

# Vietnam

A History

Stanley Karnow



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For Annette, who was there at the beginning.

Amid growing tensions, French warships bombard Haiphong, November 23.  
Vietminh forces withdraw from Hanoi in December after attacking French garrisons. Ho Chi Minh creates a rural base. The war has begun.

- 1947 \*George Kennan of the State Department, writing under the pseudonym X, publishes the concept of "containment" in *Foreign Affairs*.  
\*U.S. Congress votes funds on May 15 to aid Greece and Turkey to combat Communist insurgency and terrorism, according to a policy soon known as the Truman Doctrine.  
\*On June 5, Secretary of State George Marshall outlines aid program to Europe, later called the Marshall Plan.  
Bao Dai, living in Hong Kong, offers to negotiate with France to achieve Vietnam's independence and unity.  
\*Britain grants independence to India and Pakistan in August.  
Bao Dai initials understandings with French high commissioner Emile Bollaert in December, recognizing Vietnamese independence within limits.
- 1948 \*Soviet Union blockades land routes to Berlin in April. United States and Britain fly food and coal into the city until the blockade is lifted in September 1949.  
\*Harry Truman narrowly defeats Thomas Dewey for the presidency on November 2.
- 1949 Bao Dai and President Vincent Auriol of France sign the Elysée Agreement on March 8, making Vietnam an "associated state" within the French Union. France retains control of Vietnam's defense and finances.  
Bao Dai returns to Vietnam in April after three years of self-imposed exile.  
\*North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) formed by the United States, Canada and ten Western European nations, August 24.  
\*Chinese Communists drive Chiang Kai-shek from the mainland of China; Mao Zedong proclaims the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1.
- 1950 Ho Chi Minh declares on January 14 that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is the only legal government. It is recognized by the Soviet Union and China, but also establishes diplomatic relations with Marshal Tito's Yugoslavia, prompting some American officials to suggest that Ho is not a Soviet "puppet."  
United States and Britain recognize Bao Dai's government, February 7. Chinese Communists, now at the Vietnamese border, begin to provide modern weapons to the Vietminh.  
\*On June 26, North Korea invades South Korea. President Truman, without consulting Congress, commits American troops to the war under United Nations auspices.

Truman signs legislation granting \$15 million in military aid to the French for the war in Indochina, July 26.  
French defeated at Caobang, a key post on the Chinese border.  
General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny named French military commander and high commissioner for Indochina, December 6.

- 1951 Ho Chi Minh creates the Lao Dong, or Workers party, in February as a substitute for the Communist party, ostensibly dissolved in 1945.  
\*Truman dismisses General Douglas MacArthur, the American commander in Korea, for unauthorized statements, April 11.  
\*Cease-fire talks begin in Korea in July, though fighting continues for the next two years.
- 1952 General Giap's offensive in the Red River valley blunted by de Lattre.  
De Lattre dies in Paris, January 11.  
\*United States explodes first hydrogen device in the Pacific, November 1.  
\*Dwight D. Eisenhower elected president of the United States, November 4.
- 1953 \*Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader, dies on March 5.  
\*Armistice agreement signed in Korea, July 27.  
France grants Laos full independence as a member of the French Union in October. Majority of the French National Assembly expresses hope for a negotiated settlement to the Indochina war.  
Prince Norodom Sihanouk takes command of the Cambodian army on November 9; declares Cambodia's independence from France.  
French forces reoccupy Dienbienphu.  
Ho Chi Minh tells a Swedish newspaperman that he is ready to discuss French peace proposals.  
Vietminh forces push into Laos in December.
- 1954 On January 25, foreign ministers of United States, Britain, France and Soviet Union meet in Berlin; agree that a conference on Korea and Indochina should be held in April.  
Battle of Dienbienphu begins, March 13; French defeated at Dienbienphu, May 7.  
Eisenhower decides in April against American intervention to help France in Indochina after Britain rejects his proposal for concerted action.  
Indochina phase of the Geneva conference opens on May 8, with Britain and Soviet Union as cochairmen.  
\*Government of Prime Minister Joseph Laniel falls in Paris in June.  
Bao Dai selects Ngo Dinh Diem as prime minister, June 16.  
Pierre Mendès-France, invested as prime minister of France, June 17, pledges to achieve a cease-fire in Indochina within a month; goes to Bern to negotiate secretly with Zhou Enlai, Chinese foreign minister.  
Diem returns to Saigon, July 7.

Agreements reached at Geneva in July call for cessation of hostilities in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Provisional demarcation line at seventeenth parallel divides Vietnam pending political settlement to be achieved through nationwide elections. Final declaration accepted orally by all participants at the conference except United States, which states it will not disturb the agreements but would view renewed aggression with concern. Bao Dai's government denounces agreements.

The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) formed, September 8, by United States, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand and Philippines.

French forces leave Hanoi, October 9.

General J. Lawton Collins, Eisenhower's special envoy, arrives in Saigon to affirm American support for Diem, including \$100 million in aid. Hundreds of thousands of refugees flee from the north to the south with help of U.S. navy.

- 1955 United States begins to funnel aid directly to Saigon government in January, agrees to train South Vietnamese army. Diem crushes the Binh Xuyen sect in April. Period ends for French forces and their Vietnamese auxiliaries to deploy to the south, and for Vietminh troops to regroup in the north. Diem rejects the Geneva accords and refuses to participate in nationwide elections on July 16, a decision backed by the United States. Ho Chi Minh, in Moscow in July, accepts Soviet aid, having earlier negotiated in Beijing for Chinese assistance. Diem defeats Bao Dai in a referendum, October 23, becomes chief of state; proclaims the Republic of Vietnam, with himself as president, October 26. In December, land reform in North Vietnam reaches its most radical phase as landlords go before "people's tribunals."

- 1956 Prince Sihanouk, now Cambodian prime minister, asserts his intentions in April to pursue a neutralist policy. Diem begins crackdown on Vietminh suspects and other dissidents. \*Soviet Union crushes October uprisings in Hungary and Poland. \*Britain, France and Israel launch the Suez War in November.

- 1957 In January, the Soviet Union, favoring a permanent division of the country, proposes that North and South Vietnam be admitted to United Nations as separate states. Diem arrives in U.S. for ten-day visit on May 8. President Eisenhower reaffirms support for his regime. Communist insurgent activity in South Vietnam begins in October in accordance with decision reached in Hanoi to organize thirty-seven armed companies in Mekong Delta. During the year, guerrillas have assassinated more than four hundred minor South Vietnamese officials.

- 1958 Communists form a coordinated command structure in eastern Mekong Delta in June. Prince Souvanna Phouma dissolves his neutralist government in Laos on July 22; succeeded by Phoui Sananikone, who with American support adopts anti-Communist stance.

- 1959 A plot to overthrow Sihanouk uncovered in February, with a CIA agent involved. North Vietnam forms Group 559 in May, to begin infiltrating cadres and weapons into South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Group 759 organized in July by Communists to send supplies to the south by sea. Major Dale Buis and Sergeant Chester Ovnand killed by guerrillas at Bienhoa on July 8, the first Americans to die in what would officially be called the Vietnam Era. Diem promulgates law authorizing intense repression of Communist suspects and other dissidents in August. Hanoi leadership creates Group 959 in September to furnish weapons and other supplies to Communist insurgents in Laos. \*In December, Charles de Gaulle takes power in France; establishes Fifth Republic.

- 1960 North Vietnam imposes universal military conscription in April. Eighteen prominent South Vietnamese petition Diem to reform his government. Captain Kong Le stages coup d'état in Laos in August, hands power back to Souvanna Phouma. General Phoumi Nosavan, with CIA help, forms opposition faction in southern Laos. Lao Dong (Workers party) congress opens in Hanoi, September 5; stresses need to combat Diem regime. \*John F. Kennedy defeats Richard Nixon for the presidency, November 8. South Vietnamese army units unsuccessfully attempt to overthrow Diem, November 11. Hanoi leaders form National Liberation Front for South Vietnam, December 20, which Saigon regime dubs the Vietcong, meaning Communist Vietnamese. Crisis erupts in Laos in late December as General Phoumi Nosavan attacks Vientiane. Soviet aircraft fly supplies to Souvanna Phouma's neutralist faction.

- 1961 As he leaves office, Eisenhower warns Kennedy that Laos is the major crisis in Southeast Asia. In March, Kennedy asserts American support for the sovereignty of Laos, while Britain and Soviet Union propose an international conference to resolve the crisis. \*American-backed attempt to overthrow Fidel Castro fails at the Bay of Pigs in April. Vice-President Lyndon Johnson visits South Vietnam in May; proposes additional American aid to Diem regime.

- Geneva conference on Laos opens, May 16; later creates neutral coalition headed by Souvanna Phouma.
- \*Kennedy meets Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev in Vienna, June 4.  
Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow visit Vietnam in October; recommend American combat troop intervention disguised as flood relief. Kennedy spurns idea but decides to give Diem more equipment and advisers.
- 1962 American military assistance command formed in South Vietnam, February 6. By mid-1962, American advisers have increased from 700 to 12,000.  
Two South Vietnamese pilots bomb Diem's palace, February 27, but Diem and his family survive.  
In May, Communists form battalion-size units in central Vietnam.  
Geneva accords on Laos signed, July 23.  
\*Kennedy forces the Soviets to withdraw missiles from Cuba in October.  
American and Saigon governments promote Strategic Hamlet Program.
- 1963 Vietcong units defeat South Vietnamese at the battle of Ap Bac, January 2.  
Ho Chi Minh and Chinese President Liu Shaoji denounce "revisionism," May 1, indicating North Vietnamese shift toward China.  
South Vietnamese troops and police shoot at Buddhist demonstrators in Hué, May 8. Crisis intensifies when Buddhist monk commits self-immolation in June.  
South Vietnamese General Tran Van Don informs Lucien Conein, a CIA agent, on July 4 that officers are plotting against Diem.  
Ngo Dinh Nhu's forces attack Buddhist temples, August 21.  
Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge arrives in Saigon, August 22, replacing Frederick Nolting. On August 24, Washington recommends that Nhu be removed; also suggests American support for mutinous generals against Diem; Lodge concurs.  
Kennedy criticizes Diem in a television interview, September 2.  
Duong Van Minh and other generals stage coup against Diem and Nhu, November 1; Diem and Nhu are murdered after their surrender next day.  
\*On November 22, Kennedy assassinated in Dallas; succeeded by Lyndon Johnson.  
By year's end, 15,000 American military advisers are in South Vietnam, which has received \$500 million in aid during the year.  
Communist leadership in Hanoi decides to step up the struggle in the south.
- 1964 General Nguyen Khanh seizes power in Saigon, January 30; arrests four ruling generals but allows Minh to remain as figurehead chief of state.

- Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara visits Vietnam in March; vows support for Khanh.  
Dean Rusk, McNamara and others confer in Honolulu, June 2, on increased aid to South Vietnam. Pentagon strategists refine plans for bombing North Vietnam.  
Covert South Vietnamese maritime operations begin against North Vietnam in July.  
North Vietnamese patrol boats attack the *Maddox*, an American destroyer in the Tonkin Gulf, August 2. A doubtful second incident reported two days later. American aircraft bomb North Vietnam for the first time later this month.  
Congress passes the Tonkin Gulf resolution on August 7, giving Johnson extraordinary power to act in Southeast Asia.  
\*China explodes its first atomic bomb in October.  
\*Khrushchev ousted, October 14; replaced by Leonid Brezhnev and Aleksei Kosygin.  
Vietcong attack Bienhoa air base, October 30, but Johnson rejects proposal for retaliatory raids against North Vietnam.  
\*Lyndon Johnson defeats Barry Goldwater for the presidency, November 3.  
In November, Saigon convulsed by rioters protesting Khanh's rule. Taylor, now ambassador, urges Khanh to leave the country.  
Vietcong terrorists bomb American military billet in Saigon, December 24. Johnson again rejects proposal for raids against North Vietnam.
- 1965 Johnson's national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, arrives in Saigon on February 4, as Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin arrives in Hanoi.  
Vietcong stage attacks against American installations, February 7.  
Johnson authorizes Flaming Dart, American air raids against North Vietnam.  
Dr. Phan Huy Quat forms government in Saigon, February 18; General Khanh leaves the country.  
Operation Rolling Thunder, sustained American bombing of North Vietnam, begins on February 24.  
Two marine battalions land to defend Danang airfield, March 8, the first American combat troops in Vietnam.  
Johnson, at Johns Hopkins University, April 7, offers Ho Chi Minh participation in a Southeast Asian development plan in exchange for peace.  
North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong rejects Johnson's proposal, April 8; says settlement must be based on Vietcong program.  
Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky takes over as prime minister of a military regime in Saigon, June 11.  
American command in Saigon reports on June 26 that Vietcong have put five South Vietnamese combat regiments and nine battalions out of action in recent months.

Johnson reappoints Lodge ambassador to South Vietnam, July 8, to replace Taylor. Eighteen American combat battalions now in the country.

Johnson approves Westmoreland's request, July 28, for forty-four additional combat battalions.

In September, Chinese Defense Minister Lin Biao, in "Long Live the Victory of People's War!" indicates China will not intervene directly in Vietnam. Mao Zedong begins the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

American forces defeat North Vietnamese units in the Ia Drang valley in October, the first big conventional clash of the war.

By December, American troop strength in Vietnam reaches nearly 200,000.

Johnson suspends bombing of North Vietnam on December 25 in an attempt to induce the Communists to negotiate.

- 1966 Johnson resumes bombing, January 31.  
Johnson and South Vietnamese leaders issue a communique, February 8, in Honolulu, emphasizing need for pacification in South Vietnam.  
Buddhist demonstrators against Saigon regime in Hué and Danang, March 10. Government troops take over Danang, May 23.  
Government troops take over Hué, June 16.  
American aircraft bomb oil depots near Hanoi and Haiphong, June 29.  
President de Gaulle of France visits Cambodia in September; calls for American withdrawal from Vietnam.  
American and South Vietnamese leaders conclude conference in Manila, October 25.  
American troop strength in Vietnam reaches nearly 400,000 by year's end.

- 1967 North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh says on January 28 United States must stop bombing North Vietnam before talks can begin.  
Johnson ends two-day meeting on Guam, March 21, with Thieu and Ky. North Vietnamese reveal exchange of letters between Johnson and Ho Chi Minh.  
Westmoreland confers with Johnson in Washington, April 27; addresses Congress next day.  
Ellsworth Bunker arrives in Saigon to replace Lodge as ambassador, May 1.  
\*Johnson completes two days of talks with Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin, June 25, at Glassboro, New Jersey.  
McNamara, testifying before a Senate subcommittee in August, asserts American bombing of North Vietnam is ineffective.  
In South Vietnam, Thieu elected president, Ky vice-president, September 3.  
Communists begin major actions in September. Westmoreland starts to fortify Khesanh.

Johnson, in San Antonio on September 29, says United States will stop bombing in exchange for "productive discussions."  
Westmoreland, in the United States in November, exudes optimism. Foreign Minister Trinh says on December 29 that North Vietnam "will" talk once the United States halts its bombing.  
American troop strength in Vietnam approaches 500,000 by year's end. Domestic protests against the war rise.

- 1968 In January, Sihanouk tells Johnson's emissary, Chester Bowles, that he will not stop American forces from pursuing the Vietcong over the Cambodian border.  
\*USS *Pueblo* seized by North Koreans, January 23.  
Tet offensive begins, January 31, as North Vietnamese and Vietcong attack South Vietnamese cities and towns.  
American and South Vietnamese troops recapture Hué on February 25 after twenty-six days of fighting.  
General Earle Wheeler, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, brings request from Westmoreland in Saigon for 206,000 additional American troops.  
Clark Clifford, succeeding McNamara as secretary of defense, begins study of troop request; soon favors rejection of buildup.  
\*Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota nearly defeats Johnson in New Hampshire primary.  
\*Senator Robert F. Kennedy of New York announces candidacy for president, March 16.  
Westmoreland appointed army chief of staff, replaced in Vietnam by General Creighton Abrams.  
On March 25, "wise men" meet in Washington; advise Johnson against further escalation.  
On March 31, Johnson announces partial bombing halt, offers talks, and says he will not run for reelection.  
\*Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinated in Memphis, April 4.  
North Vietnamese diplomats arrive in Paris in mid-May for talks with American delegation headed by Averell Harriman.  
\*Senator Robert F. Kennedy assassinated in Los Angeles, June 5, after winning the California primary.  
\*Richard Nixon wins Republican nomination for president in Miami, August 8.  
\*Vice-President Hubert Humphrey wins Democratic nomination for president in Chicago amid riots outside the convention hall.  
Johnson stops all bombing of North Vietnam.  
\*Nixon elected president of United States, November 5, with Spiro Agnew as vice-president.  
\*Henry Kissinger chosen by Nixon as national security adviser, December 2.  
American troop strength in Vietnam at year's end is 540,000.
- 1969 In January, Paris talks expanded to include Saigon government and Vietcong representatives.  
Nixon begins secret bombing of Cambodia, March 18.

- Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird invents term "Vietnamization" in March to cover American troop withdrawals.
- Nixon proposes simultaneous withdrawal from South Vietnam of American and North Vietnamese forces, May 14.
- Nixon, with Thieu on Midway, June 8, announces withdrawal of 25,000 American troops from Vietnam.
- Nixon unveils "Nixon Doctrine" in Guam on July 25.
- In August, Kissinger meets covertly in Paris with North Vietnamese negotiator Xuan Thuy.
- Ho Chi Minh dies in Hanoi at age seventy-nine, September 3.
- Massive antiwar demonstrations in Washington, October 15.
- Nixon delivers "silent majority" speech on November 3.
- Another big antiwar demonstration in Washington, November 15.
- On November 16, revelation of the Mylai massacre, which took place the year before.
- American troop strength in Vietnam reduced by 60,000 by December.
- 1970 Kissinger begins secret talks in Paris with Le Duc Tho, February 20. Sihanouk overthrown in Cambodia by Lon Nol and Sisowath Sirik Matak, March 18.
- Nixon announces, April 30, that American and South Vietnamese forces have attacked Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia.
- Large antiwar protests spread across the United States. National guardsmen kill four students at Kent State University in Ohio on May 4.
- Nixon proposes "standstill cease-fire," October 7, but repeats mutual-withdrawal formula next day.
- American combat deaths in Vietnam during last week in October numbered twenty-four, lowest toll since October 1965.
- On November 12, Lieutenant William Calley goes on trial at Fort Benning, Georgia, for his part in the Mylai massacre.
- American troop strength in Vietnam down to 280,000 men at year's end.
- 1971 In February, South Vietnamese forces begin incursions in Laos against the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
- Lieutenant Calley convicted, March 29, of premeditated murder of South Vietnamese civilians at Mylai.
- \**The New York Times* begins publishing Pentagon Papers on June 13.
- Supreme Court upholds its right to do so.
- \*On July 15, Nixon announces Kissinger's trip to China.
- \*Nixon's chief of staff, John Ehrlichman, organizes the "plumbers," July 17, to investigate Daniel Ellsberg, who made the Pentagon Papers public.
- Thieu reelected president of South Vietnam, October 3.
- American troop strength in Vietnam down to 140,000 men in December.
- 1972 Nixon reveals on January 25 that Kissinger has been negotiating secretly with the North Vietnamese.
- \*Nixon arrives in China, February 21.
- North Vietnam launches offensive across the demilitarized zone, March 30.
- On April 15, Nixon authorizes bombing of area near Hanoi and Haiphong.
- \*Kissinger goes to Moscow, April 20, to prepare Nixon's summit meeting with Brezhnev on May 20.
- North Vietnamese capture the city of Quangtri, May 1.
- On May 8, Nixon announces mining of Haiphong harbor and intensification of American bombing of North Vietnam.
- \*Five men arrested, June 17, for breaking into Democratic National Committee offices at Watergate complex in Washington, D.C.
- Kissinger meets again with Le Duc Tho in Paris, August 1; senses progress. In Saigon, mid-August, senses Thieu's reluctance to accept cease-fire accord.
- Thieu opposes draft agreement in meeting with Kissinger's assistant, Alexander Haig, October 4.
- Breakthrough at Paris meeting between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, October 8. Back in Saigon in mid-October, Kissinger finds Thieu implacably opposed to agreement.
- Hanoi Radio broadcasts details of the agreement in an effort to pressure Kissinger. But he is anxious to reassure North Vietnam; declares that "peace is at hand."
- \*Nixon reelected, November 7, defeating Senator George McGovern by a landslide.
- Kissinger resumes talks with Le Duc Tho, November 20; presents him with sixty-nine amendments to agreement demanded by Thieu.
- Fresh talks between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho begin again in December and break down.
- On December 18, Nixon orders bombing of areas around Hanoi and Haiphong; raids continue for eleven days. Communists agree to resume diplomatic talks when bombing stops.
- 1973 Kissinger and Le Duc Tho resume talks, January 8; finally initial agreement, January 23.
- Cease-fire agreements formally signed in Paris, January 27. Secretary of Defense Laird announces that draft in the United States has ended.
- Last American troops leave Vietnam, March 29.
- Last American prisoners of war released in Hanoi, April 1.
- \*Nixon aides H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman and John Dean and Attorney General Richard Kleindienst resign, April 30, amid charges that the administration obstructed justice.
- Graham Martin sworn in as ambassador to South Vietnam, June 24, replacing Ellsworth Bunker.
- \*John Dean, former White House counsel, tells a special Senate committee, June 25, that Nixon tried to cover up the Watergate affair. Alexander Butterfield, former Nixon aide, discloses to committee, July 13, existence of tapes of White House conversations.

- On July 16, Senate Armed Services Committee begins hearings on the secret bombing of Cambodia.  
United States stops bombing Cambodia, August 14, in accordance with congressional prohibition.  
\*On August 22, Nixon announces appointment of Kissinger as secretary of state to replace Rogers.  
\*Agnew resigns, October 10; replaced by Representative Gerald Ford as vice-president.  
\*On November 7, Congress overrides Nixon's veto of law limiting the president's right to wage war.
- 1974 Thieu declares in January that the war has begun again.  
\*House Judiciary Committee opens impeachment hearings on Nixon, May 9.  
Communist buildup of men and supplies proceeds in South Vietnam in June.  
\*Supreme Court rules, July 24, that Nixon must turn over White House tapes to Leon Jaworski, Watergate special prosecutor; House Judiciary Committee votes, July 30, to recommend impeaching Nixon on three counts.  
\*Nixon resigns, August 9; replaced by Ford.  
\*Ford pardons Nixon, September 8, for all federal crimes that he "committed or may have committed."  
Communists review plans in September to resume fighting during the coming dry season.
- 1975 Communists capture Phuoc Long province, north of Saigon, January 6.  
North Vietnamese General Van Tien Dung goes south to take command of Communist forces, February 5.  
Communists capture Banmethuot, March 11.  
Thieu meets with his commanders at Camranh, March 15; orders northern provinces of South Vietnam abandoned.  
Thieu reverses himself, orders Hué held at all costs, March 20. But the city falls to the Communists five days later.  
Communists capture Danang, March 30.  
On March 31, politburo in Hanoi directs General Dung to push toward Saigon in the "Ho Chi Minh Campaign."  
Le Duc Tho arrives at Communist headquarters at Locninh, April 7, to oversee offensive.  
In Cambodia, Phnompenh falls to the Khmer Rouge, April 17.  
Communists capture Xuanloc, April 21, last South Vietnamese defense line before Saigon.  
President Ford, speaking in New Orleans on April 23, calls the war "finished."  
Thieu leaves Saigon for Taiwan, April 25. Vice-President Tran Van Huong transfers authority as chief of state to General Duong Van Minh, April 28.  
Option IV, evacuation of last Americans from Saigon, begins, April 29. Ambassador Martin departs.
- Communist forces capture Saigon, April 30. Colonel Bui Tin takes surrender from Minh.  
U.S. merchant ship *Mayaguez* seized by Cambodian Communists in Gulf of Siam, May 12. American aircraft bomb Cambodia. Thirty-eight U.S. marines die in rescue of thirty-nine seamen.
- 1976 \*Jimmy Carter elected president of the United States, November 2.
- 1977 On January 21, the day after his inauguration, Carter pardons most of 10,000 Vietnam war draft evaders.  
Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke begins talks with Vietnamese officials in March to explore U.S. recognition of Vietnam.
- 1978 Vietnam joins Comecom, the East European economic community, in June.  
In July, tensions between Vietnam and Cambodia build up; relations between Vietnam and China deteriorate.  
In October, United States postpones plans to normalize relations with Vietnam.  
In November, Vietnam and Soviet Union sign a friendship pact, which the Chinese term a "threat to the security" of Southeast Asia.  
Vietnam starts to repress its ethnic Chinese minority. Thousands flee the country.  
\*Carter announces full-scale diplomatic relations between the United States and China, December 15.  
Vietnam invades Cambodia, December 25.  
Thousands of "boat people" begin to flee Vietnam in December.
- 1979 China invades Vietnam in February.
- 1980 \*Ronald Reagan elected president of the United States, November 4.
- 1982 Vietnam veterans memorial unveiled in Washington, D.C., November 11.
- 1983 In June, reflecting their experience in Vietnam, several U.S. generals express opposition to military intervention in Central America without clear support of Congress and American public.  
\*President Reagan withdraws U.S. marines from Beirut following attack against their barracks in October, invades Grenada.
- 1984 In May, a federal judge announces \$180 million settlement against seven chemical companies after Vietnam veterans charged them with manufacturing Agent Orange.