, meanwhile, Vietnamese Communist forces had launched massive effective attacks against government forces in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. " The hearts and souls of the Southern soldiers were beginning to break" (Sims 90). It was feared also that Hanoi might launch a major offensive in South Vietnam's central highlands, timing the operating for the Tet observance. Casualty figures in 1971 reflected the intensification of South Vietnam's own fighting efforts against the Communists. While U. S.

deaths in Vietnam declined dramatically to 1380, compared to 4221 in 1970, the Saigon forces, on the other hand, suffered about 21, 500 dead, some in Cambodia and Laos but the majority in South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese claimed the enemy death toll to be 97, 000. " The war was over and for the first time the military forces of the United States of America wasn't sure whether it had won or lost this war, it would change America forever" (Davis 110).