



VIETNAM - Time Line

1858
French troops, with Spanish assistance, attacked the port cities of Da Nang and Saigon in Nguyen Dynasty Vietnam.

A series of French territorial gains in the subsequent years resulted in the formation of French Indochina.

1887
France establishes colonial control over Indochina. The Vietnamese region was broken up into Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina. The capital was seated in Saigon, Cochinchina. Laos entered the federation in 1893 after the French military defeated Siam (modern day Thailand).

1937
Saigon was the main transportation and commercial center for French Indochina, becoming the sixth busiest port in the entire French empire. The Trans-Indochinese railway, which connected Hanoi and Saigon, opened in 1936.

1940
Japanese troops invade Indochina.

1941
Founding of the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (Viet Minh) to fight for Vietnam's independence from French colonial rule and Japanese occupation.

1945
August: Japan surrenders to the Allies, ending World War II. The Viet Minh begin their revolution.

September: Ho Chi Minh declares the independence of Vietnam.

1946
December: The first Indochina War begins, as the Viet Minh attempt to gain independence from France.

1947
March: U.S. president Truman signs executive order creating the "Federal Employees Loyalty Program" following the breakdown of the wartime East-West alliance.

Similar loyalty reviews became established in local governments and private industries. Public opinion and rulings by the Supreme Court calms this "Red Scare" tide in late 50's and early 60's.

1950-53 Korean War
June 1950: Truman sends troops to Korea after communist forces from North Korea invade the Republic of South Korea.

July 1950: U.S. involvement in Vietnam begins, as President Truman pledges financial aid and supplies to the French.

January 1953: Dwight D. Eisenhower takes office and uses the domino theory as justification for increased aid to France.

The domino theory held that the collapse of one country in a region to communism would cause the fall of the remaining countries, like a row of dominoes.

July 1953: The Korean War ends with an armistice dividing the country into communist North Korea and democratic South Korea.

1954
May: France surrenders to the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu. The town was known for its famous opium traffic, generating 500 million French francs annually.

The area was also an extensive source of rice for the Viet Minh.

July: The Geneva Accords divide Vietnam in half, following the example of Korea. The division split Vietnam at the 17th parallel.

1956
April: Three women arrive to teach South Vietnamese nurses necessary skills for the Vietnam War.

This will begin the legacy of more than 10,000 women serving in the Vietnam War.

1959
March: The second Indochina War, known as the Vietnam War to Americans, begins as Ho Chi Minh declares a People's War to unite Vietnam.

1960
November: John F. Kennedy elected president.

December: Formation of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (Viet Cong).

1961
October: The U.S. sends helicopter units to South Vietnamese troops and becomes involved in combat operations.

1962
August: Australia sends 30 initial military advisors to support training in jungle warfare and counter-insurgency. The last Australian personnel were withdrawn in 1972.

1963
November: South Vietnamese leader Diem is overthrown in a military coup. President Kennedy assassinated; Vice President Lyndon Johnson succeeds him.

1964
August: Three North Vietnamese boats allegedly fire torpedoes at the USS Maddox, a destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin, resulting in Congress' Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

The resolution allows Johnson to wage war against North Vietnam without securing a declaration of war from Congress as stipulated in the U.S. Constitution.

1965
March: Operation Rolling Thunder begins three years of regular bombing of North Vietnam. The first U.S. combat forces arrive in Vietnam.

October - November: The U.S. wins Battle of Ia Drang Valley, the first battle of the war. Heavy casualties on both sides.

December: Number of U.S. forces in Vietnam reaches 184,300.

1966
April: American B-52's begin bombing North Vietnam.

December: Number of U.S. forces in Vietnam reaches 385,000, with slightly over 5,000 combat deaths.

1967
January: Start of Operation Cedar Falls, a major ground war effort in which U.S. and South Vietnamese forces target Vietcong bases near Saigon.

December: U.S. troop levels increase to almost 500,000, with combat deaths reaching approximately 16,000.

1968
January: Beginning of the Tet Offensive, a major show of force by North Vietnam and the Viet Cong.

February: During the Battle of Hue, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops kill more than 3,000. South Vietnamese and U.S. troops counter-attack, retaking the city.

March: Members of U.S. Infantry company kill 504 Vietnamese civilians in the My Lai Massacre. President Johnson unexpectedly announces he will not run for re-election.

April: Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated in Memphis.

May: Peace talks begin in Paris between U.S. and North Vietnamese negotiators.

August: Riots erupt at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago as antiwar protesters clash with Chicago police and National Guardsmen.

October: President Johnson announces the end of Operation Rolling Thunder, halting the bombing of North Vietnam.

December: U.S. troop levels reach 495,000, with 30,000 combat deaths to date.

1969
March: President Nixon begins Operation Menu, secret bombings of Cambodia. Nixon announces policy of Vietnamization, shifting fighting from the U.S. to the South Vietnamese army.

April: U.S. forces reach the highest level of the war, 543,400, with 33,641 Americans killed in combat.

May: Battle of Hamburger Hill, the last major mission by U.S. troops. The battle had heavy casualties and an unclear outcome, provoking a massive outcry against the war.

June: Withdrawal of 25,000 U.S. troops begins gradual reduction of forces.

September: Ho Chi Minh dies at 79.

November: Largest antiwar protest in U.S. history, as 250,000 march in Washington.

Atrocities of My Lai massacre are revealed to the American public.

December: U.S. troop levels have been decreased by 115,000 soldiers. Deaths total 40,024.

There were complaints that the process by which the system chose which young men were to be drafted was biased against the poor and the uneducated. The government decided to reduce this bias by introducing a random element into the selection process by using a lottery based on birth dates.

1970

March: Cambodia's Prince Sihanouk is ousted by a coup and joins with communist Khmer Rouge in attempt to regain power.

May: U.S. forces invade Cambodia to weaken Communist forces in the region.

This results in numerous student protests, including a demonstration at Ohio Kent State University

where National Guard troops kill four students and wound others.

June: Repeal of the 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution. U.S. troops withdraw from Cambodia.

December: U.S. troop levels fall to 280,000.

1971

March: Military court convicts Lieutenant William L. Calley for his role in the My Lai massacre. He is the only officer found guilty.

June: New York Times publishes the Pentagon Papers, classified documents revealing Vietnam policy decisions by previous White House administrations.

December: U.S. troop levels fall to 156,800.

1972

April: North Vietnam initiates the Easter Offensive. The U.S. responds by bombing Hanoi and Hai Phong Harbor.

May: To force North Vietnamese concessions at the peace talks, Nixon orders Operation Linebacker, heavy bombing of North Vietnam's military supply network and the mining of Hai Phong Harbor.

August: The last U.S. combat troops leave Vietnam.

October: U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger announces "peace is at hand," after he and North Vietnamese leader Le Duc Tho reach a tentative agreement on a cease-fire. South Vietnamese President Thieu rejects the agreement.

November: Nixon wins reelection.

December: Peace talks break off and U.S. carries out Operation Linebacker II, the most intense air attacks of the war.

1973

January: Peace talks resume and an agreement ending the war and providing for the release of prisoners of war is signed by Kissinger and Le Duc Tho.

The U.S. ends its military draft.

March: Last U.S. troops leave Vietnam. 47,244 soldiers were killed in action during the war, with 10,446 non-combat deaths.

June: Congress passes the Case-Church Amendment, prohibiting further U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia.

October: Kissinger and Le Duc Tho awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Tho declines the award, saying that "peace has not yet really been established in Vietnam."

November: Congress passes the War Powers Resolution, limiting presidential authority to send troops into combat overseas.

1974

February: Intense fighting between the Army of the Republic of Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government begins.

August: Nixon resigns following Watergate scandal. Vice President Gerald Ford becomes president.

1975

January: North Vietnamese forces take control of South Vietnam's Phuoc Long Province, with no U.S. military response.

March: North Vietnamese forces launch Ho Chi Minh Campaign.

April: Khmer Rouge captures Phnom Penh, ending five years of fighting in Cambodia and beginning the era of Pol Pot.

Nguyen Van Thieu resigns as president of the Republic of Vietnam.

The helicopter evacuation of Saigon's remaining Americans takes place a day before.

North Vietnamese forces take control of Saigon and rename it Ho Chi Minh City.

South Vietnamese President Duong Van Minh delivers an unconditional surrender to the Communists, ending the Vietnam War.

1976

July: The reunited Vietnam is named the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, with Pham Van Dong its prime minister.

1977

January: President Jimmy Carter pardons nearly 10,000 Vietnam War draft evaders.

September: Socialist Republic of Vietnam is admitted to the United Nations.

1978

May: Refugees flee Vietnam. Interconnected military conflicts such as the repressive Khmer Rouge and punitive operations from China.

December: Vietnam invades Cambodia, taking control as Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge flee to the jungle.

1979

November: Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedicated in Washington, D.C.

1980

September: Vietnam withdraws troops from Cambodia. Economic and political reforms begin transition to a market economy.

1995

July: President Clinton restores diplomatic recognition to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

1997

May: U.S. and Vietnam exchange ambassadors.

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THE FALL OF SAIGON