

FACT SHEET ON THE VIETNAM WAR

THE PAST YEAR: AN OVERVIEW

April 15, 1970

"I think history will record that this may have been one of America's finest hours, because we took a difficult task and we succeeded."

Richard Nixon spoke these words in Saigon, July, 1969, while reaffirming his continuing support for the Thieu-Ky regime. Two years after Lyndon Johnson's dramatic, but empty, gestures toward peace the war drags on, its scale matched only by the expansive rhetoric used to justify it. It has become more than evident that the Nixon Administration is selling the old Johnson "win" policy under a new name—Vietnamization. The latter is "the process of gradually transferring combat responsibilities from U.S. to South Vietnamese troops as American units are gradually withdrawn from Vietnam." The policy has not, thus far, worked well. In 1969, Nixon's first year in office, 9,414 Americans died in combat, more than in 1967, the year that brought heavy criticism to the Johnson war policy. George C. Wilson, Washington Post columnist, observed that "Ironically, a spot check of newspaper coverage in those two years shows that the Vietnam battlefield news practically disappeared from the front page in 1969 as compared to 1967." The air war continues over South Vietnam, U.S. planes dropping a monthly average of almost 100,000 tons of explosives. In the ground war revelations of Song-My style massacres (with Army officials covering up and/or excusing them with a myriad of military cliches) cast a grisly shadow of shame over our 'finest hour.' Now the reality of a spreading war in Laos and Cambodia has come to light, with American "logistical" troops and air support playing large roles in both countries. The tempo of the war has not changed. U.S. and ARVN forces have been under orders to continue "maximum pressure" on the enemy, a policy now euphemized as "protective reaction." Throughout the summer and fall of 1969 this pressure was kept up despite an unmistakable de-escalation by North Vietnamese and N.L.F. forces, beginning in June. In July casualties fell to their lowest 1969 level. The lull was widely acknowledged by the Pentagon and although it continued into August, no U.S. reciprocation was forthcoming. One Army officer of the Ninth Infantry Division stated that "If anything, we're pushing harder than before." In mid-August responding to constant military pressure, the enemy launched a counter-offensive which lasted two weeks. Then, in September, the lull resumed, and continued into November. During October the lowest U.S. casualty total since 1966 was recorded. Still there was no change in U.S. policy. One general said there had been no change in orders, that his aims were to inflict "maximum enemy casualties"; during October, his statistics revealed that of 58 engagements, only four were enemy-initiated. If there has been a tactical change in the war, it is toward more reliance on machines and firepower, with an emphasis on keeping U.S. casualties down to "acceptable" levels. In December, Secretary of State Rogers announced that North Vietnamese infiltration had decreased in 1969 by 60% from 1968 levels. This de-escalation has had no effect on policy, either on the battlefield or in Paris. Nixon has yet to appoint a top-level negotiator to replace Ambassador Lodge, who resigned last November 21. It is obvious that the President still believes in and pursues a military solution in Vietnam, just as Lyndon Johnson did before him.

CASUALTIES*

| Year | United States | | South Vietnam | | "Allied" Killed | NLF and North Vietnam Killed |
|------|---------------------|---------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | Killed | Wounded | Killed | Wounded | | |
| 1960 | — | — | 2,223 | (³) | — | 5,669 |
| 1961 | 11 | 3 | 4,004 | 8,000 | — | 12,133 |
| 1962 | 31 | 78 | 4,457 | 7,300 | — | 21,158 |
| 1963 | 78 | 411 | 5,665 | 12,000 | — | 20,575 |
| 1964 | 147 | 1,039 | 7,457 | 16,700 | 1 | 16,785 |
| 1965 | 1,369 | 6,114 | 11,243 | 23,665 | 31 | 35,436 |
| 1966 | 5,008 | 28,614 | 11,953 | 20,975 | 566 | 55,524 |
| 1967 | 9,378 | 52,969 | 12,716 | 29,448 | 1,105 | 88,104 |
| 1968 | 14,592 | 92,820 | 27,915 | 70,696 | 979 | 181,149 |
| 1969 | 9,414 | 70,216 | 21,758 | 65,034 | 866 | 156,594 |
| 1970 | 2,963 | 20,896 | 2,963 | (³) | (³) | 61,567 |
| | 42,991 ¹ | 283,695 | 110,936 | 253,818 ² | | 656,976 |

* Source: U.S. Department of Defense. Figures as of July 11, 1970.

¹ Does not include 8,209 'accidental' deaths, which raises total U.S. dead in Vietnam to 51,200.

² Figure represents the total of "seriously wounded" only for the period January 1, 1961 through December 31, 1969.

³ Figures not available.

BOMB TONNAGE DROPPED ON VIETNAM

| Period | Tons of Bombs |
|--------|---------------|
| 1965 | 315,000 |
| 1966 | 512,000 |
| 1967 | 932,763 |
| 1968 | 1,431,654 |
| 1969 | 1,186,047 |
| 1970 | 117,675 |
| | 4,495,139 |

decreased in 1969 by 60% from 1968 levels. This de-escalation has had no effect on policy, either on the battlefield or in Paris. Nixon has yet to appoint a top-level negotiator to replace Ambassador Lodge, who resigned last November 21. It is obvious that the President still believes in and pursues a military solution in Vietnam, just as Lyndon Johnson did before him.

"Speaking for peace or in any other way opposing the government [in South Vietnam] easily brings the charge of Communist sympathy and subsequent arrest . . . There must be no illusion that this climate of religious and political suppression is compatible with either a representative or a stable government."

The above statement was cabled directly to President Nixon by the U.S. Study Team on Religious and Political Freedom in Vietnam during their stay in Vietnam in May-June, 1969. It is no secret that Thieu and Ky remain in power by imprisoning vast numbers of their political opponents. A senior American advisor told the Study Team that over 45,000 prisoners are incarcerated. An estimate from the Saigon Daily News put the figure at 100,000. Regardless of the exact numbers, the fact is that anyone who openly advocates peace, negotiations, neutrality, etc. is subject to arrest, torture, and banishment to the dark cells of the prison. The recent conviction (by military tribunal) of Assembly deputy Chau is only the latest example of the totalitarian practices of the Thieu regime.

CHRONOLOGY

"If there is anything that makes my blood boil it is to see our allies in Indochina and Java deploying Japanese troops to reconquer the little people we promised to liberate. It is the most ignoble kind of betrayal."

—General Douglas MacArthur
after World War II.

- 1945- Democratic Republic of Vietnam proclaimed from Hanoi by Ho Chi Minh. Struggle of the Vietminh against Japanese occupation of Indochina during World War II had been aided by the U.S. British forces help the French colonial powers regain a tenuous control over Indochina, refusing to deal with the Vietminh.
- 1946- March 6 Agreement, signed by the French and Ho Chi Minh, recognizes Vietnam as "free state" within the French Union. France, disregarding the spirit of the agreement, establishes customs office in Haiphong. After a few minor incidents, France calls in its fleet, and without warning fires on the open port (estimates of Vietnamese dead range from 8,000 to 40,000.) The Vietminh attacks the colonial government all through Indochina in response to the Haiphong attack, and the French-Indochinese War begins.
- 1948- Bao Dai, former emperor of Vietnam is installed by France as chief of state of Vietnam in Saigon.
- 1950- U.S. agrees to help France finance war against the Vietminh. (Between 1950 and 1954, \$2.6 billion in military and economic aid—80% of the cost of the war—is sent to the French in Vietnam.)
- 1954- French defeated at Dien Bien Phu. Geneva Agreements signed, dividing Vietnam into two "zones" pending elections which are to be held no later than July 1956. President Eisenhower pledges direct *economic* aid to the government of Bao Dai. 860,000 Vietnamese, mostly Roman Catholic, cross the "provisional military demarcation line" into the southern zone.
- 1955- Bao Dai deposed and Ngo Dinh Diem becomes president of "Republic of Vietnam." U.S. assumes the training of the army of Diem's regime, taking over from the French. Preliminary talks to set up the elections required by the Geneva Agreements are scheduled to begin on July 20. They are rejected by Diem and the U.S. closes its consulate in Hanoi.
- 1956- Uprising of Cao Dai sect is put down by Diem after he agrees to legalize its religious practices. Diem refuses to allow the elections called for in the Geneva Agreements to take place. In spite of this, U.S. aid continues to Saigon.
- 1958- Guerilla activity increases in response to Diem's persecution. The guerilla forces are made up in part of former Vietminh members who remained in the southern zones, and in part of other groups which feel the weight of Diem's oppression. U.S. direct aid also increases. A Michigan State University team trains the national police, and the U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) is increased from 327 to 685 members.
- 1960- National Liberation Front (NLF) founded by South Vietnamese nationalists and intellectuals to further resistance to Diem. Diem begins to infiltrate sabotage teams into the northern zone.
- 1961- Radio Hanoi praises the NLF in first public stand on the crisis in the South. President Kennedy commits "several hundred specialists in guerilla warfare to train Vietnamese soldiers," as well as aircraft and other equipment. By the end of the year over 3100 American *advisors* are stationed in Vietnam. (By contrast, Senate Majority Leader Mansfield reports that in 1965—3 years later—"only about 400 North Vietnamese soldiers were among the enemy forces in the South.")
- 1962- The U.S. increases its aid to the Diem regime, setting up the "U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam" under four-star General Paul Harkins, and raising the number of MAAG advisors. South Vietnam's National Assembly extends its term of office by one year, and several months later extends Diem's power to rule by decree for another year.
- 1963- Buddhist demonstrations against the discrimination of the predominantly Roman Catholic Diem regime are put down bloodily by government troops and national policy in Hue and Saigon. Between June and October, seven Buddhist monks die in protest by setting themselves afire with gasoline. In November Diem is overthrown in a military coup. (10 successive governments assume power during the next 18 months, the majority of them military juntas, including that established by air-marshal Nguyen Cao Ky in June, 1965.)
- 1964- Congress in August passes "Gulf of Tonkin" Resolution after two U.S. destroyers are allegedly attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. (Subsequent testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee disclosed that neither craft suffered damage, and that some crewmen were not at all sure they were being "attacked"!)
- 1965- Regular bombing of North Vietnam begins in February. Secretary General U Thant's proposal in March for a preliminary conference on Vietnam is rejected the next day by the United States. The U.S. provides the South Vietnamese army with gases, and commits its 23,000 advisors to combat in June. By the year's end, over 160,000 additional combat troops are brought to Vietnam, and the U.S. loses 351 planes and helicopters.
- 1966- Military targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area are bombed in an effort to stop growing movement of men and supplies across the demilitarized zone. (On the effect of the bombing, Secretary of Defense McNamara was to say in 1967: "I don't believe that the bombing up to the present has significantly reduced, nor any bombing that I could contemplate in the future, would significantly reduce the actual flow of men and material to the South.") U.S. combat strength increased to over 285,000 men.
- 1967- The bombing of North Vietnam increases, as our troop commitment climbs to almost half a million. In an election rife with charges of fraud, the military ticket of Generals Thieu and Ky are elected with 35% of the total vote. (The Assembly had barred 7 sets of candidates and Ky, then Premier, had continued press censorship, declaring that "there are parts of a constitution that can be respected right away and there are others that take time.") Amid exclamations that the enemy is "hurting very badly"

CHRONOLOGY *Continued*

(Dean Rusk), that "we are making steady progress" (Hubert Humphrey), and predictions of "sensational" military gains (Ambassador Lodge), Senator Claiborne Pell announces that during the bombing of the north, "we may well have lost equipment worth more than five times the cost of the damage we inflicted." U.S. casualties continue to mount, and authorized American troop strength is increased to 525,000.

1968- January 30, the NLF launches the Tet (Lunar New Year) offensive, virtually destroying the "pacification program" and inflicting the heaviest losses of the war on U.S. troops. (Hue is held for 25 days by North Vietnamese and NLF units, Saigon itself is attacked in strength, and the U.S. embassy is entered and held for 6 hours by 19 guerilla fighters.) General Westmoreland asks for 206,000 more combat troops: over 20,000 are authorized, to bring the total authorized to 549,000. Preliminary peace talks between North Vietnam and the United States begin in Paris on May 10, following President Johnson's March 31 declaration of a limitation on bombing of North Vietnam. The use of chemicals to destroy crop-producing land in South Vietnam is increased, and for fiscal 1969 the Air Force requests almost double the amount of chemicals which it used in the previous year. General Westmoreland is replaced by General Creighton Abrams. A full bombing halt is declared on November 1 as expanded peace talks are announced. U.S. casualties continue to rise as the American command steps up the ground operations in the south. The *Washington Post* reports that almost as many U.S. soldiers had been killed in 1968 as in the previous 7 years combined.

1969- Expanded peace talks (including representation from the Saigon regime and the National Liberation Front) begin in January and continue through the year with no results. A minor Tet offensive, aimed only at military bases is launched in February. A battlefield lull dominates the rest of the year, interrupted only by occasional 'high points' of combat. Nixon unveils Vietnamization plan in May 14 speech. Troop withdrawal announcements

"Crop destruction constitutes a war measure primarily, if not exclusively, directed at children, the elderly, and pregnant and lactating women. In other words, our point is not that innocent bystanders will be hurt by such measures but that only bystanders will be hurt. The primary U.S. aim—to disable the Vietcong—will not be achieved and our proclaimed secondary aim—to win over the civilian population—is made a hollow mockery."

"Defoliation" of land in South Vietnam has been used as a weapon in the war since 1962. Since the beginning of the program, known as "Operation Ranch-Hand," the percentage of crop-producing land treated with chemicals has risen enormously. At the end of 1969 almost 6 million acres had been treated, 554,465 acres of which had been crop-producing. Much of this acreage has been subjected to repeated attacks. Besides being of dubious military value, the defoliation program has harmed and alienated the civilian population. A study done in February, 1969 disclosed a startling correlation between herbicide usage in Vietnam and fetal deaths in pregnant Vietnamese women, as well as a significant increase in birth deformities. In the face of such deliberate destruction of land and life, the apparent American assumption that the Vietnamese people prefer environmental devastation to a government including Communist participation can only be treated with the gravest of reservations.

begin: June 8—25,000; Sept. 16—35,000; Dec. 15—50,000. Ho Chi Minh dies on Sept. 3. In September, Thieu appoints military and civil servant friends to cabinet and shrinks his already narrow base of popular support. Ambassador Lodge resigns his post in Paris and Nixon chooses not to name anyone of comparable stature to carry on the negotiations there. The Song My massacre comes to light. Secretary of State Rogers announces a 60% decrease in North Vietnamese infiltration during 1969, reducing the total enemy forces level in South Vietnam to 240,000. In 1969 9,414 American soldiers died, more than 1967.

1970- The long-postponed Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on the Vietnam War open in February. The enemy launches his annual Tet offensive, aimed primarily at military bases. U.S. begins disclosures of losses in Laos fighting. AP calls B-52 raids over Laos "some of the heaviest air raids ever flown in Southeast Asia." South Vietnamese troops carry the war into Cambodia with U.S. air and logistical support. The menacing spectre of a wider war in Indochina takes on increasing reality.

TROOP STRENGTHS IN VIETNAM'S SOUTHERN ZONE

| Year's End | United States | South Viet-name | "Allied" | NLF and North Vietnamese |
|------------|---------------|----------------------|----------|------------------------------|
| 1960 | 800 | 274,000 | — | 36,000 |
| 1961 | 3,200 | 338,200 | — | 63,000 |
| 1962 | 11,300 | 467,200 | — | 79,000 |
| 1963 | 16,300 | 525,800 | — | 92,000 |
| 1964 | 23,300 | 611,700 | 500 | 170,200 (2,400) ² |
| 1965 | 184,300 | 691,500 | 22,400 | 222,800 (26,500) |
| 1966 | 385,300 | 735,900 | 52,600 | 281,900 (48,500) |
| 1967 | 485,600 | 753,000 | 59,000 | 303,800 (51,700) |
| 1968 | 542,000 | 800,000 | 72,000 | 320,000 (130,000) |
| 1969 | 472,000 | 875,000 ¹ | 69,000 | 240,000 (140,000) |

(1) In addition, there are presently 215,000 "para-military" personnel (i.e. national police, civilian irregulars, and pacification units as well as regional police).

(2) Figures in parentheses indicate number of North Vietnamese regulars included in the preceding figure.

—Scientists Jean Mayer and Victor W. Sidel

DEFOLIATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Acreage Treated With Defoliant and Herbicides

| PERIOD | ACREAGE TREATED ¹ | COST ² |
|--------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1962 | 17,119 (717) | |
| 1963 | 34,517 (297) | |
| 1964 | 53,873 (10,136) | |
| 1965 | 94,726 (49,637) | |
| 1966 | 775,894 (112,678) | \$12.5 |
| 1967 | 1,700,000 (221,000) | \$38.8 |
| 1968 | 1,900,000 (95,000) | \$45.9 |
| 1969 | 1,300,000 (65,000) | \$70.8 |

(1) Numbers in parentheses represent acres of crop-producing land. Crop-producing land in South Vietnam totals about 8 million acres.

(2) Figures (in millions) are for the fiscal year indicated.

"... We're going to bomb them back into the Stone Age."

—General Curtis LeMay

We may not yet have succeeded in pushing them back into the "Stone Age," but the Bronze Age must not be far away. Some facts about the bombing:

Total tonnage of bombs dropped on Vietnam, north and south, exceeds the total dropped in all theaters of World War Two by twice that amount. At the end of 1969, the figure stood at 4,377,464 tons. On Japan, Germany and other enemy territory in the last World War we dropped 2,057,244 tons.

We have dropped 250 pounds of bombs for every man, woman, and child in both North and South Vietnam.

We have dropped over 35 tons of bombs for every square mile of territory in both North and South Vietnam.

"It became necessary to destroy the town to save it."

—An army major at Ben Tre, South Vietnam,
February 7, 1968

CASUALTY COMPARISONS

| War | Battle Dead | Wounded |
|---------|----------------|---------|
| WW I | 53,402 | 204,002 |
| WW II | 291,557 | 670,846 |
| Korean | 33,629 | 103,284 |
| Vietnam | 42,991 | 283,695 |

The figures at left need no comment. What deserves comment, but about which there is no conclusive knowledge, is the number of civilian casualties in the war to date. The Kennedy Subcommittee on Refugees conservatively estimates that there has been a minimum of 1 million civilian casualties since 1964, perhaps 500,000 of that total being deaths. That is an average of 150,000-200,000 civilian casualties per year. In the light of increased combat casualties over the past three years, it is likely that the true figures are much higher. Edward S. Herman, author of several studies of U.S. Vietnam policy, estimates South Vietnam casualties since 1965 at 1,116,000 dead and 2,232,000 wounded.

"The official figures for refugees stand at nearly 2,000,000 (or more than 10 per cent of the population) but the true number is unknown. The official count in Saigon, for instance, is zero but perhaps half of the people in Saigon are refugees of some sort."

—Richard J. Peters, Associate Program Officer
International Voluntary Services

The U.S. Committee for Refugees lists the number of refugees in South Vietnam for 1969 as 1,197,143. Tens of thousands have fled into Cambodia and Thailand. The population of Saigon is 2.5 million, and Mr. Peter's analysis would put the refugee total over 3,000,000. The Kennedy Subcommittee on Refugees estimates over 5 million South Vietnamese have been refugees in one sense or another since 1964, and that one out of every three South Vietnamese has been dislocated by the war, whether or not he has been resettled.

VIETNAM WAR COST

| Fiscal Year | Cost (\$Billions) |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 1961-65 | \$ 10 |
| 1965-66 | 20 |
| 1967 | 20 |
| 1968 | 25 |
| 1969 | 25 |
| July-Dec. '69 | 10 |
| | \$110 Billion |

The cost of the Vietnam War has wrought a number of disastrous effects on the U.S. economy. A period of inflation, unprecedented since 1947, has literally wiped out all wage gains of the American worker: in 1965, consumer prices rose 1.8 per cent; in 1966, 3.2 per cent; in 1967, 3.2 per cent; in 1968, 4.9 per cent; and in 1969 prices rose a record 6.5 per cent—thus, a 19.6 per cent drop in the purchasing power of the dollar in four years. Unemployment rose to 4.2 per cent (3.8 million workers) in February, 1970. According to Mr. Tom Riddle, member of the Council on Economic Priorities, "Such unemployment trends do not seem to fit in well with America's goal of eliminating poverty and solving the urban crisis. Unemployment, however, is one of the costs that some of the American people are asked to pay in order to halt war-generated and stimulated inflation."

Interest rates on loans to individuals and businesses have risen to all-time highs—approaching 9 per cent. The balance of payments deficit in 1969 was \$6.99 billion—the worst in our history. Who prospers as the workers and the poverty-stricken bear the brunt of the war's cost? "In the same period that workers' wages have been declining, corporations and the rich have been enjoying unprecedented prosperity. Between 1960 and the first half of 1969 . . . corporate after-tax profits skyrocketed up 94.5% and dividends to stockholders rose 80%."

"But the American people will not, and should not, be content to sacrifice indefinitely our youth and our treasure for a Government which muzzles folk singers who sing of peace, which shuts down newspapers which dare suggest talks with the N.L.F., which locks up Buddhist priests and politicians who have the audacity to call for peace."

—Senator Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) March, 1969

Sources of information and statistics supplied upon request.

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