

EVENTS LEADING TO CRISIS

A Chronology of the Vietnam Conflict Since 1945

1945

- Mar. 9—Japanese occupation authorities proclaim independent Vietnam with Emperor Bao Dai as nominal ruler.
- Sept. 2—Communist led Vietminh Independence League seizes power under Ho Chi Minh; establish "Democratic Republic of Vietnam."
- Sept. 22—French troops return to Vietnam, clash with Communists and anti-French nationalists in Tonkin.

1946

- Mar. 6—France recognizes Democratic Rep. of Vietnam as "free state" within Indo-Chinese Federation and French Union.
- Dec. 19—Vietminh attack on French troops in north begins eight-year Indo-China War.

1949

- Mar. 8—Independent state of Vietnam established with ties to France.
- June 14—Bao Dai assumes role as chief of state of Vietnam; nationalists withhold support.
- July 19—Laos established as independent state with ties to France.
- Nov. 8—Cambodia established as independent state with ties to France.

1950

- May 8—U.S. announces military and economic aid to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

1954

- May 7—French stronghold at Dien Bien Phu falls.
- July 21—Cease-fire signed at Geneva. Partition of Vietnam at 17th parallel into Communist north and anti-Communist south with proviso of free elections in 1956.
- Sept. 8—Southeast Asia Defense Treaty (SEATO) established to check Communist expansion.

1955

- Oct. 26—Republic of Vietnam established in South Vietnam with Ngo Dinh Diem as president. U.S. promises aid.

1956

- April—Last French troops in Vietnam leave. U.S. military advisers train South Vietnamese.
- May 8—Free elections to reunify the two Vietnams postponed.

1957

- May 29—Crisis in Laos as pro-Communist Pathet Lao forces make bid for power.

1959

- April—Increase of Communist underground (Vietcong) activity in South Vietnam, supplied and directed from North Vietnam.

1960

- Nov. 11—Unsuccessful military revolt against Diem regime in South Vietnam.

1961

- Jan.—North Vietnam and U.S.S.R. aid pro-Communist rebels in Laos.
- Mar.—U.S. reacts to threat of Communist takeover in Laos with increased aid and dispatch of troops to Thailand.
- July—U.S. steps up aid to South Vietnam; increases role of military advisers.

1962

- June 11—Agreement on coalition government in Laos announced.
- Oct.—U.S. helicopter units begin air lifts of South Vietnamese troops against Vietcong.

1963

- May—Aug—Buddhist demonstrations against Diem government in South Vietnam.
- Nov. 2—Diem assassinated in army coup; start of a long series of shaky regimes and coups lasting until 1965.

1964

- Aug. 2,4—North Vietnamese patrol boats attack U.S. destroyers in Gulf of Tonkin.
- Aug. 5—In reprisal U.S. 7th Fleet makes air strike against North Vietnamese boat bases and oil storage depot.
- Aug. 7—Congress passes Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, endorsing all measures to prevent further aggression.
- Dec. 31—U.S. forces in Vietnam total 23,000.

1965

- Feb. 7—Vietcong attack U.S. installations at Pleiku. President Johnson orders retaliatory raids, beginning the bombing of bases and supply lines in North Vietnam.
- Mar. 8—3,500 Marines land at Da Nang as U.S. commits combat troops to support South Vietnamese forces.
- June 18—First B-52 raid from Guam.
- June 19—Military junta led by Nguyen Cao Ky comes to power in South Vietnam.
- June 28—U.S. Army troops in first major operation against Vietcong northeast of Saigon.
- July 28—President Johnson orders U.S. forces in South Vietnam increased to 125,000, more if necessary.
- Dec. 31—U.S. troops in Vietnam total 181,000.

1966

- Jan. 31—U.S. peace offensive fails; bombing of North Vietnam is resumed after 37-day pause.
- Feb. 7-8—President Johnson and Ky meet in Hawaii to discuss goals for Vietnam.
- June 29—First U.S. bombing raids on strategic targets in Hanoi-Haiphong area.
- Oct. 24-25—Manila conference of allied powers fighting in South Vietnam.
- Dec. 31—U.S. forces in Vietnam total 389,000.

1967

- Mar. 27—New constitution for South Vietnam.
- May—Demilitarized Zone swept by U.S. forces.
- Sept. 3—Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu and Premier Ky elected president and vice president of South Vietnam.
- Dec. 31—U.S. forces in Vietnam nearly 500,000.

1968

- Jan. 31—Vietcong launch *Tet* holiday offensive; fierce fighting rages in Saigon and Hue.
- Feb. 13—Additional 10,500 U.S. troops ordered to Vietnam to meet increased pressure against Marines at Khe Sanh and to meet Vietcong assaults on South Vietnamese cities.