

Key Events of the Vietnam War

Event	Date	Location	Significance
Democratic Republic of Vietnam established	1945	Vietnam	With defeat and withdrawal of Japanese, Ho Chi Minh leads new state with 15,000 French soldiers present
Ho retreats to hills	1947	Vietnam	French seek to depose Ho who leads Viet Minh troops in opposition to French colonial presence
French suffer huge defeat as 12,000 troops surrender and withdraw from Indochina	7-May-54	Dienbienphu	Although U.S. paid 80% of French costs, Eisenhower refused to send troops to Vietnam
Geneva Accords establish temporary division of Vietnam at 17th parallel	Jul-54	Geneva, Switzerland	Vietnam is divided into two nations with Ho leading the north and Ngo Dinh Diem leading the "free" South. Promise of free elections in 1956
Diem opponents form National Liberation Front (NLF)	1960	South Vietnam	Communists and others attempt to overthrow Diem and unify Vietnam
Diem overthrown and assassinated	2-Nov-63	Saigon	With U.S. approval and support, Diem is replaced with military junta. 16,000 American military advisors in Vietnam
Gulf of Tonkin Resolution	5-Aug-64	Washington, D.C.	Following conflict between U.S. destroyers and North Vietnamese gunboats, Pres. Johnson is given authority to "prevent further aggression." Measure passes Congress 416-0 in House and 88-2 in Senate
Johnson defeats Goldwater for presidency	Nov-64	U.S.	Portrayed as peace candidate, Johnson scores huge victory with 61% of the vote
Johnson orders bombing of North Vietnam after attack at Pleiku kills 7 U.S. soldiers	Feb-65	Vietnam	In retaliation for Communist attack on U.S. unit, LBJ authorizes attack, but stops short of all-out bombing
20,000 U.S. troops sent to support South Vietnam	1-Apr-65		Violating his promises, LBJ raises U.S. troop level to 100,000 to fight Viet Cong
Tet Offensive begins	31-Jan-68	Vietnam	Viet Cong forces launch massive attack on American positions throughout Vietnam. LBJ's popularity ratings drop to 35%

My Lai Massacre	16-Mar-68	Vietnam	Lt. William Calley leads unit which kills at least 175 unarmed Vietnamese civilians. Calley is later court-martialed and convicted, though none of his superiors are charged
LBJ announces withdrawal from 1968 presidential race	31-Mar-68	White House, Washington, D.C.	Johnson announces end of bombing and calls for peace talks after embarrassing performance in New Hampshire primaries
Paris Peace talks begin	May-68	Paris	Longest war in U.S. history begins winding down
Nixon defeats Humphrey and Wallace	Nov-68	U.S.	Nixon wins with 43.4% of popular vote
U.S. begins secret bombing of North Vietnam and Cambodia	Mar-69		Nixon avoids antiwar protests by not telling Congress or people about bombings
Nixon announces withdrawal of 60,000 U.S. ground troops	Sep-69		First reduction of U.S. troops since start of war
U.S. troops enter Cambodia	Apr-70	Cambodia	Despite Nixon pledges that U.S. troops were withdrawing from Vietnam, Cambodia invasion and bombing brought huge domestic opposition
Kent State Massacre	4-May-70	Ohio	National Guard forces kill four students protesting Vietnam involvement
Congress repeals Tonkin Gulf Resolution	24-Jun-70	Washington, D.C.	In 81-10 vote, Senate repeals authorization of U.S. involvement
Laos invaded	Feb-71	Laos	U.S. and South Vietnamese forces make incursion to "protect withdrawal of U.S. forces"
Pentagon Papers released	Jun-71	New York	New York Times begins publication of secret war study
North Vietnamese troops invade South	Mar-72	Vietnam	U.S. responds by widespread bombing of North, including bombing of Hanoi and mining of Haiphong Harbor
Largest bombing of North Vietnam	17-Dec-72	North Vietnam	American B-52s begin largest bombing of war, losing 15 B-52s
Cease-fire accord achieved	27-Jan-73	Paris	All fighting to stop and American prisoners of war to be released by North Vietnam
Nixon resigns presidency	Aug-74	White House, Washington, D.C.	Under pressure from members of his own party, Nixon ceases fight over Watergate scandal

North Vietnamese forces take Saigon	30-Apr-75	Saigon, South Vietnam	Communist forces occupy South, renaming Saigon Ho Chi Minh City. U.S. troops evacuate American embassy as South Vietnamese flee
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