



12 CRITICAL EPISODES IN THE VIETNAM WAR

1. Truman Sides with France, 1946–53
2. Eisenhower Backs Diem, 1953–61
3. Kennedy Doubles Down, 1961–63
4. Johnson Sets the Stage, 1964
5. America Goes to War, 1965
6. Fighting on Three Fronts, 1966–67
7. Tet Offensive, 1968
8. Nixon’s Campaign Promise, 1968–69
9. Crossing into Cambodia, 1970–71
10. Fighting While Talking, 1972
11. Paris Peace Accords, 1973
12. Fall of Saigon, 1975

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.

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REMEMBERING VIETNAM QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

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.

COMBATANTS

Official Name	American Name	Predecessor
People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN)	North Vietnamese Army (NVA)	Viet Minh
Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)	South Vietnamese Army (SVA)	Vietnamese National Army (VNA)
	US Armed Forces	
People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF)	Viet Cong	Viet Minh



LEADERS

Democratic Republic of Vietnam



Ho Chi Minh
Prime Minister (1945–55) and President (1955–69) People's Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)



Vo Nguyen Giap
Principal commander First Indochina War (1946–54) and Vietnam War (1960–75)



Le Duan
General Secretary Central Committee Communist Party Vietnam (1960–86)

LEADERS

Republic of Vietnam



Ngo Dinh Diem
President (1955–63) Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)



Ngo Dinh Nhu
Brother and chief political advisor to President Diem



Nguyen Van Thieu
President (1965–75) Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)

United States



Harry Truman
(1945–53)



Lyndon Johnson
(1963–69)



Dwight Eisenhower
(1953–61)



Richard Nixon
(1969–74)



John F. Kennedy
(1961–63)



Gerald Ford
(1974–77)



Robert McNamara
U.S. Secretary of Defense (1961–68)



McGeorge Bundy
National Security Adviser (1961–66)



Henry Kissinger
National Security Advisor (1969–75)



William Westmoreland
U.S. Secretary of Defense (1961–68)

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.