Remembering Vietnam:
12 Critical Episodes in the Vietnam War

Why did the United States become involved in Vietnam?
Why was the war so long?
Why was it so controversial?

It is important to answer these questions. The sacrifices made by veterans and their families, the magnitude of death and destruction, and the war’s lasting effects require no less. “Remembering Vietnam” is a resource for refreshing our collective memory. Iconic and recently discovered National Archives records trace the policies and decisions made by the architects of the conflict. Its collection of evidence provides an opportunity for new insight and greater understanding of one of the most consequential wars in American history.

Visit “Remembering Vietnam” online for more information and to see related programs and events: www.archives.gov/vietnam

Teach with these primary source documents on DocsTeach: www.docsteach.org/topics/vietnam-war

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The conflict in Vietnam involves a mind-boggling mass of acronyms, a lengthy cast of characters, and a multiplicity of terms. Use this guide to help you keep track of the architects, fighting forces, and battle sites of the Vietnam War.

**ABOUT THE TERM “VIET CONG”**

Americans and their South Vietnamese allies referred to the South Vietnamese insurgents as “Viet Cong,” a derogatory term that roughly translates to “Vietnamese traitor” or “Vietnamese communist.” The insurgents called themselves liberators. Officially, the “Viet Cong” were known as the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and the People’s Liberation Armed Forces.

**People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN)**
- **Official Name**: People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN)
- **American Name**: North Vietnamese Army (NVA)
- **Predecessor**: Viet Minh

**Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)**
- **Official Name**: Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)
- **American Name**: South Vietnamese Army (SVA)
- **Predecessor**: Vietnamese National Army (VNA)

**United States**
- **Official Name**: US Armed Forces
- **American Name**: Viet Cong
- **Predecessor**: Viet Minh

**Democratic Republic of Vietnam**
- **Leader**: Ho Chi Minh
  - **Titles**: Prime Minister (1945–55) and President (1955–69)
  - **Reign**: People’s Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)

**Republic of Vietnam**
- **Leader**: Ngo Dinh Diem
  - **Titles**: President (1955–63)
  - **Reign**: Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)

**REMEMBERING VIETNAM QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE**

- **Ho Chi Minh Trail**
- **Capital**: Hanoi
- **Key Sites**: Saigon, Hue, Haiphong, Danang, Dakto, Pleiku, Mekong Delta, An Loc, Saigon

- **Cambodia**: Laotian
- **Democratic Republic of Vietnam**: Leaders
- **Republic of Vietnam**: Leaders
- **United States**: Leaders

**Leaders**
- **Democratic Republic of Vietnam**
  - **Vo Nguyen Giap**: Principal commander First Indochina War (1946–64) and Vietnam War (1960–75)

- **Republic of Vietnam**
  - **Ngo Dinh Diem**: President (1955–63)
  - **Ngo Dinh Nhu**: Brother and chief political advisor to President Diem
  - **Nguyen Van Thieu**: President (1965–75)

- **United States**
  - **Harry Truman**: President (1945–53)
  - **McGeorge Bundy**: National Security Adviser (1961–68)
  - **Lyndon Johnson**: President (1963–69)
  - **Dwight Eisenhower**: President (1953–61)
  - **Henry Kissinger**: National Security Adviser (1969–75)
  - **Richard Nixon**: President (1969–74)
  - **John F. Kennedy**: President (1961–63)
  - **Gerald Ford**: President (1974–77)
  - **William Westmoreland**: U.S. Secretary of Defense (1961–68)