



Vietnam War



Origins of the War

- French controlled Vietnam for years
- 1950's Vietnamese fought back against the French
- US supported the French



France Surrenders

- 1954
- Final defeat was at Dien Bien Phu-worse loss in French History



Domino Theory

- If one country in Asia becomes Communist, others will too
- US wanted to stop spread of Communism anywhere in the world

Geneva Conference

- Split Vietnam into 2 countries with 17th parallel as the border
- Ho Chi Minh and communists control the North
- Diem and democracy in the South
- This split was temporary with the people of Vietnam voting and choosing a gov't in future

Diem

- Leader of South Vietnam
- Used terror tactics to keep power
- Backed out of elections meant to unite the 2 countries of Vietnam
 - Causes civil war to break out between North and South Vietnam

Protests of Diem



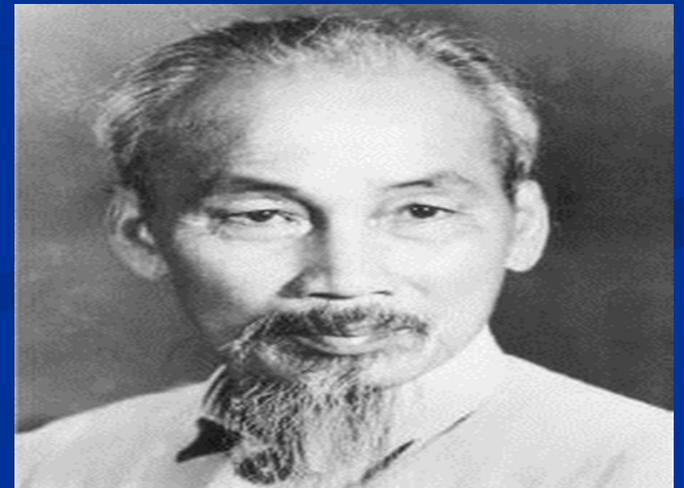
US aid to Diem

- President Eisenhower sent 675 “advisors” to help the South Vietnamese in their civil war
- US also sent financial and military aid



Ho Chi Minh

- Led communist North Vietnam
- Led revolt against the French
- Fought against the Japanese in WWII and was supported by the USA
- Now was a US enemy as a communist



US and Vietnam

- Gradual involvement in the war
- US supported the South
- US sent “advisors” to aid the South in their civil war with the communists

Escalation

- President Kennedy increases “advisors” to 16,000 in 1960
- JFK and CIA support the murder of Diem and his brothers in South Vietnam (1963)



- President LBJ “I am not going to let Southeast Asia go the way China went”



Gulf of Tonkin Incident

- Vietnamese patrol boat attacked a US ship in the Gulf of Tonkin
- US ship fired back and destroyed the patrol boat

Gulf of Tonkin resolution

- Passed by Congress
- Not a declaration of war but gave President LBJ broad military powers

Major Cities in Vietnam

- Hanoi- capital of North Vietnam
- Saigon-capital of South Vietnam

War

- General Westmoreland led the US troops in Vietnam
- US fought alongside the ARVN (South Vietnam Army)
- Draft to raise US army numbers



- We used napalm and Agent Orange as weapons
 - Destroyed the environment and crops



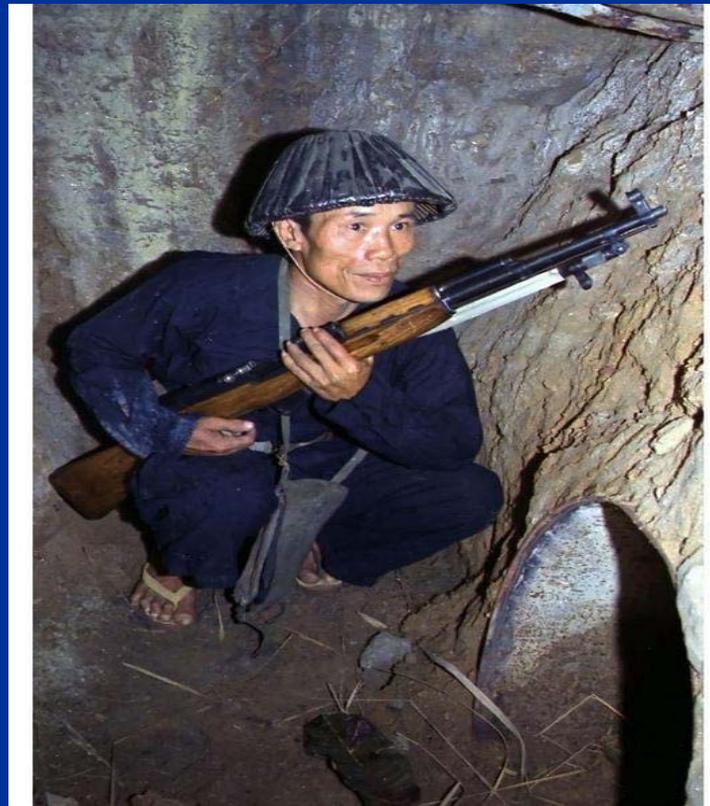
- US never knew who the enemy really was- blended in with civilians
- Viet Cong- North Vietnamese ‘irregular army’



- Viet Cong fought a “guerrilla war”- hit hard and fast and run away
- North Vietnam also had a “regular army” that wore uniforms, etc



- “the guerilla wins if he does not lose, the conventional army loses if it does not win”-Mao Zedong



My Lai Massacre

- Roughly 500 unarmed civilians were killed by a US army unit
- Mostly women, children, and elderly
- Not the only war crime committed by US soldiers



Operation Rolling Thunder

- Bombing of North Vietnam by US airplanes for roughly 3 years (1965-1968)



“Puff the Magic Dragon”

- Nickname for plane used by US for air support
- Fired 18,000 bullets per minute



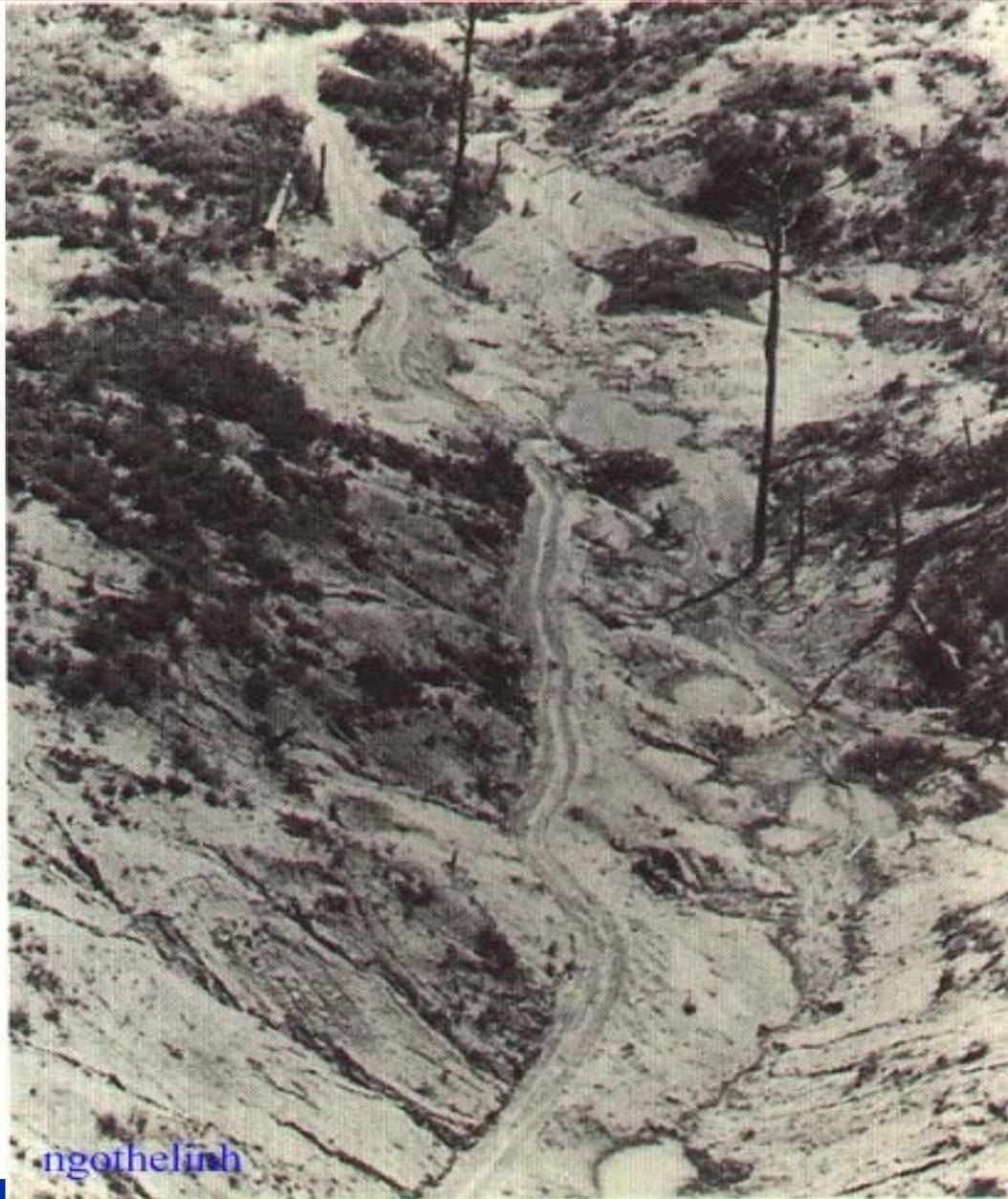
New Strategy

- Body counts were more important than gaining ground
- Soldiers would fly in by helicopter to a battlefield, win the battle and fly out (Huey)



Ho Chi Minh Trail

- Supply line for the North Vietnamese through jungles and underground
- Hard to find for US military and hard to attack
- Stretched from south Vietnam to the north



Battle of Hue

- One of bloodiest and longest battles of war
- Fought in city not the jungle
- Started during the Tet offensive





Battle of Khe Sanh

- January to July 1968
- Under siege for 77 days
- US evacuated all soldiers in July and ‘gave up’ the battle to the North Vietnamese



African Americans in Nam

- Larger percentage of the US soldiers in Nam were African American than whites



Protests

- Vietnam was not a popular war
- Many protests (some violent like at Kent State University) throughout the US against the war





Tet Offensive

- Tet was the Vietnamese New year
- Surprise attacks throughout all of Vietnam by the Viet Cong (North)
- Heavy losses for the US and ARVN (South Vietnam)

- Every major southern city was initially lost to the north then retaken
- US media makes it seem worse than it really was and helps turn public opinion against the war
- Heavy losses for Vietcong and regular North Vietnamese army
- Overall, a victory for the USA



Pentagon Papers

- Revealed that the US gov't was planning to enter war in Vietnam
- Revealed that the US gov't had no plans to end the war as long as the North still wanted to fight

Vietnamization

- President Nixon's idea that the South Vietnamese should play a more active role in the war
- By January 1973, most US soldiers are out of Nam

Fall of Saigon

- April 1975, north Vietnamese troops invade and take control of Saigon
- End of the war
- South surrenders soon after
- Vietnam becomes a unified country with a communist gov't



Costs

- 3 million Vietnamese killed
- 58,000 Americans killed
- 300,000 Americans wounded
- \$150 billion cost to USA



Impact

- 26th Amendment-voting age 18
- Draft is abolished
- War Powers Act
 - President must notify congress within 48 hours of sending troops somewhere
 - Congress must approve the troops being sent by 90 day mark or they come home

- Hatred for veterans
 - Seen as “baby killers”

POW/MIA problem

- 2583 still unaccounted for today
- John McCain was a POW
- Many were American pilots who were shot down



Ho Chi Minh

- “If we have to fight, we will fight. You will kill ten of our men and we will kill one of yours and in the end it will be you who tires of it”

