



Vietnam: Yesterday and Today

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Timeline

[1930-1949](#)[1950-1959](#)[1960-1969](#)[1970-1979](#)[1980-1989](#)[1990-1999](#)[2000-](#)[Characteristics of the Vietnam War](#)[Vietnam Related News & Opinion](#)

Ho Chi Minh



General Vo Nguyen Giap



President Lyndon Johnson



General William Westmoreland

Timeline

Chronology of U.S -Vietnam Relations

1930

Indochinese Communist Party, opposed to French rule, organized by Ho Chi Minh and his followers.

1932

[Bao Dai](#) returns from France to reign as emperor of Vietnam under the French.

September, 1940

[Japanese troops](#) occupy Indochina, but allow the French to continue their colonial administration of the area. Japan's move into southern part of Vietnam in July 1941 sparks an oil boycott by the U.S. and Great Britain. The resulting oil shortage strengthens Japan's desire to risk war against the U.S. and Britain.

1945

An OSS ([Office of Strategic Services](#), forerunner of the CIA) team parachutes into Ho Chi Minh's jungle camp in northern Vietnam and saves Ho Chi Minh who is ill with malaria and other tropical diseases.

August, 1945

Japan surrenders. [Ho Chi Minh](#) establishes the [Viet Minh](#), a guerilla army. Bao Dai abdicates after a general uprising led by the Viet Minh.

September, 1945

Seven OSS officers, led by [Lieutenant Colonel A. Peter Dewey](#), land in Saigon to liberate Allied war prisoners, search for missing Americans, and gather intelligence.

September 2, 1945

Ho Chi Minh reads Vietnam's [Declaration of Independence](#) to end 80 years of colonialism under French rule and establish the [Democratic Republic of Vietnam](#) in Hanoi. Vietnam is divided north and south.

September 26, 1945

OSS Lieutenant Dewey killed in Saigon, the first American to be killed in Vietnam. French and Vietminh spokesmen blame each other for his death.

November, 1946

Ho Chi Minh attempts to negotiate the end of colonial rule with the French without success. The French army shells Haiphong harbor in November, killing over 6,000 Vietnamese civilians, and, by December, open war between France and the Viet Minh begins.

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1950

The U.S., recognizing Bao Dai's regime as legitimate, begins to subsidize the French in Vietnam; the Chinese Communists, having won their civil war in 1949, begin to supply weapons to the Viet Minh.

August 3, 1950

A [U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group](#) (MAAG) of 35 men arrives in Saigon. By the end of the year, the U.S. is bearing half of the cost of France's war effort in Vietnam.

May 7, 1954

The French are defeated at [Dien Bien Phu](#). [General Vo Nguyen Giap](#) commands the Viet Minh forces. France is forced to withdraw. The French-Indochina War ends. See also:

[Dien Bien Phu: A Vietnamese Perspective](#)
[Dien Bien Phu: A Website of the Battle](#)

June, 1954

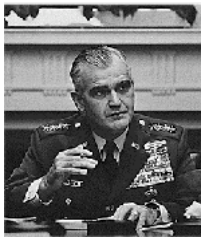
The CIA establishes a military mission in Saigon. Bao Dai selects [Ngo Dinh Diem](#) as prime minister of his government.

July 20, 1954

[The Geneva Conference on Indochina](#) declares a demilitarized zone at the 17th parallel with the North under Communist rule and the South under the leadership of Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem.

October 24, 1954

[President Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) pledges support to Diem's government and military forces.



President Richard Nixon



Robert McNamara



Henry Kissinger



President Clinton Visits Vietnam



Prime Minister Phan Van Khai visits the United States



1955

The U.S.-backed Ngo Dinh Diem organizes the Republic of Vietnam as an independent himself president.

1956

Fighting begins between the North and the South.

July 8, 1959

The first American combat deaths in Vietnam occur when Viet Cong attack Bien Hoa servicemen are killed.

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1960

The National Liberation Front (NLF)--called the [Viet Cong](#)--is founded in South Viet

February, 1961

The U.S. military buildup in Vietnam begins with combat advisors. [President John F. Kennedy](#) declares that they will respond if fired upon.

June 16, 1963

A [Buddhist monk](#) immolates himself in Saigon. Buddhist demonstrations occur through August.

June 20, 1964

[General William Westmoreland](#) succeeds General Paul Harkins as head of the U.S. military in Vietnam.

November 1, 1963

South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem is [assassinated](#).

May 4, 1964

Trade embargo imposed on North Vietnam in response to attacks from the North or

August 2 and 4, 1964

[The Gulf of Tonkin Incident](#). North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the U.S. destroyer *Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin. A second attack allegedly occurs on August 4.

In November, 2005, the National Security Agency (NSA) released "previously classified information regarding the Vietnam era, specifically the Gulf of Tonkin incident. This release includes articles, chronologies of events, oral history interviews, signals intelligence (SIGINT) translations, and other related memoranda."

URL: <http://www.nsa.gov/vietnam/>

LII Item: <http://lii.org/cs/lii/view/item/19925>

August 5, 1964

[President Lyndon Johnson](#) asks Congress for a resolution against North Vietnam after the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Congress [debates](#).

August 7, 1964

Congress approves the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) which allows the president to take necessary measures to repel further attacks and to provide military assistance to a [Treaty Organization](#) (SEATO) member. Senators Wayne L. Morse of Oregon and Frank Church of Idaho cast the only dissenting votes. President Johnson orders the bombing of North Vietnam. For additional information, see [New Light on Gulf of Tonkin, McNamara Asks How It Happened at Tonkin Gulf?](#), and [30-Year Anniversary: Tonkin Gulf and the Vietnam War](#).

March 8-9, 1965

The first American combat troops arrive in Vietnam.

April 6-8, 1965

President Johnson authorizes the use of U.S. ground combat troops for offensive operations. In exchange for peace, North Vietnam rejects the offer.

April 17, 1965

[Students for a Democratic Society](#) sponsor the first major anti-war rally in Washington, D.C.

June, 1965

Generals [Nguyen Cao Ky](#) and [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) seize the South Vietnamese government.

October 15-16, 1965

[Anti-war protests](#) are held in about 40 American cities.

November 14-16, 1965

The first major military engagement occurs between U.S. and North Vietnamese forces.

September, 1967

Thieu is elected president of South Vietnam.

Oct. 21-23, 1967

50,000 people [demonstrate](#) against the war in Washington, D.C.

January 21, 1968

The battle of [Khe Sanh](#) begins, ending six months later.

January 31, 1968

The Tet Offensive. Communist forces launch attacks on [Hue](#) and 31 other South provincial capitals and military bases. One assault team gets inside the walls of th Saigon but is driven back.

[American Perspective](#)
[Vietnamese Perspective](#)

March 16, 1968

Unarmed Vietnamese civilians are killed by members of U.S. Army Lt. William L. Calley at [My Lai](#).

March 22, 1968

President Lyndon Johnson names General William Westmoreland as Army Chief of Staff, replaced in Vietnam by [General Creighton W. Abrams](#).

May 10, 1968

The Paris peace talks begin between U. S. and Vietnamese officials.

May 10-20, 1969

The battle [for Hamburger Hill](#)

June 8, 1969

[President Richard Nixon](#) announces the first troop withdrawals from South Vietnam.

September 3, 1969

Ho Chi Minh dies.

November 15, 1969

250,000 people demonstrate against the war in Washington, D.C.

December 1, 1969

The first [draft lottery](#) since 1942 begins.

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March 10, 1970

Captain Ernest Medina charged with murder for the murders at My Lai. Events leading to [Lai Courts-Martial](#) begin, ending with the conviction of Lieutenant William Calley.

April 30, 1970

The armies of the U.S. and South Vietnam [invade Cambodia](#) to roust North Vietnam. The invasion sparks campus protests.

May 4, 1970

Four students are killed by National Guardsmen at [Kent State](#) University in Ohio. This event sparked hundreds of protest activities across college campuses in the United States. At the University of New Mexico, protesters were met with violence. See [Sates Anti-War Movement and the Vietnam War](#) and [New Mexico State Police](#).

May 6, 1970

More than 100 colleges are closed due to student riots over the invasion of Cambodia.

February, 1971

South Vietnam and the U.S. invade [Laos](#) in an attempt to sever the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

December 18, 1972

Christmas bombing of Hanoi and North Vietnam begins.

December 24, 1972

1972 Bob Hope gives his last show to U.S. servicemen in Saigon. It was his 9th Christmas show in Vietnam. President Nixon suspends Operation Linebacker II for the Christmas holiday.

December 28, 1972

The North Vietnamese announced that they will return to Paris if Nixon ends the Christmas bombing campaign was halted and the negotiators met during the first week of January.

January 23, 1973

United States, South Vietnam, and North Vietnam sign [Paris Peace Accords](#), ending U.S. combat role in war. U.S. military draft ends. A cease-fire goes into effect 5 days later.

March 29, 1973

Last U.S. combat troops leave Vietnam.

February 12-27, 1973

POWs begin to come home as part of [Operation Homecoming](#).

April 1, 1973

Hanoi releases last 591 acknowledged American POWs.

September 16, 1974

[President Gerald Ford](#) offers [clemency](#) to draft evaders and military deserters.

April 21, 1975

South Vietnamese President Thieu resigns.

April 29-30, 1975

Saigon falls. U. S. Navy evacuates U.S. personnel and South Vietnamese refugees. American combat death in Vietnam occurs. South Vietnamese [President Duong](#) surrenders.

[American Perspective](#)
[Vietnamese Perspective](#)

April 30, 1975

North Vietnamese forces take over Saigon; South Vietnam surrenders to North Vietnam and reunifying the country under communist control, forming the Independent of Vietnam. Washington extends [embargo](#) to all of Vietnam.

May 12, 1975

The U.S. merchant ship [Mayaguez](#) is seized by the [Khmer Rouge](#) in international waters of the Gulf of Siam. The ship, owned by Sea-Land Corporation, was en route to Sattahip, Hong-Kong, carrying a non-arms cargo for military bases in Thailand.

December, 1978

Vietnam invades Cambodia and topples [Pol Pot](#)'s Khmer Rouge government, ending [terror](#).

1979

Western European countries and non-communist Asian nations support U.S.-led intervention in Vietnam, in protest against invasion of Cambodia.

[Return to Top](#)**February, 1982**

Vietnam agrees to talks on American [MIAs](#).

November 11, 1982

[The Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#), "The Wall," is dedicated in Washington, D.C.

1988

Vietnam begins cooperation with United States to resolve fate of American service members (MIA).

September/October, 1988

United States and Vietnam conduct first [joint field investigations](#) on MIAs.

September 1989

Vietnam completes Cambodia withdrawal.

[Return to Top](#)**April 21, 1991**

United States and Vietnam agree to establish U.S. office in Hanoi to help determine status of missing Americans. Washington presents Hanoi with a roadmap for phased normalization of relations and lifting of embargo.

October, 1991

Vietnam supports U.N. peace plan for Cambodia. Secretary of State [James Baker](#) is ready to take steps towards normalizing relations with Hanoi. Washington presents ["roadmap"](#) plan for phased normalization of relations and lifting of U.S. embargo.

December, 1991

Washington lifts ban on organized U.S. travel to Vietnam.

1992

Vietnam's [Constitution](#) adopted.

April 29, 1992

Washington eases trade embargo by allowing commercial sales to Vietnam that meet U.S. needs, lifts restrictions on projects by American non-governmental and non-profit organizations, and establishment of telecommunications links with Vietnam.

October, 1992

Retired General [John Vessey](#), U.S. presidential envoy on MIA issue, makes sixth trip to Vietnam, obtains Vietnamese agreement on wider MIA cooperation, which Washington describes as a breakthrough.

December 14, 1992

President George Bush grants permission for U.S. companies open offices, sign feasibility studies in Vietnam.

July 2, 1993

President Bill Clinton ends U.S. opposition to settlement of Vietnam's \$140 million **International Monetary Fund**, clearing the way for the resumption of international relations with Vietnam.

September 13, 1993

President Clinton eases economic sanctions against Vietnam to allow American firm development projects financed by international banks, another step toward normal relations.

January 16, 1994

Admiral Charles Larson, head of U.S. Pacific Command visits Vietnam, the highest active-duty U.S. military officer to do so since the war's end. He concludes that lift embargo would help efforts to account for Americans missing from the war.

January 27, 1994

Backed by broad bipartisan support, the Senate approves non-binding resolution urging Clinton to lift embargo, a move they felt would help get a full account of Americans missing in the Vietnam War.

February 3, 1994

President Clinton announces the **lifting of the trade embargo**.

October 5, 1994

House passes bill saying MIA accounting should remain central to U.S. policy in Vietnam, main function of a U.S. liaison office in Vietnam.

January 27, 1995

U.S. and Vietnam sign agreements settling old property claims and establishing liaison offices in each other's capitals.

April 30, 1995

Vietnam celebrates the 20th anniversary of the end of the war.

May 15, 1995

Vietnam gives U.S. presidential delegation batch of documents on missing Americans. Pentagon as most detailed and informative of their kind.

May 23, 1995

Senators **John Kerry** (D, Mass) and **John McCain** (R, Ariz.), both Vietnam veterans, announce plans to normalize relations.

May 31, 1995

Vietnam turns over 100 pages of maps and reports about U.S. servicemen killed during the war. An American veteran's map helps locate a mass grave of communists killed during the war.

June 1995

Senators Kerry and McCain say they plan to offer a Senate resolution approving normalization with Vietnam.

Secretary of State **Warren Christopher** recommends to President Clinton that they establish formal diplomatic relations with Vietnam.

State Department praises Hanoi authorities for increasing counter-narcotics cooperation with the United States.

Vietnamese President Le Duc Anh announces he will visit the United States in October in celebration marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of the **United Nations**.

July 11, 1995

President Clinton announces normalization of relations with Vietnam, saying they move forward and bind up the wounds from the war.

July 28, 1995

Vietnam becomes a member of the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations** (ASEAN).

August 5, 1995

Secretary of State Warren Christopher opens U.S. embassy in Hanoi.

September 4, 1995

Former President George Bush visits Vietnam.

November 7-10, 1995

Former Secretary of Defense **Robert S. McNamara** visits Vietnam.

July 12, 1996

U.S. National Security Adviser **Anthony Lake** visits Hanoi to mark the first anniversary of normalization of relations.

April 10, 1997

Former POW [Douglas "Pete" Peterson](#) is confirmed by the Senate as the first a Vietnam since the end of the war and the first ever to be posted to Hanoi. Vietnam confirmed as Vietnam's ambassador to the United States.

April 16, 1997

U.S. and Vietnam reach copyright protection agreement, a step toward [Most Fav](#) status.

May 9, 1997

Ambassador Peterson arrives in Hanoi to take up his new post. Ambassador Le Van Washington on May 7.

June 24, 1997

Secretary of State [Madeline Albright](#) arrives in Vietnam on an official visit.

March 10, 1998

President Clinton waives the [The Jackson-Vanik Amendment](#) for Vietnam, allow investors in Vietnam to compete more effectively in Vietnam and to receive financial government agencies such as the Export-Import Bank.

April 15, 1998[Pol Pot dies](#)

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July 13, 2000

The United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky and Vietnam's Trade sign a major [trade agreement](#) intended to provide Vietnam with access to the U.S. same terms granted to most other nations. Vietnam agrees to lower tariffs and open up American products and services. The trade agreement is the last step in normalization between the U.S. and Vietnam.

November 16-19, 2000

President Bill Clinton and his family, Hillary Clinton and their daughter Chelsea, arrive for a [historic visit](#). Clinton was the first President to visit Vietnam since President Nixon. The purpose of Clinton's trip was to discuss relations between the two countries. *C think it is time to write a new chapter here.* See [President Clinton's Visit to Vietnam](#)

July 24-26, 2001

Secretary of State [Colin Powell](#) pays a three-day visit to Vietnam where he attends the Regional Forum in Hanoi. It was Powell's first visit to Vietnam since he served in Vietnam.

October 3, 2001

The United States Senate approves an agreement normalizing trade between the U.S. and Vietnam.

November 28, 2001

Vietnam's National Assembly ratifies the trade agreement with the United States to ensure that any U.S. interference in Vietnam's internal affairs could jeopardize implementation. The Vietnamese government voiced strong concerns over the U.S. House of Representatives passage of a [Vietnam Human Rights Act](#) which ties future U.S. non-humanitarian aid to improvements in Vietnam's human rights record.

November 10, 2003

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld met with Vietnam's Defense Minister for the first time a senior Vietnamese military official has visited Washington.

November 19, 2003

Navy missile frigate *USS Vandegrift* docked in the port of Ho Chi Minh City, a symbol boosting relations between Vietnam and the United States. Many of the crew were daughters of Vietnam War veterans. It was the first U.S. ship to dock in Vietnam since the war.

January 14, 2004

[Nguyen Cao Ky](#), who served as premier of South Vietnam until 1967 and then as president from 1967 to 1971, paid a visit to relatives in Vietnam for the Tet holiday. Permission given by the Vietnamese government. The visit caused controversy among overseas Vietnamese who felt it would legitimize the current government in Vietnam. Ky fled to the United States after the fall of Saigon in 1975.

March 25, 2005

Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai welcomed Vietnamese monk, [Thich Nhat Hanh](#), who was banned from returning to Vietnam in 1966. The Zen Master was invited by the Vietnamese Sangha's International Religious Board and will stay in Vietnam for 3 months.

March 29, 2005

The *USS Gary* arrived in the port of Saigon, marking the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States and Vietnam. The ship visited Vietnam in November, 2003 and the second in July, 2004. The visits are now annual.

April 30, 2005

The 30th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

[Vietnam Remembers Fall of Saigon](#)
[Open Letter to the People of Viet Nam](#)
[Vietnam: A Lingering Conflict](#)
[Vietnam Experts Comment on 30th Anniversary of War's End](#)
[Vietnam's Long Journey from War](#)

June 19, 2005

Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and a delegation of the Vietnamese government arrived first destination on his official four-city, week-long visit to the United States at the President George Bush. "The purpose of my visit to the United States is to elevate it to a higher plane," Khai said.

The Prime Minister Phan Van Khai met privately with Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates at the company's Redmond headquarters. Gates also gave him a tour of Microsoft's "home" display of consumer technology and a company research center. The Prime Minister met with press and representatives of major U.S. businesses at his first stop. Contracts were signed.

The Prime Minister met with President Bush on Tuesday, June 21 in the White House. They talked about Vietnam's desire to join the World Trade Organization, business issues, and signed an agreement that Bush said would make it easier for people to worship.

The Prime Minister is the highest-ranking leader to visit the United States since the Vietnam War 30 years ago. The last time a Vietnamese leader visited the United States, he was in a country that no longer exists.

[Vietnamese Prime Minister to Visit United States](#)
[Vietnam on the Path of Reform](#)
[PM Phan Van Khai: "My Visit to the United States is Important"](#)
[Protests Staged For Vietnam Prime Minister's Visit](#)
[Vietnam's Prime Minister Meets with Bill Gates](#)
[President Welcomes Vietnamese Prime Minister to the White House](#)

July 26, 2006

Former POW and U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, Pete Peterson, writes an [opinion](#) in Congress to grant permanent normal relations status to Vietnam.

November 7, 2006

The World Trade Organization formally invited Vietnam to become its 150th member.

November 17, 2006

U.S. President George H.W. Bush began a four-day visit to Vietnam in Hanoi where he met with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' meeting. He also met with Prime Minister Dung. Bush's trip included a stop in Ho Chi Minh City with a visit to a POW camp and a tour of the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command responsible for locating Americans missing in Vietnam.

January 22, 2007

Adm. Gary Roughead, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, paid a two-day visit to Vietnam with Vice Adm. Nguyen Van Hien, commander of the Vietnamese Navy. Under discussion was to cooperate in typhoon prediction, search and rescue, and disaster relief.

January 25, 2007

Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and Vietnam's official in charge of relations with the U.S., Yen Thi, met with Pope Benedict XVI in Rome in an effort to normalize relations after the Vietnam War.

May 21, 2007

Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer witnessed the signing of an agreement requiring all government offices to use licensed computer software in a step to curb rampant piracy. The Ministry of Finance was the first government agency to sign the Microsoft Office license during a visit by company Chairman Bill Gates last year.

November 11, 2007

25th anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C.

--Sandra M. Wittman

For additional information on U.S. Vietnam Relations, see:

[Joint Task Force Full-Accounting](#)
[U.S. Embassy](#) (Hanoi)
[U.S.-Vietnam Relations](#) (U.S. State Department)
[Vietnamese Embassy](#) (Washington, D.C.)

