



VIETNAM

CONFLICT 1945 - 75



Name:

There is a huge collection of movies and documentaries on Vietnam.

Below is our recommended list - though we may only show a clip or two from each. 'Path to War' is our no.1 pick.



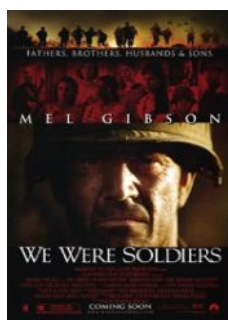
Check out our youtube channel: **GCSEHistory**

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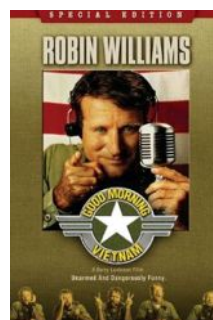
The Quiet American

A Times reporter in Vietnam in the 1950s. A love story but shows the situation in Vietnam with the French occupation



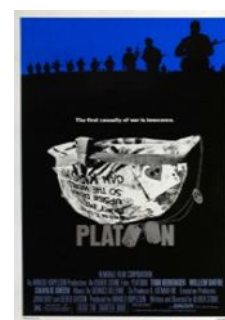
We were soldiers

The story of the first major battle of the American phase of the Vietnam War. Includes the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu



Good morning Vietnam

A new radio DJ goes to Vietnam to bring humor to Armed Forces Radio. He turns the studio on its ear and becomes wildly popular with the troops. While he is off the air, he tries to meet Vietnamese especially girls, and begins to have brushes with the real war that never appears on the radio.



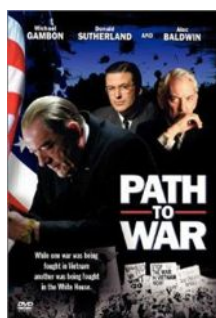
Platoon

Chris Taylor is a young, naive American who gives up college and volunteers for combat in Vietnam. Excellent portrayal of conflict between the soldiers in the platoon. And as he struggles for survival, he soon realizes he is fighting two battles, the conflict with the enemy and the conflict between the men within his platoon.



Born on the 4th July

The true story of Ron Kovic. Paralyzed in the Vietnam war, he becomes an anti-war and pro-human rights political activist after feeling betrayed by the country he fought for.



Path to War

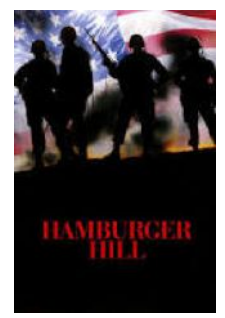
A excellent portrayal of the Johnson presidency and its spiralling descent into the Vietnam War.

Acting on often conflicting advice from his Secretary of Defence, Robert McNamara and other advisers, President Johnson finds his domestic policy agenda overtaken by the war.



Full Metal Jacket

A pragmatic U.S. Marine observes the dehumanizing effects the Vietnam War has on his fellow recruits from their brutal boot camp training to the bloody street fighting in Hue.



Hamburger Hill

A brutal and realistic film focuses on the lives of a squad of 14 U.S. Army soldiers during the brutal 10 day (May 11-20, 1969) battle for Hill 937 fortified by the North Vietnamese.

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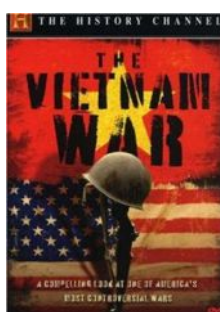
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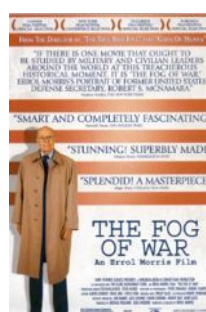
Hearts & Minds

This film recounts the history and attitudes of the opposing sides of the Vietnam War using archival news footage as well as its own film and interviews.
Excellent opposing views.



The Vietnam War

History Channel documentary covering the main aspects of the war.
Tactics, home front etc.
Good overview.



The Fog of War

Defence Sec of War Robert McNamara discusses his role under Presidents Kennedy & Johnson.



Battlefield Vietnam

Full and comprehensive coverage of the war in this 12 part series.

Websites:

Public Broadcasting Service in the USA : <http://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/>

My Lai massacre: <http://famous-trials.com/mylaicourts>

Vietnam war history: <http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/famous-american-vietnam-vets>

General war history: <http://www.historynet.com/vietnam-war>

US govt records: <https://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/military/vietnam-war.html>

Vietnam War Museum in the US: <http://www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org>

BBC timeline of events: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16568035>

USA today timeline: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/09/11/vietnam-war-timeline-u-s-involvement-over-decades/653693001/>

The struggle against France for independence, 1945-54

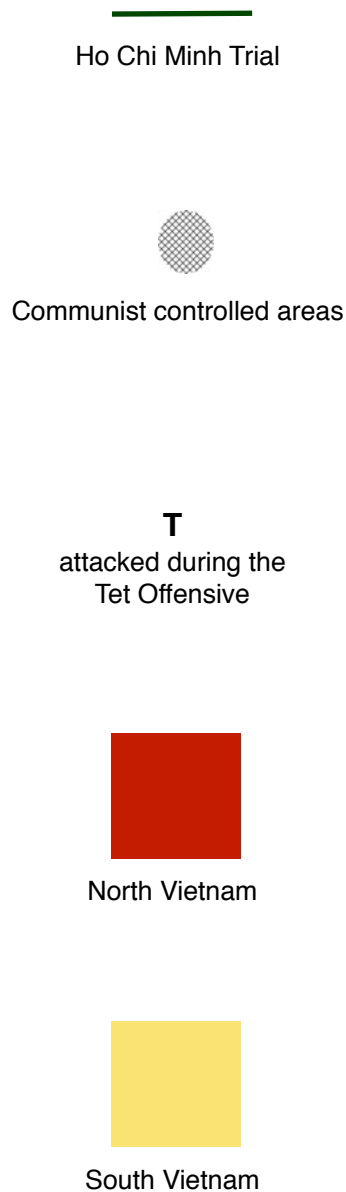
The Vietnam Conflict



Showing:

- . North/South border
- . Main US bases
- . Ho Chi Minh trail

Vietnam War map



The struggle against France for independence, 1945-54

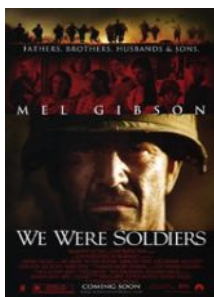
The Vietnam Conflict



The Quiet American

Life in Vietnam in the 1950s, under French occupation. Vietminh guerilla action is shown.

Additional notes



We were soldiers

The story of the first major battle of the American phase of the Vietnam War. Includes the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu



Documentaries

on

Battlefield Vietnam

Part 1:

Dien Bien Phu



Check out our
youtube channel:
GSCEHistory

The struggle against France
for independence, 1945-54

The Vietnam Conflict



1 Background

1.1

French Indo China

(Vietnam, Cambodia + Laos)
Indo China had:

. rice, corn, coal & rubber
. 1939 before WWII, Vietnam
was part of French Empire:
1940 France was defeated by
Germany in WWII

1941 France agreed that Japan
could take resources from its
colony as it was fighting China

Consequences: Vietnamese
starved as the Japanese took
rice - up to 2.5 million died

The Vietminh formed

1941 Ho Chi Minh +
Nguyen Vo Giap (communists)
set up the:

'League for the Independence of
Vietnam' a nationalist movement

Aim: to establish an independent
Vietnam (free from foreign rule
e.g. France + Japan)

Vietminh was based in South
China, but got help from the USA
(training & equipment).

They then attacked French &
Japanese using guerrilla tactics.

1945 Japanese takeover

Took control from the French,
but in Aug. surrendered to the
USA in WWII & had to withdraw
from all countries inc. Vietnam

1945 Who to rule Vietnam?

Vietminh quickly took over from
French & Japanese:

Sept. Ho Chi Minh announced
Vietnam to be independent

USA believed people should
rule themselves - not colonial
countries

1.2

French return to Vietnam

1945: Dec. 50,000 French troops
took control of the south of Vietnam.
French commander Leclerc said he
had won by March 1946.

Vietminh guerrilla

fighters disappeared
when the French arrived
& took back control when
they left an area.

Negotiations 1946

Vietminh 'controlled' the North & the
French the south. Ho went to Paris
but no agreement only a ceasefire.

**First
Indochina War****French launch attack**

1946: Nov. French troops attacked
the Vietminh in the north inc. Hanoi
The Vietminh hide in the
jungles - there was
little fighting.

1950 Cold War

Korean War,
McCarthyism,
Truman Doctrine meant
USA supporting French fight
communists e.g. Vietminh & Ho

USA sent supplies to the French
to help them defeat the Vietminh.

China

- . Communist took over in China in 1949 led by Mao Zedong
- . Mao supplied Vietminh with military equipment
- . USA scared communism would spread through Asia (domino theory)

1.3

Vietminh success

1950: Giap had 100,000 well
armed soldiers

French 100,000 soldiers + 300,000
Vietnamese BUT cover huge area.

Vietminh guerrilla tactics

Hiding in the jungles they could
hit the French whenever
they wanted.

Giap tried a big attacks in 1950
& 1951 but lost heavily against
well defended French positions.

Turning point: Dien Bien Phu

Giap was determined to win a 'big
battle'. He chose Dien Bien Phu
which defended one way into Laos.
He had 60,000 men + 200 artillery
guns. They tunnelled close to the
French position. For several weeks
the Vietminh attacked, until the
French surrendered as they could
not supply the base.

**French defeats
&
consequences****USA not help the French**

1954: France asked for US troops, but
US had just fought in Korea so was not
interested in another war.

Geneva Agreement

May 1954: France,
UK, USA, China,
Vietnam & USSR
. After DBP France
had had enough.

Agreement:

1. Vietnam divided into North & South
North = Ho Chi Minh
South = Ngo Dinh Diem
2. Elections to be held July 1956

Diem refused to accept the
agreement & USA said they would
support him (containment)

French pull out of SE Asia

For the French it was humiliating defeat
& they pulled out from the rest of the
countries in Indochina.

1a

Test yourself: The French in Vietnam

Multiple choice - circle or underline the correct answer

a

Hi Chi Minh & Giap set-up

- a. League for the Independence of Vietnam
- b. Vietnam Communist Party
- c. Geneva Agreement

b

In 1946 the Vietminh controlled

- a. All of Vietnam
- b. North Vietnam
- c. Indo-China

c

The Japanese took over from the French in

- a. 1944
- b. 1945
- c. 1946

d

The Geneva Agreement

- a. gave the communists control over Vietnam
- b. made Ho Chi Minh leader of Vietnam
- c. divided Vietnam into North & South

e

The Japanese took over from the French in

- a. 1944
- b. 1945
- c. 1946

f

After their defeat at Diem Bien Phu the French

- a. pulled out of South East Asia
- b. sent 100,000 soldiers to Vietnam
- c. joined with the USA to fight the Vintminh

g

The communists took over in China in

- a. 1945
- b. 1949
- c. 1952

h

The USA became involved in Vietnam because they believed in

- a. Ho Chi Minh
- b. Truman Doctrine
- c. Colonialism

1E

Test your knowledge & understanding: The French in Vietnam

a

Describe **two** key features of:**First Indo China War****Battle at Dien Bien Phu****The Geneva Agreement**

b

Explanation:

Why did the Vietminh form?**Why were the Vietminh were successful against the French?****Why did the French pulled out of South East Asia?**

c

Cause/consequence and judgement:

The main reason the French left Vietnam was because of their defeat at Dien Bien Phu

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

The main reason the Vietminh formed was to be a communist organisation

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

exam style questions

The struggle against France for independence, 1945-54

The Vietnam Conflict



The Quiet American

Life in Vietnam in the 1950s, under French occupation. Vietminh guerilla action is shown.

Additional notes



2

Background

Truman Doctrine

USA the policy of:

. **containment**

help those fighting communist e.g. South Vietnam

. **domino theory**

if South Vietnam becomes communist it will spread to Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma etc.

2.1

US support

. France had supported France after WWII, so this was a continuation of that

. President Eisenhower supported Diem the leader of South Vietnam (Republic of Vietnam).

. Diem was supported with USA money for supplies & military equipment + military advisors

. USSR & China was helping North Vietnam was USA had to help the south

Threat of communism

. China wanted to increase its influence in the region

. USA was worried about China's influence in the region

. US presidents did not want to seem weak by letting communism spread

. USA concerned about Japan's security, where it

2.2

Diem unpopular from the start

. **Cheated**

Diem won the election with 98% of the vote. More people voted than there were people in Saigon! He cheated & everyone knew it.

. **Catholic**

Diem was a catholic (like the French) when most Vietnamese were Buddhists - this made things difficult for Diem.

. **Land reform**

Most Vietnamese wanted land reform. They wanted land of their own to farm.

Diem was not interested in giving people their own land.

. In the North Ho Chi Minh made land reform his no.1 priority.

Life in South Vietnam

Life in South Vietnam

. Diem spent much of time hunting down Vietminh & re-educating them or executing them. (12,000+)

. No election took place (Geneva Agreement) as Diem cancelled it.

. Rich landowners made their poor tenants pay higher taxes

. Diem was making enemies of the peasants

Government

. When the French left Diem had to start from scratch.

. Govt. jobs went to family, friends and other catholics

. Diem claimed everything was democratic but really it was a dictatorship with rigged elections

2.3

Ho Chi Minh Thought:

. **Vietnam Workers Party (La Dong)**

Party had a mix of communist ideas which was called Ho Chi Minh Thought

. **Communism**

North Vietnam became communist, often romanticised

. **Land reforms**

The North is mountainous & is a difficult place to grow food - most rice grown in the south.

Large landowners had their land taken away - sometime beaten & executed (over 50,000) if the people said they had committed crimes as landlords.

Peasants were given land, then put into co-operatives. The results were good as production doubled but there were some protests over the reforms.

Life in North Vietnam

Opposition

. **Possible opponents**

. Communists got rid of any possible opponents - catholic priests, Buddhists monks, intellectuals, academics, etc

Most were sent to re-education camps - forced labour + beatings = death.

Up to 500,000 were re-educated.

Ho Chi Minh admitted that re-education may have gone too far

. **Economic growth**

With help from China & Russia North became more industrial inc. military, but was short of skilled workers eg engineers

Over 100 new factories were built, enabling it to continue with the war

2a

Test yourself: Life in North and South Vietnam

The statement is linked with either North Vietnam or South Vietnam - write North or South as the answer

	Statement	North or South
1	La Dong was formed	
2	Diem was the leader	
3	Ho Ch Minh was the leader	
4	Re-education of opponents	
5	Land reform was a priority	
6	Help from USSR & China	
7	Catholics favoured over Buddhists	
8	Land reform never really happened	
9	Ho Chi Minh was the leader	
10	Help from USA	
11	Buddhist monk burns himself, in protest against treatment of Buddhists	
12	Most of the land was in the hands of large landowners	
13	Many government jobs went to the leader's family & friends	
14	Catholic priests were arrested	
15	Some protests over land reforms	

2E

Test your knowledge & understanding: US intervention

a

Describe **two** key features of:

Life in North Vietnam before 1965

Life in South Vietnam before 1965

'Ho Chi Minh Thought'

b

Explanation:

Why did so many people follow Ho Chi Minh?

How did the Vietminh deal with opposition?

Why did people oppose Diem in South Vietnam?

c

Cause/consequence and judgement:

The main reason the South Vietnamese government was unpopular because Diem was a Catholic

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

The communist had total support in the North

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

exam style questions

The Vietnam Conflict



Check out our
youtube channel:
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Documentaries
on
Ho Chi Minh
from
BBC
History Channel

Battlefield Vietnam: Part 2 Undeclared War inc. Strategic Hamlets

Additional notes

[illegible]

3

3.1

Background

Ho Chi Minh

A teacher, sacked for not learning French - went to USA & Europe - to Versailles at the end of WWI to ask for Vietnam independence.

Founder member of French Communist Party, then to China. Returned to Vietnam to seek independence after WWII. Leader of La Dong until 1959. Was the figurehead of Vietminh until his death, but not the total leader the USA said he was.

. Known as 'Uncle Ho' to his people



June 1963; a Buddhist monk sets fire to himself, in protest against treatment of Buddhists

End of Diem

. Diem's rule was becoming more corrupt & less democratic
. The USA not longer wanted to support him

. He was anti Buddhist & had many arrested and beaten

. Many officers in the ARVN were against Diem

. JFK orders CIA help the ARVN to get rid of Diem

. 1st Nov 1963: Diem & his brother were captured then murdered

3.2

National Liberation Front (NLF)

(National Front for Liberation of the South)

. NLF (Vietcong)

Founded Dec. 1960 in the South to get people to support communists. Many people were against Diem in the south.

The South & USA called the NLF the Vietcong.

Communists & non communists joined the NLF, but was controlled by the Northern Vietminh.

The Vietminh had got rid of the French, now the NLF was aiming to remove Diem & his American supporters.

Ho Chi Minh Trail

. In 1959 a series of trails were built through Laos & Cambodia to connect North Vietnam to the south.

These trails supplied the Vietcong with everything they needed.

National Liberation Front



People's Liberation Armed Forces

. The PLAF was the military wing of the NLF

. First major attack in 1965 at two US Army bases

These attacks convinced US Pres. Johnson to send US soldiers to Vietnam.

Tet Offensive 1968

. Most famous PLAF attacks during Tet religious holiday when they attacked several towns & cities at the same time.

They lost, but their ability to attack so many places at the same time shocked the US President & people, who thought the PLAF was weak.



Ho Chi Minh
Uncle Ho as he was known was the 'father' of the nation.

3.3

South Vietnamese Army (ARVN)

. ARVN

Had 170,000 troops v 10,000 Vietcong

BUT: battle for hearts & minds not military

. Lt. Colonel Vann

US advisor Vann quit because the ARVN were so bad.

. President J F Kennedy

Kennedy using US pilots to attack NLF but kept it a secret + US helicopters took ARVN troops into battle.

Number of advisors increased.

JFK knew if advisors got killed then he would come under pressure to respond with military action.

US response to attacks



Strategic Hamlet Programme

. Diem's response

Many villages in the South were supporting the Vietcong. Diem moved the peasants to 'strategic hamlets' protected by the ARVN

. Strategic hamlets

. Peasants most of whom did not want to move had to: pay the govt. for materials to build their new houses & the barbed wire - that was given to them by the USA!

. Many peasants hated the hamlets & became NLF supporters

. By 1963 3/4 of the peasants were in strategic hamlets

3a

Test yourself: The conflicts begins for the USA

You have the answer but what is the question?

a**ANSWER:** Ho Chi Minh

Question: _____

b**ANSWER:** National Liberation Front

Question: _____

c**ANSWER:** Tet Offensive

Question: _____

d**ANSWER:** Strategic Hamlet Programme

Question: _____

e**ANSWER:** President J.F. Kennedy

Question: _____

f**ANSWER:** Ho Chi Minh Trail

Question: _____

g**ANSWER:** People's Liberation Armed Forces

Question: _____

**The struggle against France
for independence, 1945-54**

The Vietnam Conflict



3E

Test yourself: The conflicts begins for the USA**a**Describe **two** key features of:**National Liberation Front****Strategic Hamlet Programme****b**

Explanation:

Why was the NLF successful?**Why was the Ho Chi Minh trail necessary?****c**

Cause/consequence and judgement:

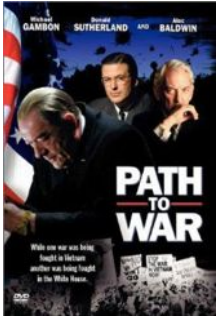
The main reason the Diem government lost support was because of its Strategic Hamlet Programme

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

The end of the Diem regime was inevitable

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

exam style questions



Path to War

Follows the Johnson Presidency focusing upon the Vietnam War.



Check out our
youtube channel:
GCSEHistory

Additional notes

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4

Background

L.B. Johnson President

Took over after JFK killed in Nov. 1963. LBJ wanted to fix problems in USA - 'Great Society'. But the situation in Vietnam was getting worse. He took advice from McNamara that winning would not be a problem. Once he committed troops - he did not want to be the first President to lose a war.



4.1

4.2

Support for South Vietnam

had supported the French before.
Needed US support to stop communists taking over

Truman Doctrine

. Containment
. Domino Theory

Reasons why the USA became involved in Vietnam

Kennedy + Johnson

wanted to be seen as
being tough on communism

US attacked

. Gulf of Tonkin 1964
. US soldiers 1965

Westmoreland

Commander of Vietnam forces in 1964. He believed 'attrition', that eventually the Vietcong would not be able to replace those soldiers killed.
Aim: attack Vietcong using superior firepower. Success at La Dong in 1965, led Westmoreland to think his strategy was winning. BUT: Vietcong now avoided big battles to limit the numbers killed. By 1968, the strategy was obviously not working. Tet Offensive showed that the Vietcong was still strong. Westmoreland was replaced in March 1968.



4.3

Steps to War for the USA

1. 1960 - 1963: Kennedy increased military advisors
from 900 to 11,000

2. 1963: Vietcong take over 40% of S.Vietnamese

3. 1963: President Johnson sends more help to stop Vietcong

Johnson not a 'war monger' but not want to be seen as soft on communism
Defence Sec. McNamara believed war was winnable

4. Aug. 1964: Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

(still debate about circumstances of incident)

US ships attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats
Johnson attacked North Vietnamese naval bases
US congress gave permission to 'take all necessary measures' in

5. March 1965: US Marines arrive

No longer called advisors but troops
US bombers start bombing North Vietnam called 'Rolling Thunder'
Thought US troops, rather than the ARVN, could defeat Vietcong

6. After 1966: Total war

Over 500,000 US soldiers in Vietnam on 12 month tours

McNamara

Sec. of Defence recommended support for South Vietnam, increased advisors from 900 to 16,000. President Johnson listened closely to McNamara, as he sent 200,000 soldiers. By 1967 he started to have doubts that USA could win the war & resigned in Nov. 1967.



4a
Vietnam War: USA involvement in Vietnam

Rank	Reasons why USA became involved in the Vietnam & explanation of ranking
1	
2	
3	
4	

Mark /10	Steps to war: how far did each 'step' take USA closer to war (mark out of 10) Explain how it took the USA closer to war in Vietnam
	1960 -63: Kennedy increased military advisors
	1963: Johnson sent more help to South Vietnam & McNamara believed war was winnable
	1964: Gulf of Tonkin resolution
	1965: US marines arrive in South Vietnam & Rolling Thunder begins



4E

Test your knowledge & understanding: US intervention

a Describe **two** key features of: (6 marks)

Johnson

Westmoreland

McNamara

b Explanation: (8 marks)

Why was McNamara so pro-war in Vietnam?

Why did the USA become involved in Vietnam?

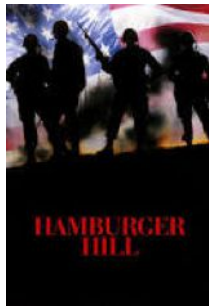
c Cause/consequence and judgement:

The main reason the USA became involved in Vietnam was the Truman Doctrine
How far do you agree with this interpretation?

Without the Gulf of Tonkin incident the USA would not have become involved in Vietnam

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

The Vietnam Conflict



Close-up of 14 US soldiers during a 10 day battle



The conflicts within
the US Army
highlighted in this film



Check out our
youtube channel:
historystudent

Additional notes

Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68

The Vietnam Conflict



5

Turning points

My Lai Massacre
1968 - 1969

Charlie Company on search & destroy mission killed 300 - 400 villagers, mainly women, children & old men. No Vietcong were found. It was considered a success. One year later a letter was sent to politicians & Life magazine printed photos. An investigation ended in mass murder charges for Lt. Calley & others. Calley was blamed & got 20 years 'hard labour'. USA people were shocked & protests increased.

Tet Offensive 1968

On Tet religious holiday, Vietcong launched over 100 attacks across South Vietnam. Scale of offensive shocked USA. Vietcong suffered huge casualties, but USA morale badly affected. Americans now thought the war was unwinnable.

Hue Massacre

The VC & North Vietnamese troops took the city of Hue on 31 Jan. as part of the Tet Offensive. For nearly a month the US besieged the city. After they defeated the VC, mass graves were found where civilians had been killed by the VC. The numbers vary from a few hundred to several thousand.

5.2

Bombing

Operation Rolling Thunder
(Feb. 1965 - 1972)

- . Targets:
 - . industrial & military targets initially approved by President
 - . then town & cities
 - . then in Laos & Cambodia
 - . Ho Chi Minh Trail
- Result:**
- . reduced number of soldiers needed
 - . dropped more bombs than on Germany & Japan in WWII
 - . damaged NV ability to fight the war
 - . attacked Vietcong targets in South
 - . 14,000 US bombers shot down
 - . failed to stop the communists

- . Killing civilians (women & children) turned many in USA against the war

US
tactics in
Vietnam

Chemical Weapons

- . Agent Orange & Napalm
 - . It was a sort of 'weedkiller'
 - . Used to destroy the jungles, so the Vietcong had no hiding place
- Result:**
- . Destroyed thousands of sq. km of jungle
 - . Burned & killed thousands of guerrilla fighters & civilians

- . Shocking pictures of women & children burned by chemical weapons turned many people in the USA

Search & destroy

- . Bombing was not winning the war
- . USA built strong bases in the south & launched attacks via helicopters

Result:

- . Some successes against Vietcong
- . Pointless attacks based on poor information
- . Vietcong often 'vanished' before attacks
- . Many civilians killed during attacks
- . Turned many peasants against the USA/South Vietnamese
- . My Lai Massacre turned US public opinion against the war

5.3

Guerrilla tactics

- . Less soldiers & outgunned by US & South Viet forces
- . Ho Chi Minh used guerrilla tactics like Mao in China
- . Attack & disappear into jungle
- . Retreat if out numbered
- . Not always wear uniforms
- . Got peasant support - sometimes through terror

Result:

- . Very motivated fighters
- . Lower morale of US soldiers
- . Had peasant support
- . Network of informants
- . Over 1 million died

Vietcong
tactics

Supply lines & tunnels

- . The Vietcong in the South were supplied via Ho Chi Minh trails in Laos & Cambodia
 - . Bombing of trail controversial as Laos & Cambodia were 'neutral' in the war.
 - . USA failed to stop the flow of supplies, often carried on bicycles, despite heavy bombing, by up to 35,000 people
 - . Underground bases & tunnels kept Vietcong safe from bombing
- Result:**
- . Vietcong constantly supplied
 - . Tunnel network destroyed US morale

Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68

The Vietnam Conflict



5a

Vietnam War: tactics of war

Vietcong	Success /10	Explanation
Guerilla Tactics		
Supply Lines		
USA	Success /10	Explanation
Bombing		
Chemical weapons		
Search & Destroy		

**Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68**

The Vietnam Conflict

**5E**

Test your knowledge & understanding:
Escalation 1964-68

aDescribe **two** key features of: (6 marks)**My Lai incident****Hue Massacre****Rolling Thunder****Search destroy****Guerilla tactics**

b

Explanation: (8 marks)

Why did the USA use the 'Rolling Thunder' tactic?**Why did the USA use 'search & destroy' tactics in Vietnam ?**

c

Cause/consequence and judgement:

The US tactics were never going to defeat a guerilla army

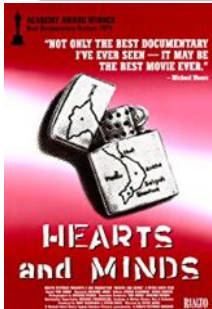
How far do you agree with this interpretation?

The USA had no answer to the guerilla tactics of the VietminhHow far do you agree with this interpretation?

exam style questions

Confrontation in the Vietnam War, escalation 1964 - 68

The Vietnam Conflict



Hearts & Minds

A look at opposing views in the Vietnam War



Platoon

The conflicts within the US Army highlighted in this film



Full Metal Jacket

Army training with shocking outcomes, plus the horror of fighting for a mixed bunch of soldiers



Check out our
youtube channel:
GCSEHistory

Additional notes

Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68

The Vietnam Conflict



6

Why was the USA unable to win the Vietnam War?

Military situation

Communists



6.1

Harsh lifestyle

- . Vietcong use to hard peasant lifestyle
- . At home in jungle environment & communal living

Win the hearts & minds

- . Communists worked hard to win over the peasants BUT treated peasants harshly if they did not support them

Serve their country

- . Patriotic soldiers fighting for their homeland
- . United against colonial rule - French, Japanese then USA

6.3

Support in Vietnam + China & Russia

- . Full support of Vietnamese people - working together
- . Many villagers hide the Vietcong from the US soldiers plus they fed them

Support from USSR & China

- USSR & China supplied military equipment + advice throughout the war

Attitude
to war

Support



U.S.A.

6.2

US soldiers used to a comfortable life

- . Join up for different reasons: hero; patriotism; learn to fly etc
- . Life in Vietnam was harsh & uncomfortable
- . Many conscripts did not want to be there

Killing civilians

- . Bombing & chemical weapons killed civilians & turned Vietnamese against the USA

Tour of duty

- . Soldiers were in Vietnam for 365 days
- . The priority was to survive & go home, rather than win the war

6.4

Reaction in USA

- . Anti-war movement showed soldiers to be baby killers
- . Many soldiers were anti-war before they even went to Vietnam
- . Upon returning home not treated as heroes
- . Some soldiers became anti-war protesters!

Reaction around the world

- . Increasingly the USA become more isolated as the TV pictures showed some of the incidents like the Monk suicide, & the napalm girl



**Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68**

The Vietnam Conflict



6

Why was the USA unable to win the Vietnam War?**Military situation****Communists**

6.5

Guerrilla warfare

- . Guerrilla warfare was central to VC tactics, though the Tet offensive showed it was capable of traditional warfare which shocked US generals and US public alike
- . US troops always scared of VC ambushes

Supplies

- . VC supplied through network of tunnels + Ho Chi Minh trails in Laos & Cambodia
- . People repaired trails after US bombing within hours or days

Military tactics**U.S.A.**

6.6

High tech weapons

- . Up to 1964 US military advisors had good relationship with Vietnamese
- . After 1965 US Marines very aggressive & came to hate Vietnamese
- . After 1965 US relied on bombing inc. chemical weapons which killed civilians
- . US forces could not tell friend or enemy apart because of Vietcong tactics

Operation Phoenix

- . CIA + special forces identify & neutralise top VC
- . Local police carry out arrests, torture & killings
- . Neutralise= torture, get information, kill
- . Over 81,000 VC captured - up to 50% killed

6.7

Unity

- . Soldiers & Vietnamese people very motivated to defeat the 'colonial invading' army & worked together
- . Communists controlled & motivated in a variety of ways
- . People made huge personal sacrifices inc. women & children to help the soldiers:
- . 'Shock brigades' repaired bomb damage after air raids

Quality of soldiers**Conflicts within the US army**

- . Officers often lacked experience & authority
- soldiers mutinied
- . Over 100 officers were killed by their own men
- . 'Grunts' (infantrymen) were on average 19 years old, had low morale & going on patrols was very unpopular with booby traps and ambushes common
- . Many army units experienced racial problems

6.8

Disunity in the Army

- . US forces distrust South Vietnamese forces, as communists had infiltrated the South Vietnamese army & government

Drugs & R & R

- . Soldiers were in Vietnam for 365 days
- . Priority was to survive & go home, rather than win the war
- . Many resorted to drugs to overcome the shock of war
- . When on R & R in Saigon or Tokyo many got STD

Information

- . Communists had informants in South Vietnam - in all areas inc. army, US Army and CIA
- . They often knew of planned attacks in advance

**Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68**

The Vietnam Conflict



6a

Why was the USA unable to win the Vietnam War?

Write in whether the statement applies to either the USA or communists

USA or Communists	Statement
	At home in the jungle environment & with communal living
	Priority was to survive & go home
	Supported & supplied by the USSR & China
	Motivated to defeat the 'invading colonial armies'
	'Grunts' were on average 19 years old
	After 1965 they relied on bombing & the use of chemical weapons
	Had informants in the South Vietnamese govt., US army & CIA
	"Shock brigades" repaired bomb damage after air raids
	Soldiers were in Vietnam for 365 day tour of duty
	Supplied through a network of tunnels & trails through Laos & Cambodia
	Patriotic soldiers fighting for their homeland
	Worked hard to win the 'hearts & minds' of the peasants
	Often knew, in advance, of planned attacks
	Found life in Vietnam harsh & uncomfortable
	Many soldiers took drugs to overcome the shock & horror of war
	At home soldiers were often known as 'child killers'
	Officers often lacked authority & there were mutinies

Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68

The Vietnam Conflict



6b

Why was the USA unable to win a military victory in Vietnam?

Rank with an explanation the military strengths of the North Vietnamese communists
and the military weaknesses of the USA

**Communists****USA**

Rank	Strengths	Explanation	Rank	Weakness	Explanation
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

**Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68**

The Vietnam Conflict



6E

Test your knowledge & understanding:
US escalation

Exam style questions**a**Describe **two** key features of:

Winning the hearts and minds

Jungle warfare

Chinese and Russian support for North Vietnam

The TV War

Disunity within the US military

b

Explanation:

Why did the USA have disunity within the military?

Why were the Vietminh & Vietcong well motivated?

c

Cause/consequence and judgement:

The USA was never going

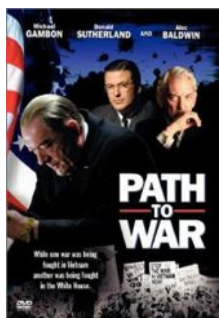
How far do you agree with this interpretation?

The USA had no answer to the guerrilla tactics of the Vietminh

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

exam style questions

The Vietnam Conflict



Follows the Johnson Presidency focusing upon the Vietnam War.



Episode 5 & 6
Countdown to Tet
Tet Offensive

Episode 10

Rolling Thunder



Check out our
youtube channel:
GCSEHistory

Additional notes

[illegible]

Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68

The Vietnam Conflict



7

Why was the USA unable to win the Vietnam War?

Situation in the USA

President Johnson's aims

Public aim: defeat communism (containment)
support democracy (S.Vietnam)

Private aims: save face for USA

not be first President to lose a war

BUT: many in US not care about democracy in Vietnam
US supporting a corrupt S. Vietnam government



7.1

1965

Public opinion

Students protests e.g. teach-ins - against conscription

7.2

1966 - 67

Public opinion

Members of Congress start criticising Johnson's policies

Buddhist monk sets herself on fire in protest in Vietnam

Martin Luther King & other church leaders join anti-war protests

Tax increases to pay for war, leads to more demonstrations

Media turn against the war

Loss of McNamara 1967

McNamara (Defence Sec.) with JFK then Johnson who is responsible for military policy & tactics

McNamara changed from saying easily winnable, to the war being unwinnable

Replaced by Clark (advisor & friend of Johnson)

Problems in South Vietnam 1966 - 67

Government was corrupt & unpopular
Many South Vietnamese supported Ho Chi Minh

Tet Offensive

North Vietnamese VC attacked multiple targets in the South

Attacked during Tet holiday surprising everyone

Attacks were unsuccessful & the VC lost 60,000 soldiers

BUT: US shocked by size of attack, confidence shaken

US intelligence failed & 10,000 US/South troops killed

People in USA shocked by what they saw

US media showed it as a failure for the USA

7.3

1968

Financial costs

Great Society spending cut as military spending increased

Deficit: from \$1.6 billion (1963) to \$25.3 billion (1968)

Inflation increased + people not want to pay

increase in tax to pay for war

Defence Secretary Clark

Realised USA did not have a plan to win in Vietnam (policy of not losing to save face)

By March 1968 Clark was telling President Johnson the war was unwinnable

President Johnson

Johnson's health suffered

Advisors started looking at peace options

Bombing stopped whilst peace talks held

BUT: Peace difficult as North Vietnamese not want to compromise

Johnson in a weak negotiating position

Public opinion

TV coverage: bombing & chemical attacks turned people against war

Mai Lai incident shocked people around the world

Opinion: win the war or get out

Divided US society

USA torn apart by the war - totally divided

Civil unrest - some feared civil war

**Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68**

The Vietnam Conflict

**Why was the USA unable to win a military victory in Vietnam?**

Which year for each event?

	Event	1965 1966/7 1968
1	Tet Offensive	
2	Clark telling the President the war was unwinnable	
3	Teach-ins to protest against conscription	
4	Buddhist monk burns himself to death in protest about how Buddhists treated	
5	Taxes increased to pay for war	
6	Martin Luther King join anti-war protests	
7	Increased bombing to win the war	
8	Tet Offensive made people realise that the U.S.A. could not win in Vietnam	
9	Great Society spending cut to pay for war	
10	People shocked by My Lai massacre	
11	Lt. Calley was sentenced to 20 years for murder	
12	Inflation increased in U.S.A.	
13	Started chemical attacks in Vietnam	
14	Johnson suffering from ill health	
15	Some felt civil war possible	

**Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68**

The Vietnam Conflict



7E

Test your knowledge & understanding:
US escalation

aDescribe **two** key features of: (6 marks)

Johnson's methods of fighting in Vietnam

The Vietnam war in 1966 - 67

Financial costs for the USA of the Vietnam war

The Vietnam war in 1968

Opposition to the war in the USA

b

Explanation: (8 marks)

Why did the opposition to war grow in the USA in the 1960s?

Why was the resignation of McNamara important to Johnson?

c

Cause/consequence and judgement:

People in the USA were against the war because they could not win

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

The USA lost the war at home, rather than on the battlefields of Vietnam

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

exam style questions

**Confrontation in the Vietnam War,
escalation 1964 - 68**

The Vietnam Conflict

**Platoon**Search & Destroy
mission**Additional notes**Check out our
youtube channel:
GCSEHistoryA lot of documentaries
on My Lai Massacre
on youtube

Nixon & Ford's policies - Vietnamisation, peace & communist victory 1969 - 75

The Vietnam Conflict



8

The My Lai Massacre 1968 - 1970

Event: Unit of soldiers (Charlie Company) on a 'search & destroy mission'. Attacked what they thought was a Vietcong stronghold.

After 3 / 4 hours 300-400 civilians were dead inc. women & children.

There were no Vietcong & only 3 weapons found.

Official report: only 20 civilians killed, the rest were VC.

The soldiers were praised for their actions.

The letter: Soldier Ridenhour who knew many soldiers at My Lai wrote a letter to politicians & officials in Washington saying what really happened there.

Life Magazine: published photos of the massacre.

Investigation: Lieutenant Calley was charged with murder and others were also charged, but the army made Calley solely responsible & said he was not acting on orders. Calley was sentenced to 20 years hard labour. (He was released after 3 years).

The events of My Lai shocked the US people.

8.1

1969

The Peace Movement

Peace movement: no longer hippies & students but ordinary middle class people who wanted an end to the 'pointless' war.

My Lai Massacre: after the incident came to light over 500,000 people protested against in the war in Washington DC. The largest protest ever in the USA.

Politics: to be pro-war was political suicide for most politicians.

Loss of faith in the military leadership

Realisation that the USA could not win a military victory after the Tet Offensive
People lost faith in the US army

New President

President **Richard Nixon** become In January 1969.

He was elected on making the war 'de-Americanised' - less US involvement in Vietnam

Nixon was very anti-communist but had to be against the war or at least pro peace to get elected in 1968

Peace with Honour

May 1968: USA wanted a South Vietnam, the communists wanted a united Vietnam.

USA wanted free elections in the south but North Vietnam did not trust the elections would be fair.

8.2

Nixon's
strategy

Peace Talks

. **May 1968:** no progress

North Vietnam: wanted a united Vietnam,
NLF be part of govt in South
not trust USA to have free elections

USA: wanted separate North & South Vietnam
no NLF in the South & free elections

Nixon Doctrine

. **July 1969:** in Guam Nixon announced:
. USA keep its treaty commitments
with Asian countries

. Expect countries to take responsibility for own defence

. In Vietnam this became 'Vietnamisation' as Nixon withdrew US troops from Vietnam but continued the bombing campaign against the North

8a

Test yourself: Nixon's policies in Vietnam

Read each statement and decide whether it is TRUE or FALSE

	Statement	True or False
1	Charlie Company were on a 'search & destroy' mission	
2	Nixon became U.S. President in January 1968	
3	At My Lai the U.S. soldiers found hundreds of Vietcong weapons	
4	The Nixon Doctrine largely replaced the Truman Doctrine	
5	Nixon wanted a united Vietnam	
6	Soldier Ridenhour exposed what happened at My Lai	
7	People in the U.S.A. were not that bothered by events at My Lai	
8	Tet Offensive made people realise that the U.S.A. could not win in Vietnam	
9	Nixon introduced the policy Vietnamisation	
10	The official report about My Lai explained exactly what happened	
11	Lt. Calloway was sentenced to 20 years for murder	
12	Nixon wanted 'peace with honour'	
13	In 1969 only students were protesting against the war	
14	Peace was very close in 1969	
15	The Northern communists did not trust U.S.A. to hold fair elections	



8E

Test your knowledge & understanding: US escalation in Vietnam

a

Describe **two** key features of:

My Lai Massacre

The Peace Movement

Nixon Doctrine

Peace Talks

b

Explanation:

Explain why the My Lai Massacre was a turning point in the war

Explain why the Peace Movement affected US policy on Vietnam

c

Cause/consequence and judgement:

The My Lai Massacre was the turning point for many Americans

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

The Nixon's strategy was complete change in policy for the USA

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

exam style questions

The Vietnam Conflict



Episode 11
Peace with Honour



Check out our
youtube channel:
historystudent

Additional notes

Nixon & Ford's policies - Vietnamisation, peace & communist victory 1969 - 75

The Vietnam Conflict



9

The end of war in Vietnam

Bombing - Rolling Thunder

Nixon ordered bombing to be increased. He hoped this would put pressure on the communists as peace negotiations continued. When talks broke down in Dec 1972, Nixon ordered a massive bombing campaign. In 11 days more bombs were dropped than in the previous 2 years. The North restarted negotiations and the Paris Peace Agreement was signed on 27 January 1973

9.1

**Nixon's
strategy**

Vietnamisation

Nixon started replacing US soldiers with Vietnamese soldiers AVRN. Between 1969 - 71 400,000 troops were withdrawn from Vietnam. BUT: AVRN were no match for the communist fighters.

USSR & China relations

USSR & China relations in 1969 were so bad some feared there would be a war between the two.

US invasion of Cambodia

The US was unable to cut off the supply lines as the communists used trails & bases in Laos & Cambodia. Nixon ordered the invasion of Viet Cong bases in Cambodia

As a result both countries tried to improve their relations with the USA. 1970: Nixon & USSR began talks about limiting nuclear arms (SALT) & asked USSR to pressure North Vietnam to end the war. 1972: Nixon was invited to visit China & he asked China to pressure North Vietnam to end the war.

Negotiations: 'Peace with Honour'

Kissinger (USA) & Le Duc Tho (North Vietnam) agreed:

- . US troops withdraw after ceasefire
 - . Prisoners of war released
 - . Elections in the south
- Paris Peace Agreement - 27 January 1972

- . Nguyen Van Thieu, leader of South Vietnam was angry because as part of the agreement he would have to resign and the North would takeover the South if the USA left
- . December 1972: Le Duc broke off negotiations - Nixon ordered more bombing of the North
- . Negotiations restarted - Thieu agreed to resign, Le Tuc & Kissinger signed
- . Paris Peace Agreement - 27 January 1973

Nixon was forced to resign over Watergate - Aug. 1974.
VP Gerald Ford took over as President

The end

- . Pardoned the draft dodgers
- . Asked Congress for support of over \$500 million for SV & Cam, but did not get the help.
- . April 1975, communist forces entered Saigon - hundreds of thousands of S. Vietnamese were executed.
- . Ford refused military help
- . Ford ordered the evacuation of Americans
- . People watched on TV as 6000 Americans fled, helicopters lifting people off the Embassy roof.

9.2

Ford's strategy

*The evacuation has been completed
This action closes a chapter in the American experience. I ask all Americans to close ranks, to avoid recrimination about the past, to look ahead to the many goals we share and to work together on the great tasks that remain to be accomplished.*

War started in 1941 against the Japanese was now over & Saigon renamed as Ho Chi Minh City.

9a

The Vietnam War

Match the event to the correct year

McNamara changed from saying easily winnable,
to the war being unwinnable

Members of Congress start criticising Johnson's policies

Peace movement: no longer hippies & students but ordinary
middle class people who wanted an end to the 'pointless' war.

North Vietnamese VC attacked multiple targets in South Vietnam

Over 500,000 people protested against in th war in
Washington DC. The largest peace protest ever in the USA.

The invasion of Viet Cong bases in Cambodia

Both the USSR & China tried to improve
their relations with the USA.

Nixon was very anti-communist, but had to be against the
war or at least pro peace to get elected



Johnson's aims: defeat communism (containment)
& support democracy (S.Vietnam)

When talks broke down ordered a
massive bombing campaign.

Military spending increased to \$25.3 billion

Realisation that the USA could not win a military victory
after the Tet Offensive and people lost faith in the US arm

North Vietnamese VC attacked multiple targets in the South
Attacked during Tet holiday surprising everyone

In 11 days more bombs were dropped than in the previous 2 years

Students start protests e.g. teach-ins - against conscription

Nixon started replacing US soldiers
with Vietnamese soldiers AVRN.

400,000 US troops were withdrawn from Vietnam

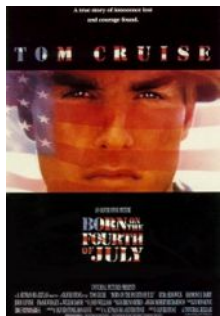


Test your knowledge: What were the turning points that contributed to the situation in the USA becoming increasingly anti-war?

Score each event out of 10, in terms of it being a turning point that influenced the American public into becoming more anti-war - explain your score.

Event	Score out of /10	Explanantion
Johnson's aims		
Johnson's methods: bombing & chemical weapons		
McNamara resigns: war unwinnable		
Tet Offensive		
Clark: there is no plan to win the war		
My Lai massacre		
Invasion of Cambodia & Laos		
Nixon's increase in bombing		

The Vietnam Conflict



**Born on the
4th July**



Check out our
youtube channel:
GCSEHistory

Additional notes

[illegible]This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

The impact on civilians in Vietnam & attitudes in the USA

The Vietnam Conflict



10

Consequences of the Vietnam War

Society

- . In the South before the war 90% lived in the countryside - after the war 60% lived in cities
- . Many peasants left the countryside & lived in shanty towns, during and after the war, around Saigon: poverty, prostitution & drugs were common. Conditions were very poor - lack basic necessities - clean water, sanitation, transport etc.
- . Refugees = 5 million
- . Corruption in the South was rife
- . Black market in US goods
- . Drugs (heroin, opium) were easily available during the war for the US soldiers, this continued after the war
- . Over 500,000 Vietnamese women became prostitutes (many poor peasants who needed to support their families after their farms were destroyed)

Political

- . Vietnam unified under communism
- . Communism spread to Cambodia & Laos
- . Millions of South Vietnamese victimised after the war: thousands executed for working with ARVN or US
- . Millions forced to work in 'economic' zones or where 're-educated' (forced labour)

Environment

Chemical warfare

- . Huge areas (20%) of forest & agricultural land destroyed with over 20,000,000 gallons of 'herbicides' dropped
- . Agricultural land not useable - some for 100 years
- . Food shortages as a result
- . Water supply poisoned
- . Est. 400,000 effected immediately plus 500,000 born with a variety of defects
- . Miscarriages common

Mines

- . Mines & unexploded bombs were everywhere and continued to kill people years after the war
- . Effect farmers in particular

10.1

South Vietnam

Economic

- . USA banned trade with Vietnam
- . Food shortages were common as:
 - chemical weapons poisoned the land, irrigation systems destroyed, over 20 million bomb craters
- . During and after the war many young people in rural areas moved to the city - it was safer
- . Unemployment rose and jobs created to meet the American needs disappeared overnight
- . 'Boat people': 1970s saw 1 million Vietnamese try to leave the country for political and economic reasons - thousands died as a result
- . Took 20 years to recover to pre-war levels



Society

- . Women took on the work of men particularly as farmers as men joined the army to fight
- . Over 2 million soldiers and civilians died, news of deaths were often kept from families at the time, to avoid low morale, so many were shocked to find out at the end of the war

10.2

North Vietnam

Economic

- . 70% of factories destroyed, production fell by 50%
 - . Transport network destroyed (24 bombs per km) four hour journeys became four days
- . Many building in Hanoi destroyed inc. temples, schools etc
- . China and Russia helped rebuild in the North

The impact on civilians in Vietnam & attitudes in the USA

The Vietnam Conflict



10

Consequences of the Vietnam War

Political

- . President Johnson destroyed by the war - even though vast majority supported the war at the start
- . Pro-war became political liability
- . Protests across the country
- . Nixon anti-communist but had to pursue peace
- . Politicians more isolationist

US foreign policy: end of containment

- . Propaganda disaster for the USA
- . Use of bombing, chemical warfare lost US support
 - . Nixon ended the 'Truman Doctrine'
 - . US abandoned policy of containment
- . Military intervention less likely after Vietnam
- . Looked to talk with USSR & China: Detente



Society

- . 58,000 died in the war

Divided the nation:

- . Student demonstrations
- . Draft dodgers
- . Many veterans became anti-war protestors drug addicts & suffered post traumatic stress (est. at 800,000)
- . Others who handled Agent Orange suffered cancer - compensation has been paid to US soldiers
- . TV war: pictures of the horrors of war on the news every evening
- . USA lost confidence in their country

Kent University 1970

- . Anti-war violent protests - about secret missions in Cambodia
- . National Guard called in to restore order
- . 4 killed & 9 injured as NG fired 70 shots
- . University closed for 6 weeks
- . Strikes across US at universities & colleges - seen as a 'watershed' moment in the anti-war movement

USA

10.3

Economic

- . Military industrial production increased, consumer goods decreased
- . USA had budget deficits which caused inflation
 - . Interest rates rose
 - . Value of the dollar fell
- . Govt. spending was reduced on social programmes in Johnson's 'Great Society'

Fulbright Hearings

- . In 1971 a committee led by William Fulbright
 - . Investigated the Vietnam War
 - . Give advice on how to end US involvement there
 - . Evidence over inhumane behaviour of US troops in Vietnam.
- . My Lai was not just an isolated incident. Such behaviour had been encouraged by the military leadership
- . The effect of these hearings was to raise questions at an official Government level about the purpose of US involvement in Vietnam

The impact on civilians in Vietnam & attitudes in the USA

The Vietnam Conflict



10a

Consequences of the Vietnam War

List the consequences for both sides as
positive & negative on a scale of 1 - 5.
5 = very positive/negative

positive



U.S.A.

5

4

3

2

1

2

3

4

5

negative

Many peasants left the countryside & lived in shanty towns: poverty, prostitution & drugs

US abandoned policy of containment

South Vietnamese victimised after the war,
thousands executed & 're-educated'

Took 20 years to recover to pre-war levels

Vietnam unified under communism

Food shortages were common

'Boat people': 1970s saw 1 million people try to leave the country

Communism spread to Cambodia & Laos

Looked to talk with USSR & China: Detente

Govt. spending was reduced on social programmes
in Johnson's 'Great Society'

Interest rates rose and the value of the dollar fell

Nixon ended the 'Truman Doctrine'

USA banned trade with Vietnam

Food shortages were common

Many veterans became anti-war protestors
drug addicts & suffered post traumatic stress

10E

Test your knowledge & understanding:
consequences

a

Describe **two** key features of: (6 marks)

Consequences of chemical warfare

Fulbright Hearings

Jungle warfare

b

Explanation: (8 marks)

Why did the USA have disunity within the military?

Why were the Vietminh & Vietcong well motivated?

c

Cause/consequence and judgement:

The USA was never going

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

The USA had no answer to the guerilla tactics of the Vietminh

How far do you agree with this interpretation?

exam style questions



The Dead Forest - Agent Orange

by Richard Dieterle

Taken from <http://vnwarstories.com>

In 1968 we eventually fell onto a rather wide road through the otherwise impenetrable jungle. This road, fashioned of compacted dirt with a slight mix of gravel, was of a pale yellow color and elevated a couple of feet above its bed. It was pleasant to go down such a road after the usual hump through “thick shit” which had been accomplished by the point man and forward element turning themselves into human plows. It was still early in the day and the sky was thinly overcast, but it was bright enough out. We hadn't gone very far down this road when we came to one of the most bizarre sights of the war: suddenly the thick foliage of the jungle gave way to a kind of hellish landscape unlike any I had ever seen. All the vegetation — trees, bushes, vines — everything, had been completely stripped of its leaves, and all the wood had turned a dead gray color. Not a single leaf or speck of green could be seen anywhere. All the trees stood perfect upright as they had in life, but the want of leaves made it possible to see a long way into what would otherwise have been an opaque jungle. That, of course, was the idea. It would be impossible for anyone to ambush us along this road, since there was no cover for them. Still, this was not really very reassuring, since even at the time we had a sense that the agent used to effect this result was probably a greater menace to us than to the enemy. It was time to eat, but I can't now remember whether we pushed on to clear this desert of wood, or whether we did in fact stop to eat there. The area had been sprayed quite some time before with Agent Orange but it is to this day somewhat unsettling to think of what this stuff could have done to us, and whether at the time of this writing, long distant from that day, I shall not yet become a casualty of the Vietnam War.

The government, as usual, employed the “Big Lie” They told the world that Agent Orange was a harmless defoliant and that the strange maladies turning up among those who worked with it were due to other causes. It took countless years to get aid to our self-inflicted casualties because the government refused to confess its lie until it was completely and irrefutably proven that it was a deliberate deception.



The struggle against France for independence, 1945-54

The Vietnam Conflict



<http://www.rockdalenewtoncitizen.com/>

Lou Eisenbrandt was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease 14 years ago, the result of exposure to Agent Orange. Female Angels of Mercy came in contact with the lethal herbicide when cutting away the uniforms on wounded soldiers. I was privileged to meet Lou and listen to her awe-inspiring presentation during the July gathering of the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association. And this is her story.

From her own words during the presentation: "I have Parkinson's from exposure to Agent Orange, so I've instructed my body to remain still. If I do a Michael J. Fox, please forgive me, but I can't help it. I'm also not using a laser pointer because the laser would be all over the place.

"My experiences are no different than other nurses who served in Nam. Ten thousand women served, 7,000 were nurses. I grew up in the small town of Mascoutah, Ill, population 3,000. I was the oldest of five, born with a wanderlust in my heart because I knew something else was out there for me."

"I was in nurses training when I stumbled onto an Army program which allowed a nurse to join up, study for three years, then serve for two years. I didn't join for a noble cause or thinking I could change the world, I just wanted to see some of the world, like Germany, Japan or England. My first port-of-call was officer's training at Ft. Sam Houston, Texas, in June of 1968. Then I received orders for Ft. Dix, N.J. I packed up my brand new Rambler American and headed for The Garden State.

"I spent nine months at Ft. Dix, which was a good thing. Some nurses were sent straight from nursing school to Vietnam. Ft. Dix was interesting to say the least. They even had a stockade section, and I had to check daily for improvised weapons. One prisoner escaped, but not on my shift. I usually cared for the soldiers with upper respiratory infections, at one point over 300 soldiers. We also had the fatties and skinnies. If too fat, we put them on diets; if too skinny, they got milkshakes. Oddly, they put these guys in the same ward. The skinnies stayed skinny because the fatties drank all the milkshakes. Before the year was out I received a manila envelope; 'Congratulations, you're going to Vietnam.' Not the travel I expected.

"I arrived in Vietnam on Nov. 1, 1969. I had a choice of bases, so I picked the 91st Evac at Chu Lai because an old roommate was assigned there. Chu Lai was beautiful, on a hill near a cliff, overlooking the South China Sea. I arrived during Monsoon season, everything wet; my hooch had double beds, a foot locker, and one fan. Thank goodness my room was in front of the bunker. Chu Lai is in the skinny part of Nam, ocean on one side, mountains in the background.

"I loved flying on the choppers since I was an avid photographer. Great region for photos, but I never took photos of casualties. Chopper pilots are, well, different. They loved to party. I spent my first three months in a medical ward treating non-combat related problems, like hepatitis and malaria, even jungle rot. By the way, the Officer's Club was built on the edge of a cliff. We consumed a 'slight' amount of alcohol in there.

"Within three months the chief nurse asked if I wanted the challenge of the emergency room. I accepted. After we cared for casualties we washed the blood down a drain in the concrete floor with a hose. Head injuries from rotor blades were the worse cases, horrible wounds. If a soldier was not ambulatory we utilized a gurney and used screens to block off a KIA or DOA. During triage if we determined a soldier wouldn't make it he was placed behind a screen then a nurse held his hand and talked to him until he died.

"One time after their village was hit, we had 99 Vietnamese civilians to care for within a 24-hour period. When wounded Vietnamese came in, so did the whole family. We also had Vietnamese nurses. They really helped due to culture differences.

"We waterskied but with parameters, like never going out after 1 p.m. because that was when sharks arrived. We used a Jeep to pull the boat, but I have no idea where the Jeep and boat and skis came from. There were local fishermen in LRBs, Little Round Boats, who would wave at us until we threw them a tow rope and pulled them along. They loved it.



Nguyen Thanh Trung, spent most of his teenage years in pursuit of one goal: to avenge the death of his father at the hands of South Vietnamese troops. This burning desire for revenge led him to flight schools in Texas and back to his homeland, where he fought alongside southern troops, all the while hatching a plot that would earn him a place in war history - to bomb the palace of Saigon's leaders, the men he held responsible for his father's death. Today Capt. Trung is a pilot for Vietnam Airlines.

Trung grew up in the river byways of the Mekong Delta, a fertile land home to many poor farmers, many of whom saw the Viet Cong, guerilla fighters who supported Communist North Vietnam as their only hope for a better life - and a united Vietnam. Like so many other children in Vietnam, he lost a parent to the war being fought around him, when, in 1963, his father, a Viet Cong guerilla, was executed by South Vietnamese forces.

On the death of his father:

"That day, I could not go back to my house. I didn't have anywhere to go. So I sat on the ferry [I took to school every day and went] back and forth, back and forth on the river all night. I asked myself the question, who is responsible for the death of my father? I answer for myself. I said, President Diem [the leader, handpicked by the Americans], you are responsible for the death of my father. And I told myself, when I am grown up, if I have the opportunity, I will become a pilot. And I will bomb the palace of the leader of South Vietnam."

Trung joined the Viet Cong movement shortly after his father's death. He would spend the next twelve years working to fulfill his dramatic vow to bomb the palace in Saigon. The Viet Cong encouraged him to join the South Vietnamese Air Force, and in 1969, he was sent for advanced training in Texas. When he returned to his country, he began flying regular bombing sorties. But stealing a F-5, one of the American's most sophisticated jets from the tightly guarded military base was close to impossible. It would take him three years to perfect his plan to bomb the presidential palace.

Trung finally perfected a plan using the military's own protocol against them. To cut down on radio noise, the pilots were required to communicate with each other by visual signals before they took off. On April 5, 1975, Trung gave his squad leader a hand signal that he was having electrical trouble. The rest of his squadron took off without him. According to military procedure, he had ten seconds in which to abort his mission, or catch up with the other planes. He waited out the ten second countdown and took off. But instead of joining his formation, he headed for the target he had held in his mind - the presidential palace.

Trung avenges his father's death:

Just after take-off, I fly direct to Saigon. On that day, my aircraft was loaded with four bombs, [Viet Cong leaders had told him to use] two for the palace, two for the U.S. embassy. But with the first two bombs, I missed targeting the palace. Very quickly I made the decision. With the last two bombs I will bomb the palace and forget the embassy.



Trung's bombs set fire to only a small section of the Presidential Palace roof, but the psychological damage was done. He had brought the war to downtown Saigon - and signaled South Vietnam's leaders that their time was running out. When Trung landed the American F-5 jet on a tiny airstrip in Northern territory, he was greeted with a hero's welcome. But he paid a hefty price for his actions - back in Saigon his wife and children were thrown in jail just hours after the bombs fell.

In one of the final actions of the war, Trung faced an even greater challenge than the bombing of the Palace: training a ragtag group of North Vietnamese fliers, who were used to Soviet-made MiGs how to fly F-5s. The young captain was able to teach them to fly the American planes in just five days. On April 28, 1975, Trung led a formation of five planes that bombed Saigon's main airport, Tan Son Nhat, throwing the entire American evacuation into chaos.

On his motivation for the bombing:

I did everything I could to stop the war as soon as possible. You stop the war one day earlier, you can save a lot of people. One month earlier, you can save thousands. One year earlier, a million. The earlier you stop the war, the more people you can save.

Trung was one of a handful of Vietnamese pilots trained by the Americans to remain in Vietnam after the war ended. When Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1979, he took to the skies again and led bombing raids over the border. In 1990, Trung joined the national carrier, Vietnam Airlines, and has been helping train a new generation of aviators ever since.



Trung lands in NVA territory to a hero's welcome.



Trung trained in Texas in 1969.



Teenager Thieu Thi Tao joined the revolutionary movement protesting the regime of the American-installed President Diem. Arrested for her activities, she spent seven years as a political prisoner in the infamous "tiger cages" where she was beaten, and tortured. When the North Vietnamese took Saigon in 1975, she felt vindicated - her years of imprisonment were a small price to pay for a united Vietnam. Now the head of a shrimp cooperative, Tao confronts a new enemy: greed, corruption and bureaucracy.



Tao enjoyed the benefits of a middle-class upbringing in South Vietnam's capital city. But the pretty schoolgirl who grew up speaking the language of colonialism at school was also learning about social justice at home.

A family of revolutionaries:

My mother was wonderful. Not only did she give us the opportunity to attend a French school, she also taught us to resist against the dictatorship, against repression and injustice. When the dictator [South Vietnamese president] Diem repressed the Buddhists [in 1964], we took part in demonstrations.

Tao was horrified by the brutal measures taken by Diem, the corrupt Catholic president installed by the Americans, to silence the Buddhist monks who spoke out against the war. Her family attended massive street rallies in support of the monks. At one rally, Tao and her sister Tan were spotted by a Viet Cong recruiter. He later visited their home. The girls joined the guerilla movement in support of Communist North Vietnam, and went to work.

On working with the Viet Cong:

When I was 18, I was part of a plan to bomb the Saigon central police station. I am the leader of the commando unit, and I carry the explosives inside the police headquarters...To succeed in the plan, I had to convert one of the police staff to our cause. But I was arrested because this person betrayed me.

Tao and her sister were thrown into jail. Even in jail, they would not stop protesting against their arrest and the South Vietnamese regime, and as a result moved to the infamous Tiger Cages in the island prison on Con Son. It was the beginning of seven years of torture, beatings and starvation.



Tao's mother raised a family of revolutionaries.



On her imprisonment and torture:

In prison, sometimes they made my sister or me witness the torture of the other. When I saw them beat my sister, it was very painful...They put us in the Tiger Cages, and when I came to my senses I thought I fell into Hell because the cage was the shape of a coffin. The jailors walked above us, and we were inside the cages below. There was so much suffering—they mistreated us, poured down quick lime [a caustic chemical which burns the skin on contact] when they wanted to repress us.

But despite the beatings and torture, the girls continued their resistance. Tao and her sister painstakingly wrote the names of all of the political prisoners held in the island prison in microscopic script on the inside of a prison uniform and gave it to their mother to smuggle out of the country. The list of political prisoners would make its way to the Paris Peace Talks, where it was entered into evidence, documenting that South Vietnam was holding political prisoners, a fact they had vehemently denied. These talks would curtail U.S. involvement in the war.

Tao's release; the end of the War:

When I was released... I couldn't believe it...the happiness makes tears pour down. I couldn't walk. I was paralysed [from years of torture]. I was cured in those months, but at the time of the liberation, my legs are still very weak. But I participate in the liberation. I planted the revolutionary flag.

The war was over, but Tao's revolutionary ardor was undimmed. After several jobs in the post-war government, she went back to school and studied marine biology because she believed the field could help feed the new nation. In 1988, twenty years after they first met, she married Sau Cong - the V.C. recruiter who had spotted her in the crowd of demonstrators and changed her life.

Tao marries her Viet Cong recruiter:

When we got married, I asked him "When did you fall in love with me?" He said "Since the beginning, since our first meeting." I asked him "Why, if you loved me, didn't you prevent me from taking those risks and placing the explosives at the police headquarters?" He said "Because it was your duty. Only when we have freedom, we can have love. If our people, our country, is dominated, we can't have happiness."



Taken from: www.pbs.org



"I was 22 years old, young and adventurous. We'd jump in a Jeep and travel heavily mined Highway 1 to visit orphanages or Hue. We took M-16s and helmets, but never encountered any problems. They instructed us to not purchase Cokes or beer from roadside stands because the VC would booby-trap cans with live grenades. Pull the tab ... and, boom!

"Saigon was a trip, pardon the pun. It was crazy. Traffic would go on a red light, then keep on going on a green light. Once a bike ran over my toes ... I was standing on the sidewalk. Rocket attacks were common at Chu Lai because of all the fuel storage tanks. You know, back then ladies used pink rollers. We couldn't wear helmets during rocket attacks if we had our hair in rollers; it hurt like heck!

"The realities of war? You try to forget them, but you never do. Every soldier brought into the emergency room had to have his fatigues cut from his body, fatigues frequently coated with Agent Orange. I recall the missing limbs, arms and legs dangling on shredded flesh, and one soldier we rolled over to check for exit wounds his back stayed on the litter. We put him back down. He made it through surgery and we got him to Japan. Don't know if he made it or not. I think of that kid every day.

"You tried to be detached from the suffering, but I had an attachment to a young lieutenant who came in with his men. His unit took heavy casualties and he wanted to be with them, to see them through their ordeal. Next time it was him, peppered full of shrapnel. We were told he would lose both legs. That's one of the few times I had to walk out of the emergency room. It rattled me. We saved his legs, but I've seen him since returning home. His legs are not of much use; he's another boy I think about every day.

"A photo taken of me on my last day in Vietnam shows a young nurse who aged in just one year. You are grateful to be leaving in one piece, but the bond was so strong with the people you worked with that you are also sad about leaving. I was the only female on the flight home. I will never forget my year in Vietnam, it is always with me ... always."

Lou Eisenbrandt returned home, then spent six weeks on the road with another nurse, visiting other veteran nurses, doing their best to forget and move on with their lives. Both ladies settled into nursing positions at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Denver. Lou met and married a young attorney named Jim. They've been together for 44 years, have two grown children and two precious grandchildren, and as Lou affectionately stated, "one big dog." Her book, "Vietnam Nurse, Mending and Remembering," distributed by Deeds Publishing

Basic Training at Fort Polk

by Jerry Prater

Taken from <http://vnwarstories.com>

The Continental Trailways bus that transported us 37 draftees from the Dallas selective service office arrived at the Reception Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana at approximately 11:00 p.m. on Monday, December 12, 1966. As we exited the bus, the soldiers assigned to the Reception Center began yelling at us, and telling us to line up in two rows, and to stand at attention. They then told us that if we had any documents with lewd language or seductive pictures of women, we'd better get rid of them now because we would be in deep trouble if they were discovered on our person after leaving the Reception Center. I had a note in my wallet from a buddy of mine that had a cuss word in it, so I threw it in the garbage. One of the soldiers noticed one draftee was chewing gum, so he yelled at him to swallow it. One of the soldiers asked me for the packet of documents, and he took them out and told us to reply when our name was called. Our induction forms were divided between the four soldiers, and they called us individually to answer some questions, one of which was if we were a [conscientious objector](#). Since I had a very strong religious upbringing, I had given a lot of thought to how I would answer that question, but I just couldn't decide what I should say. When I was asked, I thought about it for several seconds before answering. Then, I blurted out one word that would make a cataclysmic change in my life. My answer was "No."

After completing the forms, we were transported on a deuce and a half to a [mess hall](#) where we were fed breakfast. We were then marched to a barracks where we would spend our first night as a private in the Army. The non-commissioned officer in charge told us that [veille](#) was normally at 0500 hrs. (5:00 a.m.) but we would not have to get up until 0800 because we had arrived and processed in so late. All of us had trouble going to sleep because of all the events of the day, and our anxiety and fear of the two years we were forced to serve in the Army. We finally went to sleep, expecting not to have to get up until 0800. That didn't happen! A Sergeant came into our barracks at approximately 0545 yelling at us to get up, and asking why we didn't respond to our call over the loud speakers to report for breakfast in the mess hall. We told him of our instructions from the previous evening, but his response was that we had a schedule to meet and we were already late for our first formation. We hurriedly got up, got dressed, and got into formation. The sergeant marched us to an abbreviated breakfast, then to the quartermaster where we were joined by another group of draftees and we drew our uniforms, fatigues, shoes, boots, socks, underwear, canteens, mess kit, helmet, helmet liner, harness, back pack, and other supply items we would use during basic training. All these items were placed in our duffle bag and we marched to another location where tags with our last name were sewn on our fatigue shirts, and tags with our full name and serial number were sewn into our combat boots, dress shoes, hats and fatigue caps. We were also provided with a plastic name plate to be attached when we wore our dress green and khaki uniforms. These items were replaced in our duffle bag and we were marched back to the barracks where we had slept, dropped off our duffle bag, and marched to the mess hall for dinner. We were then marched back to the barracks where we had slept that morning.

We were awakened at 0500 on Wednesday, December 14 and marched to the mess hall for breakfast, then we were joined by yet another group of draftees and marched to the barber shop where we got the fastest and shortest haircuts we had ever had! After we walked out of the barber shop, a group of drill sergeants greeted us with a lot of very loud profanity telling us to form up with our duffle bag facing them. After all the guys in my expanded group had their hair cut and got into formation, one of the drill sergeants had a packet of documents and told us to board the "cattle car" trailer very quickly after our name was called. Each of the guys went up the wooden steps, moved as far forward on the trailer as possible, and sat down. One of the guys whose name was called before mine was a little heavy, and he had a lot of difficulty stepping up the wooden ladder. As he was struggling with the steps, one of the drill sergeants went up behind him and kicked him hard in the butt. That didn't help the guy who was struggling, but it definitely sent a message to all of us who had not yet boarded the trailer. The rest of us climbed up onto the trailer without incident and we were transported from the south fort to the north fort, and we exited at our basic training company area.



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I walked into the two story wooden barracks that was built hurriedly at the beginning of World War II and noticed that there was a row of eight double bunk beds on both sides of the floor. I selected an upper bunk about halfway down the east side of the bottom floor. The two drill sergeants assigned to my platoon were Johnnie Redden, a tall, husky Texan, and Federico Tubera, a short, muscular Filipino who had been a jungle fighter against the Japanese during World War II. We were sent to the supply room to check out our mattress, pillow, and bed sheets, then instructed how to properly make a bed where the sheets were tight enough that a coin would bounce off it. Our drill sergeants advised us that, due to the threat of [spinal meningitis](#), the head and foot of each bed would alternate so no one in the bed above, below or directly next to you could breathe in the direction of another trainee’s face. We were also instructed to put up a “sneeze sheet” on one side of our bed next to our head to avoid spreading or receiving germs. We were then taught the proper way to hang our uniforms and display our shoes, boots, hats and caps. We then learned how to roll our clean socks, underwear, and tee shirts, as well as the exact area in which each item was to be placed in our foot locker. Our drill sergeants advised us to pay a small fee and use a cleaning service authorized by the fort to clean all our dirty uniforms and clothing.



The Vietnam Conflict

Personal stories



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by Jerry Prater

Taken from <http://vnwarstories.com>

Sergeant Tarpley then turned the formation over to the drill sergeants, and each platoon marched to the road in front of the company area. When the entire company was marching on the road, we heard the order "Double time, march!" We then had to run in step and in formation for slightly more than one mile. Even though I was reasonably athletic, I began suffering after about half a mile, but I was able to finish without having to walk or stop. However, many trainees did have to walk part of the way because they were not physically able to run even half a mile. When we arrived back at the company area, the first platoon got in line for breakfast, and we went through the prescribed procedure for meals. As we were in the mess hall eating, some of the drill sergeants would roam around and tell the overweight trainees to stop eating and leave the mess hall after only a few bites. They would also yell at anyone who was not eating fast enough to suit them and either make them gulp the remainder of the food down, or to stop eating and leave the mess hall. We were also required to do 5 chin ups as we exited the mess hall after each meal.

Since we were inducted less than two weeks before Christmas, we were given a 14 day leave beginning at noon on Monday, December 19, and we were to be back in time for the 0530 formation on Tuesday, January 3, 1967. Our company clerk had chartered a Continental Trailways bus for all the trainees who wanted to travel to the bus station in Dallas. I had purchased a ticket and, after we had breakfast and prepared the barracks for inspection, I dressed in olive drab dress uniform and fell into formation with my platoon. After we were dismissed, I went to the designated area and waited for the bus to arrive. Some of the drill sergeants were roaming among us as we were waiting to check our hygiene and make certain that our uniforms were properly outfitted. The drill sergeants noticed that at least three trainees did not shave that morning, so they ordered them to pull out their razors and dry shave. All of them had blood on their face and someone gave them handkerchiefs so the blood wouldn't get on their uniforms. The sight of them bleeding made a lasting impression on me, and put a damper on my bus ride to Dallas. While I was on leave, I did a lot of push-ups and ran several times because I wanted to be better prepared for the physical aspects of basic training. My bride drove me back to my company area on Monday, January 2 well in advance of the lights out time of 2100.

Once again, Sergeant Tubera came to our barracks Tuesday morning at about 0450 banging on the metal trash can, shaking bunks, and yelling at us to get out of bed and into formation. This was the first official day of our basic training and we had our first session of PT (Physical Training) after we had eaten breakfast and prepared the barracks for inspection. We did at least ten repetitions of all twelve of the basic exercises. However, Sergeant Tubera added one additional step when he led PT, which was about twice each week. He considered any trainee with a waistline in excess of 30 inches to be a "fat boy," and all fat boys had to do an additional ten push-ups after every exercise. Since I had a 32 inch waist, I was considered a fat boy and had to do all those extra push-ups. After two weeks, we had a PCP (Physical Combat Proficiency) test and were measured on five separate events, with a score given for the time it took to complete the event, or the number of repetitions completed. After I completed the test, I went to Sergeant Tubera and asked if I was still a fat boy even though I scored 455 out of 500 on the test. He told me that if I scored that high, I was no longer a fat boy.

Less than two weeks after we returned from Christmas leave, we were having a session of PT and, as usual, a few of the drill sergeants were roaming around the formation making certain that all the trainees were completing each exercise correctly and "by the numbers." After we completed one of the exercises, Sergeant Redden walked up to Larry Nunn and asked him if he had shaved that morning. Larry said that he did shave and, according to regulations he shaved every morning. I was in PT formation next to Larry and Sergeant Redden asked me if it looked like Larry had shaved. I responded that his face didn't look like it, but I knew he did shave because he was at the sink next to me that morning. I was lying, and I believe Sergeant Redden knew it, but he just walked away. I remembered seeing the blood on the faces of the three trainees after they were made to dry shave as we were leaving for Christmas leave and I didn't want one of my buddies to have to go through that experience.

During our first two weeks of basic training, we were taught all aspects of military courtesy, the Uniform Code of Military Justice, hygiene, first aid, treatment of wounds, character guidance, proper marching procedures, and rifle classes. We went to the firing range during our third week, and this was a real challenge for me because I had never fired a weapon of any kind in my life. When we arrived at the firing range, we were shown a pit that was about two feet high and ten feet in diameter with a steel mesh cover.

We were told that this was our urinal for use while we were at the firing range, and anyone who put chewing gum, cigarette butts or any other article on or in the urinal would be required to reach in with their bare hand and retrieve the object. The officer in charge informed us of some safety procedures and told us that the [M-14](#) was a powerful weapon with hardly any recoil. He demonstrated

that by placing the butt of the rifle against his chin and fired a round. When I was firing my M-14 on the range, I knew I was doing something wrong because the rifle butt was hitting my shoulder hard and causing me pain with every round I fired, and my shoulder was black and blue the next day. My firing accuracy was also very bad, and my scores were among the worst in the company. I



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Our drill sergeants then informed us of several aspects of army life we could expect while we were in basic training. [Reveille \(Bugle Call\)](#) would be at 0500 each morning, and we must get up, shower, shave, get dressed in our fatigues, and be in platoon formation outside the barracks by 0530. The Company Commander, or one of the two training officers, would conduct an inspection of each of the four barracks each morning after we left the company area for our training sessions. The platoon with the highest daily and weekly ranking would receive special privileges and benefits, and the other three platoons would have to live with the stigma, as well as constant reminders and harassment of the drill sergeants, that they did not measure up. Additionally, the order in which each platoon was called to line up for each meal was determined by the daily inspection ranking. We could smoke in the barracks, and all ashes and cigarette butts had to be placed in the “butt can,” a red coffee can filled about one-third full of water that was attached to the two rows of wooden columns, and that the cans had to be cleaned each morning before inspection. Our drill sergeants also told us they had to sign for the wooden barracks and, if it caught on fire, it would burn down in 17 minutes and they would be responsible for paying to rebuild it. In order to prevent, or detect a fire as soon as it starts, we would be required to walk a fire watch on both floors every night from 2100 (9:00 p.m.) until 0500, the time designated for us to sleep. A trainee on each floor would be assigned to get fully dressed in fatigues and walk up and down the middle of the barracks floor for one hour. They would then wake up the trainee who was scheduled to walk the next hour, undress, and go back to sleep.

All of our meals would normally be served in the [mess hall](#), which meant that all of the trainees, other than the squad leaders and platoon guides (trainees selected for leadership roles because of their previous experience in [ROTC](#)), would be required to serve [KP](#) (Kitchen Police), the detail that all enlisted men dreaded the most. Those assigned to pull KP would be awoken at about 0430 so they could get dressed and report to the mess hall to assist in the preparation of breakfast. They would continue on this detail until after the dinner meal had been served and the mess hall was “policed,” all dishes, trays, pots, pans, tables, floor, and everything else had been cleaned and ready for breakfast the next morning. Of all the KP duties, the one I hated the most was washing the pots and pans because so many were used for each meal, and they were so dirty, greasy, and hard to clean.

Lights out was at 2100 and we went to sleep expecting to be woken up at 0500 by the guys who were walking the 0400 to 0500 fire watch. Instead, we were awoken by Sergeant Tubera as he walked into the barracks at approximately 0450 banging on the metal

trash can, pulling mattresses off the bed onto the floor, and yelling for us to get out of bed and get dressed. All the other guys were getting dressed but, since we only had 6 sinks for all 56 trainees in my platoon, I hurriedly went to the sink so I could be one of the first to shave. I had very wiry and tough whiskers, but very sensitive facial skin. As a result, I had to shave very slowly and very carefully to avoid cutting myself in several places and bleeding a lot. We all shaved, dressed and were in formation by 0530.

Sergeant Tarpley told us that platoons would fall out for meals in numerical order, and that each trainee was to stand at parade rest in front of the lines painted 5 meters apart on the sidewalk. Five trainees would be called into the mess hall at a time, and each trainee was to sound off with their number as they entered, “One drill sergeant,” “two drill sergeant” and so forth. Any trainee who sounded off with the wrong number had to drop and give 50 push-ups, plus go to the back of the line. After each 5 trainees entered the mess hall, we were to come to attention, march up 5 of the lines and stand at parade rest. This process continued until every trainee entered the mess hall. While we were waiting in line, we were ordered to study and memorize our 11 general orders because any drill sergeant may come up to any trainee at any time and ask him to repeat one of the general orders. Failure to quote the requested general order verbatim would result in the trainee having to drop and give 50 push-ups, plus to go to the end of the mess line.



Basic Training at Fort Polk

by Jerry Prater

Taken from <http://vnwarstories.com>

The officer in charge informed us of some safety procedures and told us that the [M-14](#) was a powerful weapon with hardly any recoil. He demonstrated that by placing the butt of the rifle against his chin and fired a round. When I was firing my M-14 on the range, I knew I was doing something wrong because the rifle butt was hitting my shoulder hard and causing me pain with every round I fired, and my shoulder was black and blue the next day. My firing accuracy was also very bad, and my scores were among the worst in the company. I never figured out the proper way to hold the rifle, and I didn't understand how to get my front and rear sights in line. When we went to the qualifying range, my score was 30, which was just barely above the minimum required score of 27, so I qualified as a Marksman.

Sergeant Thomas Eustice was our platoon sergeant and he was housed in a room at the entrance to our barracks. He would regularly strut around the barracks in his starched fatigues, infantry scarf, spit shined boots and shiny helmet liner and make threats about what he would make us do if anybody in the platoon didn't measure up. He would always end the threat with his favorite expression, "If you thing I'm bullshitting, just try me!" As we were coming to the end of our basic training, all of us were anxious to learn what [MOS](#) (Military Occupation Specialty) we would be assigned, and where we would be stationed for our [AIT](#) (Advanced Individual Training). Sergeant Eustice obtained a copy of that list and read the assignments to us. I'll never forget what he said when he came to my name. He said "Prater, E-3-3, **TIGER LAND**." I couldn't believe it! Here I am a college grad who doesn't know the first thing about firing a rifle and I'm going to the infantry while all the high school dropouts who fired expert were being sent to be trained as company clerks, finance clerks, etc.! I was devastated.

We completed our eight weeks of basic training, and we had our graduation ceremony on the morning of Friday, February 24, 1967. After the ceremony, we returned to the company area and had our last company formation. Just before we were dismissed, Sergeant Tarpley had us march in place to the cadence song he sang when he marched to our training destinations. It was the Amen song, he would say the words "See the little baby," and we would sing "A – amen"; "wrapped in a manager," "A –amen"; "On Christmas Morning," "A – amen, amen, amen."



The Vietnam Conflict

Personal stories



Carl Fosco

Hometown: Ticonderoga

Current residence: Hudson Falls

Time served in Vietnam: December 1969 to February 1971

Military service: Spec. 5 in the U.S. Army as a medic in the air cavalry regiment. He was stationed in Quang Tri, just south of the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam.

Taken from <http://poststar.com>

He spent 14 months in the air cavalry regiment of the Army, having been drafted right after his college graduation.

"Six weeks later I was in Fort Dix, New Jersey, doing push-ups because my student deferment had ended," he said.

Fosco received medic and infantry training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and soon after went to Vietnam. The air cavalry was a "frenetic" operation and he was always on the move.

He was stationed mostly in Quang Tri, just south of the DMZ between North and South Vietnam. Fosco and his fellow medics would be sent out to patrol in areas from Khe Sanh to the border of Laos.

Fosco carried a bayonet given to him by a soldier he replaced. He would use the weapon to slash through the uniform of a wounded man so he could quickly tend to his injuries. It worked better than the government-issued scissors in his medical bag, which were "just stupid when somebody's trying to shoot at you," he said.

Fosco and his team were on call 24-7. They could expect to be airlifted into an area and not come out for several days. An A-H1 Cobra – an agile, thin-profile helicopter armed with rockets, machine guns and grenade launchers – provided support to the medics and engaged the enemy, if necessary.

"Whenever we got into trouble, those boys were right there," Fosco said. "Those pilots have a lot of guts."

On one mission, an aircraft in another air cavalry troop had been shot down. Fosco's team was summoned to pick up the crew since the other troop's infantry was busy elsewhere.

The scene was grim. The helicopter had been obliterated by a rocket and what was left would have fit into the back of a Jeep. Most horrific, though, was seeing the remains of the pilot and co-pilot.

"They were burned to a crisp. Their skulls were there, no eyes. Their hands were burned off with bone sticking out," Fosco said. "We had to put them in the body bags and put them on the helicopter and get out. I got on board. I was leaning back and I could feel the heat of their bodies through the body bags as we took them to the hospital morgue. I spent almost 15 months on the line like that."

Determined to put the memories behind him, he spent six months working in a paper mill in Ticonderoga after his discharge. While in Vietnam, he had applied to and was accepted to graduate school. He returned to SUNY Cortland, where he had done his undergraduate work, and earned a master's degree in secondary social studies. He went on to teach at Hartford Central School from 1973 until his retirement in 2002.

"I had a goal; I didn't just come home and drift," he said. "I took off the uniform and hung it up and went on with my life. That was it."

He doesn't remember much about his Vietnam homecoming and thinks most soldiers were treated with indifference.

In 1975, Fosco joined the Army Reserves in Glens Falls, working one weekend a month and two weeks every summer, and rose through the ranks from drill sergeant to sergeant major by the time he retired 27 years later. He now receives military medical benefits.

Reflecting on his time in Vietnam, Fosco said he wasn't concerned with any "grand cause" of defeating communism. He and his buddies were focused on making it home in one piece.

He believes the U.S. should have learned from France 15 years before that the war in Vietnam was futile.



The Vietnam Conflict

Personal stories



Personal Story

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by: Dr. Hal Kushner
1/9 Cav, 1 Cav Div

At the 1st Cav reunion DR Hal Kushner, who served with 1/9 Cav, 1 Cav Div, in Vietnam, told the story of his service in Vietnam and his horrible ordeals, extreme pain and suffering and unflinching loyalty and honor to the United States Army and our country.

Taken from <http://www.war-stories.com>

I want you to know that I don't do this often. I was captured 2 Dec. 1967, and returned to American control on 16 Mar. 1973. For those of you good at arithmetic - 1931 days. Thus it has been 32 years since capture and 26 years since my return. I have given a lot of talks, about medicine, about ophthalmology, even about the D-Day Invasion as I was privileged to go to Normandy and witness the 50th anniversary of the invasion in Jun. 1944.

But not about my captivity. I don't ride in parades; I don't open shopping centers; I don't give interviews and talks about it. I have tried very hard NOT to be a professional PW. My philosophy has always been to look forward, not backward, to consider the future rather than the past. That's a hell'uva thing to say at a reunion, I guess. In 26 years, I've given only two interviews and two talks. One to my hometown newspaper, one to the Washington Post in 1973, and a talk at Ft. Benning in 1991 and to the Military Flight Surgeons in 1993. I've refused 1,000 invitations to speak about my experiences. But you don't say no to the 1-9th, and you don't say no to your commander. COL Bob Nevins and COL Pete Booth asked me to do this and so I said yes sir and prepared the talk. It will probably be my last one.

I was a 26-year-old young doctor, just finished 9 years of education, college at the University of North Carolina, med school at Medical College of VA, a young wife and 3 year old daughter. I interned at the hospital in which I was born, Tripler Army Med Center in Honolulu, HI. While there, I was removed from my internship and spent most of my time doing orthopedic operations on wounded soldiers and Marines. We were getting hundreds of wounded GIs there, and filled the hospital. After the hospital was filled, we created tents on the grounds and continued receiving air evac patients. So I knew what was happening in Vietnam. I decided that I wanted to be a flight surgeon. I had a private pilot's license and was interested in aviation. So after my internship at Tripler, I went to Ft. Rucker and to Pensacola and through the Army and Navy's aviation medicine program and then deployed to Vietnam. While in basic training and my E&E course, they told us that as Doctors, we didn't have to worry about being captured. Doctors and nurses they said were not PWs, they were detained under the Geneva Convention. If they treated us as PWs, we should show our Geneva Convention cards and leave. It was supposed to be a joke and it was pretty funny at the time.

I arrived in Vietnam in Aug. 1967 and went to An Khe. I was told that the Div. needed two flight surgeons; one to be the div. flight surgeon at An Khe in the rear and the other to be surgeon for the 1-9th, a unit actively involved with the enemy. I volunteered for the 1-9th. The man before me, CPT Claire Shenep had been killed and the dispensary was named the Claire Shenep Memorial Dispensary. Like many flight surgeons, I flew on combat missions in helicopters, enough to have earned three air medals and one of my medics, SSG Jim Zeiler used to warn me: "Doc, you better be careful. We'll be renaming that dispensary, the K&S Memorial Dispensary."

I was captured on 2 Dec 67 and held for five and a half years until 16 Mar 73. I have never regretted the decision that I made that Aug to be the 1-9th flight surgeon. Such is the honor and esteem that I hold the squadron. I am proud of the time I was the squadron's flight surgeon.

On 30 Nov. 1967, I went to Chu Lai with MAJ Steve Porcella, WO-1 Giff Bedworth and SGT McKeckney, the crew chief of our UH-1H. I gave a talk to a troop at Chu Lai on the dangers of night flying. The weather was horrible, rainy and windy, and I asked MAJ Porcella, the A/C commander, if we could spend the night and wait out the weather.

He said, "Our mission is not so important but we have to get the A/C back." I'll never forget the devotion to duty of this young officer; it cost him his life.