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The U.S. radiates civilians with depleted uranium

3/4/2006 7:08:00 AM GMT

Last week, the U.S. military placed an order for \$38 million in depleted uranium rounds, bringing the total amount of the order from a West-Virginia Based company to \$77 million for fiscal year 2006.

The new order was placed with Alliant Techsystems for 120-mm ammunition. Once the new deal is completed, the company will have produced 35,000 rounds for the U.S. army. In a statement, the company making the deadly weapon said: "Its state-of-the-art composite sabot, propellant, and penetrator technologies give it outstanding accuracy and lethality."

The [Pentagon](#) uses depleted uranium in its rounds because it says that it is extremely effective in penetrating heavy armor. But critics of these controversial munitions believe that inhaling the radioactive dust left by the highly combustible weapon causes cancer and birth defects.

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Depleted uranium remains radioactive for 4.5 billion years. The byproduct of manufacturing nuclear weapons or reactors contaminate water and soil.

It also poses a more serious threat when it is inhaled and absorbed into the human body.

Studies show that DU can remain in human organs for years.

- **Gulf War**

According to an editorial on *The Guardian*, the depleted uranium (DU) used in the first Gulf War led to a significant

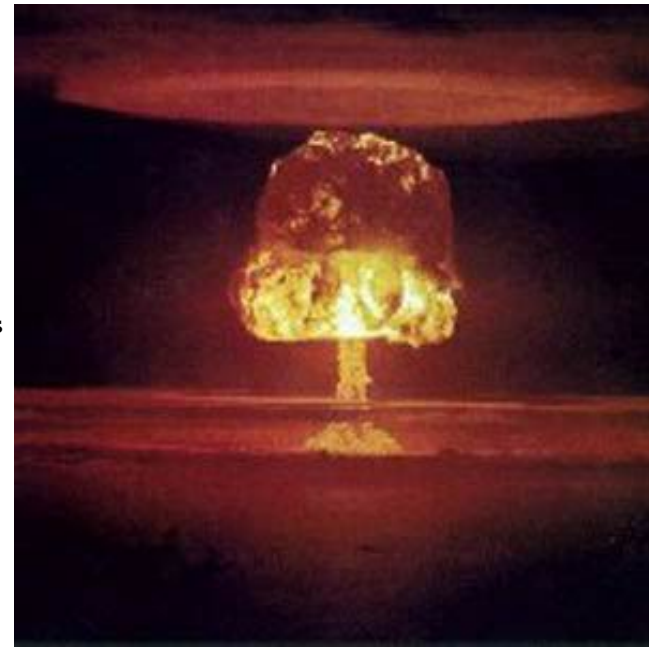


increase in the levels of childhood leukaemia and birth defects in [Iraq](#).

In 1991, the U.S. and its allies blasted a number of tanks, armored personnel carriers and other military vehicles with armor-piercing shells made of depleted uranium -- the first time such deadly weapons had been used in warfare -- as the Iraqi soldiers retreated from Kuwait. Now, almost 15 years after the end of the Gulf War, the highway where the tanks were blasted remains a radioactive toxic wasteland, some experts even call it the "Highway of Death."

An article on *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* states that "many researchers outside [Iraq](#), and several U.S. veterans organizations, agree; they also suspect depleted uranium of playing a role in Gulf War Syndrome, the still-unexplained malady that has plagued hundreds of thousands of Gulf War veterans."

In the "Highway of Death" in [Iraq](#), radiation levels register 1,000 times normal background radiation levels. Tedd Weymann, deputy head of the Uranium Medical Research Centre (UMRC), said: "At one



Depleted uranium remains radioactive for 4.5 billion years.

point the readings were so high that an alarm on one of my instruments went off telling me to get back. Yet despite these alarmingly high levels of radiation children play on the tanks or close by.'

- **Iraq War**



The exact amount of DU used during the 2003 [Iraq war](#) hasn't been revealed, but some experts estimate it was more than a thousand tons used in more than 51 sites across the country. An Iraqi tank destroyed by the U.S. weapon in Basra, where UK forces are stationed, registered 2,500 times normal background radiation. In the surrounding area, researchers recorded radioactivity levels 20

times higher than normal.

In 2003, Human Rights Watch said that hundreds of “preventable” civilian deaths in [Iraq](#) have been caused by the use of cluster bombs by U.S. and UK occupation forces. Experts also called for the water and milk being used by Iraqi civilians in Basra, where more than 1 million people live, to be monitored after analysis of biological and soil samples from area found 'the highest number, highest levels and highest concentrations of radioactive source points' in the Basra suburb of Abu Khasib, the centre of the fiercest battles between British troops and [Saddam](#) loyalists.

British Professor Brian Spratt, who head a Royal Society working group on the hazards of DU, said: “British and U.S. forces need to acknowledge that DU is a potential hazard and make inroads into tackling it by being open about where and how much has been deployed. Fragments of DU penetrators are potentially hazardous, and should be removed, and areas of contamination around impact sites identified. Impact sites in residential areas should be a particular priority. Long-term monitoring of water and milk to detect any increase in uranium levels should also be introduced in [Iraq](#).”

The U.S. and its allies committed another war crime in Fallujah, which witnessed a bloody offensive in 2004. Residents, mainly civilians, were subject to bombardment by napalm, depleted uranium shells, phosphorus bombs (a weapon that is illegal if used against civilians). The use of such banned

weapons makes the U.S. responsible for the same crimes that the [toppled Iraqi President Saddam Hussein](#) is accused of.

- **“Crime against humanity”**

The U.S. military acknowledges the deadly impacts of depleted uranium in a training manual, which requires anyone who come within 25 meters of any DU-contaminated equipment to wear respiratory and skin protection, warning that “contamination will make food and water unsafe for consumption”.



Dr. Doug Rokke, a [Vietnam](#) and Gulf War combat veteran, is an outspoken opponent of the use of DU munitions. "DU is the stuff of nightmares," he said. "Verified adverse health effects from personal experience, physicians and from personal reports from individuals with known DU exposures include reactive airway disease, neurological abnormalities, kidney stones and chronic kidney pain, rashes, vision degradation and night vision losses, lymphoma, various forms of skin and organ cancer, neuropsychological disorders, uranium in semen, sexual dysfunction and birth defects in offspring... This whole thing is a crime against God and humanity."

In addition to [Iraq](#), DU munitions were used in Bosnia, Kosovo and Serbia in 1999. In the same year, a UN sub-commission considered DU hazardous enough to call for an initiative banning its use worldwide. The initiative has remained in committee, primarily blocked by the U.S., according to Karen Parker, a lawyer with the International Educational Development/Humanitarian Law Project, which has consultative status at the United Nations.

“Since 1991, numerous U.S. Department of Defense reports have said that the consequences of DU were unknown," Rokke said. "That is a lie. We warned them in 1991 after the Gulf War, but because of liability issues, they continue to ignore the problem."

"Their arrogance is beyond comprehension," he said. "We have spread radioactive waste all over the place and refused medical treatment to people“.

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The Pentagon

1/1/2003 GMT

The Pentagon is the headquarters of the United States Department of Defense. Those who work within its walls often simply call it the Building. As a symbol of the US military, "the Pentagon" is often used metonymically to refer to the Department of Defense rather than the building itself.

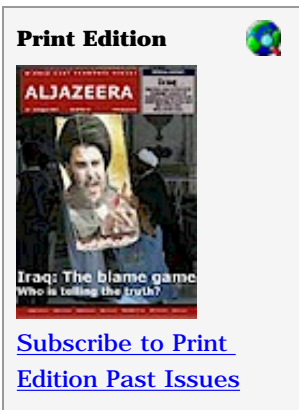
The building was dedicated on January 15, 1943 and it is the highest-capacity low-rise office building in the world. Located in Arlington, Virginia, it houses approximately 23,000 military and civilian employees and about 3,000 non-defense support personnel. It has five sides, five floors above ground (plus two basement levels), and five ring corridors per floor. Despite 17.5 miles (28 km) of corridors, it takes a maximum of seven minutes to walk between any two points in the building.

At five acres (20,000 m²), the central plaza in the Pentagon is the world's largest "no-salute, no-cover" area (an area excepted from normal rule that, when out of doors, US military personnel must wear hats and salute superior officers). The open space in the center is informally known as ground zero, a nickname originating during the Cold War when it was thought of as the most likely target of a nuclear missile. At the center of the plaza is a snack bar, the "Ground Zero Cafe".

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Just south of the Pentagon are Pentagon City and Crystal City, extensive shopping and high-density residential districts in Arlington. Arlington National Cemetery is to the north. A Washington Metro station is also located at the Pentagon, on the Blue and Yellow Lines.

- **History**

Construction

Before the construction of the Pentagon, the Department of War (now the Department of Defense) was housed in a series of "temporary" buildings erected during World War I which nearly covered the National Mall. During the early years of World War II, with construction supervised by the future Manhattan Project supervisor Leslie Groves, 680,000 tons (620,000 tonnes) of sand and gravel were dredged from the nearby Potomac River for the new building, which were then processed into 435,000 cubic yards (330,000 m³) of concrete and molded into the pentagon shape. Very little steel was used in its design due to the needs of the war effort.

Its unusual shape results from the fact that its originally intended site, Arlington Farms, fronted on Arlington Ridge Road and the Arlington Memorial Bridge approach, which intersected at an angle of approximately 108 degrees (the angle of a regular pentagon). President Franklin D. Roosevelt had it constructed at its current location because he didn't want the new building to obstruct the view of Washington, D.C. from Arlington Cemetery.

Peace Protests

During the late 1960s the Pentagon became a focus for peace protests against the Vietnam War.

In one of the better known incidents, on October 21, 1967, some 35,000 anti-war protesters organised by the Youth International Party, or "Yippies", gathered for a demonstration at the US Defense Department (the "March on the Pentagon"), where they were confronted by some 2,500 armed soldiers. Various peaceful protests ensued that subsequently typified "Flower child" behaviour in the eye of the public. The Yippie leader, Abbie Hoffman, subsequently declared their intention of levitating the Pentagon 300 feet by means of meditation, wobbling it once in mid-air in order to

exorcise evil spirits. Several Yippie members maintain to the present day that they were briefly successful in this endeavour - though no independent confirmation is forthcoming.

Renovation

Since 1998, the Pentagon has been undergoing a major renovation, known as the Pentagon Renovation Program. This program, scheduled to be completed in 2010, involves the complete gutting and reconstruction of the entire building in phases to bring the building up to modern standards, improving security and providing greater efficiency for Pentagon tenants.

Source: [Wikipedia.org](#)

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Iraq War

1/1/2003 GMT

The Iraq war or war in Iraq is both an informal and formal term for military conflicts in Iraq that began with the invasion of 2003. Further definition of the term varies with usage and point of view, hence, depending on the context, the term "Iraq War" or "Iraq war" may refer to the "war proper" —i.e. limited to the 2003 invasion and the engagement fought between various military forces (such as the old Iraqi army and the multinational forces) or also including the occupation up to the establishment of the sovereign Iraqi state — or the term may refer to the invasion and occupation as well as the continuing conflict.

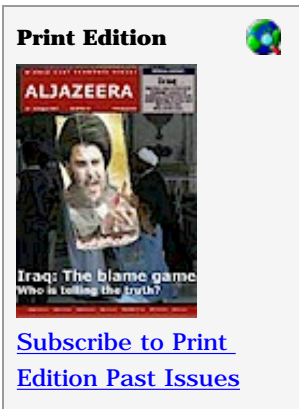
- **War rationales and debates**

Both critics and supporters of the war have disagreed about the validity of the rationales, and over whether the ex post facto failure to find weapons "stockpiles" indicates a failure of intelligence. As stated in public rhetoric such goals have changed notably since 2002, and views differ as to whether past statements should be considered "failed goals" (or, again at the extreme, "deceptive premises") for the war. War proponents have argued a "fight them over there, so we dont have to fight them over here" rationale, which views goals claimed in rhetoric as subordinate to maintaining a positive

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view toward the continued conflict. In the opinion of some anti-war activists, the rhetorical shift and the lack of success in achieving a peaceful resolution show evidence of both failure and deception on the part of pro-war government officials and de-legitimizes both the original cause for the invasion as well as any continued support for the war.

- **War justifications**

Allegedly perceived goals of the invasion and occupation as stated by the United States in 2002 before the Iraq invasion are likewise controversial factors. Over time, these have varied, but as originally given (before the 2003 Iraq invasion) for the initiation of the war included:

1. that Hussein's regime was in violation of United Nations demands for weapons inspections;
2. that the Hussein regime allegedly had a program intended to develop weapons of mass destruction;
3. that Hussein had failed to comply with UN resolutions requiring a full accounting of its weapons of mass destruction and full cooperation with UN inspections.
4. that the Hussein regime had ties to al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations that posed a threat to international safety; and,
5. promoting democratic self-government in the nearly-entirely autocratic Arab Middle East.

- **Criticisms and opposition of the war**

The war was unpopular from the outset in many Coalition countries, as reflected in opinion polls and widespread protests, including the largest worldwide protest in human history, on February 15th, 2003: a day of Global protests against war on Iraq. The Iraq War was widely viewed by many critics as counterproductive. Many viewed the war as improper (being a moral and ethical violation); and, at the extreme, illegal under international law. By the summer of 2005, there was an increase in the number of individuals in the United States that felt the same way. A decorated British Royal Air Force Officer has been court-martialled for refusing to take further part in the war. He was decorated more than once in the Iraq War, and considers that the war is illegal. He has been charged with "refusing to obey a lawful command".

Critics have cited that, economically, the various engagements in Iraq has cost the United States about USD \$200,000,000,000, and still costs about USD \$4,000,000,000 a month.

- **Primary Objections**

- No evidence of weapons of mass destruction were found.
- No evidence linking Iraq to Al Qaeda, or the September 11, 2001 attacks.
- Post-war planning was inadequate. In the absence of a clear plan of action for creating a democratic and sovereign Iraq, the insurgency grew.
- The war has tarnished the reputation of the United States, in Muslim countries, France, and countries that were with Iraq before the invasion.
- The war has endangered United States national security by bringing Al Qaeda elements into Iraq and establishing a network of terrorists where none existed before the American invasion.
- Civilian infrastructure has been destroyed including water, sewage and electricity as a result of the invasion; much of which has never been repaired.
- There have been heavy civilian casualties including the killing of motorists at checkpoints.

- **Christian opposition**

On September 13, 2002, U.S. Catholic bishops signed a letter to President Bush stating that any "pre-emptive, unilateral use of military force to overthrow the government of Iraq" cannot currently be justified. They came to this position by evaluating whether an attack against Iraq would satisfy the criteria for a just war, as defined by Catholic theology.

The Vatican also came out against war in Iraq. Archbishop Renato Martino, a former UN envoy and current prefect of the Council for Justice and Peace, told reporters that war against Iraq was a "preventative" war and constituted a "war of aggression", and thus did not constitute a just war. The foreign minister, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, expressed concerns that a war in Iraq would inflame anti-Christian feelings in the Islamic world. On February 8, 2003, Pope John Paul II said "we should never resign ourselves, almost as if war is inevitable."

Both the outgoing Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, and his successor, Rowan Williams,

spoke out against war with Iraq.

The executive committee of World Council of Churches, an organization joined by churches with a combined membership of between 350 million and 450 million Christians from over 100 countries, issued a statement in opposition to war with Iraq, stating that "War against Iraq would be immoral, unwise, and in breach of the principles of the United Nations Charter."

- **Countries**

The following countries' governments made known that they did not support the War of Iraq in principle.

- Russia
- China
- Pakistan
- Morocco
- Germany
- France
- Canada
- New Zealand

- **Iraq Survey Group findings**

In October 2003, David Kay, head of the Iraq Survey Group, reported the interim ISG findings that small amounts of banned material were uncovered, as well as discoveries of non-WMD programs banned by the United Nations and concealed during the IAEA and UNMOVIC inspections that began in 2002. Kay testified on January 28, 2004 that "the effort that has been directed to this point has been sufficiently intense that it is highly unlikely that there were large stockpiles of deployed, militarized chemical weapons [in Iraq]". Charles Duelfer, as the new head of the Iraq Survey Group, released the final ISG report which included the following points:

1. No senior Iraqi official interviewed by the ISG believed that Saddam had forsaken WMD forever;
2. Saddam Hussein convinced his top military commanders that Iraq did indeed possess WMD that

could be used against any U.S. invasion force, in order to prevent a coup over the prospects of fighting the U.S.-led Coalition without these weapons;

3. Iraq's main goal was to end sanctions while preserving the capability to reconstitute WMD production;
4. Iraq had intended to restart all banned weapons programs as soon as multilateral sanctions against it had been dropped, a prospect that the Iraqi government saw coming soon;
5. Iraq used procurement contracts allowed under the Oil for Food program to buy influence among U.N. Security Council member states;
6. Iraq had destroyed stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons. and,
7. There was "no indication [Iraq had] resumed fissile material or nuclear weapon research and development activities since 1991" .

David Kay, was quoted as telling a Senate panel "We were almost all wrong" on Iraq.

- **War of Iraq**

The War of Iraq (2003) was the war in the Middle East country of Iraq, which resulted from the the Iraq disarmament crisis of late 2002 and began with the invasion of 2003. The war was between the Iraqi military and a coalition of multinational forces. The United States and the United Kingdom were the two major components of the occupation that invaded and deposed Saddam Hussein's regime. This was done on claims which included Hussein had failed to comply with UN resolutions requiring a full accounting of its weapons of mass destruction and full cooperation with UN inspections. The forces opposing the coalition units were the conscript Iraqi Regular Army. They were reinforced and strengthened by the Republican Guard and Fedayeen Saddam. In post-invasion Iraq (2003–2005), after the Hussein regime had been overthrown, activity centered around occupation and U.N. efforts to establishing a sovereign state. According to some opinion polls, the war was unpopular from the outset in many occupation countries.

- **Prior to invasion**

Prior to invasion, the United States and other occupation forces involved in the 1991 Persian Gulf

War had been engaged in a low-level conflict with Iraq, enforcing Iraqi no-fly zones. In mid-2002, the U.S. began to change its response strategy, more carefully selecting targets in the southern part of the country in order to disrupt the military command structure in Iraq. A change in enforcement tactics was acknowledged at the time, but it was not made public that this was part of a plan known as Operation Southern Focus.

The weight of bombs dropped increased from none in March 2002 and 0.3 in April 2002 to between 8 and 14 tons per month in May-August, reaching a pre-war peak of 54.6 tons in September - prior to Congress' 11 October authorisation of the invasion. The September attacks included a 5 September 100-aircraft attack on the main air defence site in western Iraq. According to The New Statesman this was "Located at the furthest extreme of the southern no-fly zone, far away from the areas that needed to be patrolled to prevent attacks on the Shias, it was destroyed not because it was a threat to the patrols, but to allow allied special forces operating from Jordan to enter Iraq undetected."

- **Combat summary**

Occupation forces managed to topple the government and capture the key cities of a large nation in only 28 days.

The Saddam-built army had no weapons that could stand up to occupation forces, and managed only to stage a few ambushes that gained a great deal of media attention but in reality did nothing to slow the occupation advance. The Iraqi T-72 tanks, the heaviest armored vehicles in the Iraqi Army, were both outdated and ill-maintained, and when they did stand up to occupation forces they were destroyed quickly, thanks in part due to the occupation's control of the air. The U.S. Air Force and British Royal Air Force operated with impunity throughout the country, pinpointing heavily defended enemy targets and destroying them before ground troops arrived.

The main battle tanks (MBT) of the occupation forces, the U.S. M1 Abrams and British Challenger 2, proved their worth in the rapid advance across the country. Even with the large number of RPG attacks by irregular Iraqi forces, few occupation tanks were lost and no tank crewmen were killed by hostile fire. All three British tank crew fatalities were a result of friendly fire. The only tank loss

sustained by the British Army was a Challenger 2 of the Queen's Royal Lancers that was hit by another Challenger 2, killing two crewmen.

The Iraqi Army suffered from poor morale, even amongst the supposedly elite Republican Guard, and entire units simply melted away into the crowds upon the approach of occupation troops. Other Iraqi Army officers were bribed by the CIA or coerced into surrendering to occupation forces. Worse, the Iraqi Army had incompetent leadership - reports state that Qusay Hussein, charged with the defense of Baghdad, dramatically shifted the positions of the two main divisions protecting Baghdad several times in the days before the arrival of U.S. forces, and as a result the units within were both confused and further demoralized when the U.S. Army attacked. By no means did the occupation invasion force see the entire Iraqi military thrown against it, and it is assumed that most units disintegrated to either join the growing Iraqi anti-occupation fighters or return to their homes.

- **Invasion**

On March 20, 2003 at approximately 02:30 UTC (05:30 local time), about 90 minutes after the lapse of the 48-hour deadline set by the occupation for Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave Iraq, explosions were heard in Baghdad and Australian Special Air Service Regiment personnel crossed the border into southern Iraq. At 03:15 UTC, or 10:15 pm EST, U.S. President George W. Bush announced that he had ordered the occupation forces to launch an "attack of opportunity" against targets in Iraq.

Before the invasion, many observers had expected a lengthy campaign of aerial bombing in advance of any ground action. In practice, U.S. plans envisioned simultaneous air and ground assaults to decapitate the Iraqi forces as fast as possible attempting to bypass Iraqi military units and cities in most cases.

It was expected that the elimination of the leadership would lead to the collapse of the army and the government, and that much of the population would support the invaders once the government had been weakened. Occupation of cities and attacks on peripheral military units were viewed as undesirable distractions.

The invasion was swift, with the collapse of the Iraq government and the military of Iraq in about three weeks.

Securing the oil infrastructure was considered important. Presumably, oil infrastructure was secured for financial reasons as well as strategic. The British Royal Marines 3 Commando Brigade launched an air and amphibious assault on the Al-Faw peninsula during the closing hours of 20 March to secure the oil fields there; the amphibious assault was supported by frigates of the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy. The 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, attached to 3 Commando Brigade, attacked the port of Umm Qasr. The British 16 Air Assault Brigade also secured the oilfields in southern Iraq in places like Rumaila.

After a rapid initial advance, the first major pause occurred in the vicinity of Hillah and Karbala, where U.S. leading elements, hampered by dust storms, met resistance from Iraqi troops and paused for some days for re-supply before continuing toward Baghdad. The first Civil Affairs unit to enter Iraq, the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, was on hand to restore basic services, distribute humanitarian aide, and begin the arduous process of building a democratic government from scratch. This unit would later play a pivotal role in the Iraqi elections when they returned to Iraq a second time.

- **Fall of Baghdad**

Three weeks into the invasion, U.S. forces moved into Baghdad. Initial plans were for armor units to surround the city and a street-to-street battle to commence using Airborne units. However, within days a "Thunder Run" of US tanks was launched to test Iraqi defenses, with about 30 tanks rushing from a staging base to the Baghdad airport. They met heavy resistance, but launched another run two days later into the Palaces of Saddam Hussein, where they established a base. Iraqi government officials had either disappeared or had conceded defeat. On April 9, 2003, Baghdad was formally secured by US forces and the power of Saddam Hussein was declared ended. Saddam had vanished, and his whereabouts were unknown.

General Tommy Franks assumed control of Iraq as the supreme commander of occupation forces.

Shortly after the sudden collapse of the defense of Baghdad, news were circulating in Iraq and elsewhere that there had been a deal struck (a "safqua") wherein the US had bribed key members of the Iraqi military elite and/or the Ba'ath party itself to stand down. In May 2003, General Franks retired, and confirmed in an interview with Defense Week that the U.S. had paid Iraqi military leaders to defect. The occupation troops promptly began searching for the key members of Saddam Hussein's government. These individuals were identified by a variety of means, most famously through sets of most-wanted Iraqi playing cards.

- **Seizure of other areas**

In the north, Kurdish forces opposed to Saddam Hussein had already occupied for years an autonomous area in northern Iraq. With the assistance of U.S. Special Forces and airstrikes, they were able to rout the Iraqi units near them and, on 10 April, to occupy oil-rich Kirkuk, a city of significant emotional importance to Kurds, causing further complications in U.S.-Turkish relations. Occupation special forces had also been involved in the extreme west of Iraq, attempting to occupy key roads to Syria and airbases. In one case two armored platoons were used to convince Iraqi leadership that an entire armored battalion was entrenched in the west of Iraq. On 15 April, Multinational forces mostly took control of Tikrit, the last major outpost in central Iraq, with an attack led by the U.S. Marines' Task Force Tarawa and followed by elements of the Army's 4th Infantry Division.

- **Bush's 'Mission Accomplished'**

On 1 May 2003 George W. Bush landed on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, in a Lockheed S-3 Viking, where he gave a speech announcing the end of major combat operations in the Iraq war. Bush's landing was criticized as an overly theatrical and expensive stunt. Clearly visible in the background was a banner stating "Mission Accomplished." It was criticized by some as premature - especially later as the guerrilla war dragged on.

- **Aftermath**

Military rule and occupation

The post-invasion environment began after the Hussein regime had been overthrown. It centers around occupation forces and UN efforts to establish a democratic state capable of defending itself, versus various anti-occupation fighters demands that the foreign forces leave the country. According to opinion polls, the war was considered unpopular from its beginning in many "Coalition" countries. In the weeks that followed Bush's dramatic aircraft carrier landing, all types of crime significantly increased in Iraq due to the end of the Saddam Hussein regime.

Early occupation

During the early occupation, a number of widely-cited humanitarian, tactical, and political errors by United States and United Kingdom planners and forces led to a growing armed resistance, the Iraqi anti-occupation fighters. The anti-occupation forces are believed to be predominantly, but not exclusively, Iraqi Sunni Muslim Arabs, plus some foreign Arab and Muslim fighters, some of the latter tied to al-Qaeda. Several minor occupation members have pulled out of Iraq; this has been widely considered a political success for the anti-occupation forces.

On 2 July 2003, President Bush declared that American troops would remain in Iraq in spite of the attacks, challenging the opponents with "My answer is, Bring 'em on," a line the President later expressed misgivings about having used. In the summer of 2003, the multinational forces focused on hunting down the remaining leaders of the former regime, culminating in the shooting deaths of Saddam's two sons in July. In all, over 200 top leaders of the former regime were killed or captured, as well as numerous lesser functionaries and military personnel.

In the chaos after the war, massive looting of the infrastructure, and most catastrophically, munitions occurred. According to the Pentagon, 250,000 tons (of 650,000 tons total) of ordnance were looted.

The capture of Saddam and calls for elections

On 22 July 2003, during a raid by the U.S. 101st Airborne Division and men from Task Force 20, Saddam Hussein's sons (Uday and Qusay) and one of his grandsons were killed. Saddam Hussein

was captured on December 13, 2003 by the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division and members of Task Force 121 during Operation Red Dawn.

At the same time, elements left out of the CPA began to agitate for elections. Most prominent among these was Ali al-Sistani, Grand Ayatollah in the Shia sect of Islam. More anti-occupation forces stepped up their activities. The two most turbulent centers were the area around Fallujah and the poor Shia sections of cities from Baghdad to Basra in the south.

The United States and the occupation Provisional Authority decided to face the growing anti-occupation fighters with a pair of assaults: one on Fallujah and another on Najaf, home of an important mosque, which had become the focal point for the Mahdi Army and its activities. Just before the American attack on Fallujah, four private military contractors, working for Blackwater USA, were ambushed and their corpses mutilated by a large crowd, receiving a great deal of media attention. In the ensuing offensive, the United States was unable to dislodge the anti-occupation fighters, and instead suffered repeated attacks on its own rear and flank.

Sources: wikipedia.org

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Sunday, March 26, 2006



Sudan, the next Iraq?

3/26/2006 12:48:00 PM

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"Enemies intend to stop our progress by broad propaganda. But God willing, Iran will fully gain access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in this year".



Blast in front of Iraqi school kills student

A roadside bomb exploded Sunday morning in front of a school in the southeast Iraqi city of Basra, killing a 13-year-old student, Iraqi police said.



Israeli bulldozers raze Tulkarem olive trees

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Saddam Hussein

5/22/2005 12:00:00 PM GMT

The former Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, was born on April 28, 1937, in the village of Al-Awja near Tikrit, north of Baghdad.

While a teenager, Saddam immersed himself in the anti-British and anti-Western atmosphere of the day. In 1955, he moved to Baghdad and joined the Arab Baath Party.

He applied for the Baghdad Military Academy in 1957 but he was denied admission, he then joined the underground Baath Socialist Party.

After the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958, Saddam conspired to assassinate the prime minister, Abdel-Karim Qassem. But the plot was discovered, and he escaped the country to Syria, then Egypt. He was tried in absentia in 1960 and was sentenced to death.



Saddam's opponents weren't able to nominate anyone else who might hold Iraq together.

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While in Cairo, Saddam studied law but didn't complete his studies. He returned to Iraq after the Ramadan Revolution in 1963.

With the Baath party in control in Baghdad, Saddam started seeking a position of influence. During this period he married his cousin Sajida. They later had two sons and three daughters.

When the Baath Party collapsed in 1964, Saddam was accused of opposing the regime and was detained. He remained in jail until his escape in 1967.

While in prison, Saddam was elected as the Deputy Secretary General of the Baath Party Leadership.

In July 1968, the Baath Party returned to power in a coup. In the same year, Saddam graduated from the College of Law and gained a position in the Revolutionary Command Council, led by his cousin, Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr.

In 1969, Saddam was elected the Vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council.

When al-Bakr's health deteriorated, Saddam achieved his ambition as becoming head of state in 1979.

Holding together a diverse nation

The former leader might defend his criticized leadership style by arguing that nothing else could have united such a vast and diverse nation such as Iraq.

Despite their harsh criticism, his opponents were not able to identify anyone else who might hold Iraq together, with Kurds in the north, Sunni Muslims in the centre and Shiites in the south.

When a European reporter nervously cited reports that Saddam's regime have tortured and perhaps even killed its opponents, the Iraqi leader didn't seem surprised, his answer was "Of course. What do you expect if they oppose the regime?"

It was reported that Saddam used chemical weapons to suppress the Kurds in 1988, and that he demolished towns to put down a Shiites rebellion in the south.

War

In 1980, Saddam launched a surprise cross-border attack on neighboring

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Iran, in an attempt to gain Iranian oil reserves and seize the Shatt al-Arab waterway leading to the Gulf.

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But the Iranian resistance was far tougher than he expected. Eight years later, after thousands of people died and after the country sunk in debts, Saddam agreed on a ceasefire.

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OPINIONS

On 2 August 1990, he took another costly decision by ordering his army to invade Kuwait. In 1991, the United States started bombing the Iraqi capital after Saddam refused to leave Kuwait.

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In 1991, the Persian Gulf War ended and the U.S. President George Bush declared a ceasefire.

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In 1998, Saddam failed to comply with the United Nations weapons investigators and in the same year, the U.S. issued the Iraq Liberation Act, which authorized the removal of Saddam's regime.

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In 2002, the United States started its official plan to topple the Iraqi leader even though he allowed the UN inspectors to return to the country. During his rule, Saddam insisted that Iraq didn't possess any weapons of mass destruction.

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The U.S. invasion

The United States led the war on Iraq on March, 19, 2003, to oust Saddam Hussein and remove his regime from power.

The toppled leader was caught on December, 13, 2003, in the Iraqi city of Adwar, ten miles south of Tikrit. He and his 11 top associates are being held in U.S. custody in an undisclosed location.

They appeared before the Iraqi Special Tribunal in July, 2003 to face preliminary charges, including war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Saddam was charged with seven crimes, including the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the suppression of 1991 revolts by Kurds and Shiites, and the mass displacement of Kurds in the 1980s.

The trials are expected to begin in 2005.

But Rights group said that the process might be unfair and discredited because the Iraqi Special Tribunal, designed to gather evidence and try the toppled Iraqi leader and his senior aides, has "serious human rights

shortcomings" and lacks "fair-trial protections."

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The Vietnam War

1/1/2003 GMT

The Vietnam War or Second Indochina War was a conflict between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN, or North Vietnam), allied with the National Liberation Front (NLF, or "Viet Cong") against the Republic of Vietnam (RVN, or South Vietnam), and its allies—notably the United States military in support of the South, with US combat troops committed from 1965 to 1973.

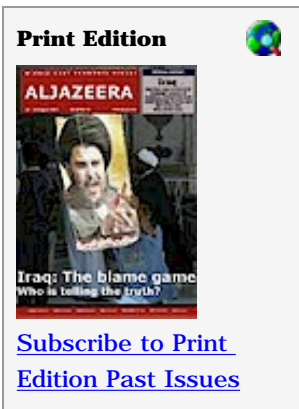
After France's attempted recolonization of Indochina was defeated in 1954 by the Viet Minh at the battle of Dien Bien Phu, an agreement to temporarily partition the country in two with a Demilitarized Zone or DMZ was reached at the Geneva Conference. The DMZ was not a natural division of Vietnam and was not intended to create two separate countries. The scheduled elections for the unification of the country were blocked. The Vietnam War began as a civil war—fought to determine the status of Vietnam as either a unified nation or as one partitioned indefinitely into two independent states, each supported by rival superpowers. Fighting began in 1957, and with U.S. and Soviet-Chinese involvement and support, it would steadily escalate and spill over into the neighboring Indochinese countries of Cambodia and Laos.

South Vietnam—and allies such as the U.S.—portrayed the conflict as one based in a principled and

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strategic opposition to communism, to deter its expansion throughout Southeast Asia and elsewhere. North Vietnam and its Viet Cong allies claimed the war as a struggle to reunite the country and to repel a foreign aggressor—a continuation of the earlier war for independence against the French.

After fifteen years of protracted fighting and massive civilian and military casualties, major, direct U.S. involvement ended with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1973. Fighting between Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces against the dominant combined People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and Viet Cong forces would soon bring an end to the RVN and the war. With the Northern victory, the country was unified as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) with a communist-controlled government based in Hanoi.

- **Overview**

A precise timeline of the Vietnam War is difficult to determine. Some consider the Vietnam War to have been a continuous conflict beginning with the French attempt to reestablish colonial control in 1946 and continuing until the fall of Saigon in 1975. Others divide the conflict into two separate wars, the First Indochina War between the French and the Viet Minh and the Second Indochina War between North Vietnam and South Vietnam and its US allies. Many experts consider the Vietnam War to have just been one front in the larger Cold War.

The First Indochina War may be said to have begun in 1946 with the writing of the Vietnamese constitution and to have ended in 1954 with the Geneva Peace Accord. The US involvement in the conflict is less distinct. The United States had supported Vietnamese guerillas against the Japanese during World War II, and provided aid to the French in the early 1950s. A US military presence was established in South Vietnam following the 1954 Peace Accord. As US advisors were drawn into battles between North and South Vietnamese forces the US involvement escalated.

The ground war was fought in South Vietnam and the border areas of Cambodia and Laos. The air war was fought there and in the strategic bombing of North Vietnam. Commando raids or secret operations were conducted by US or South Vietnamese forces in the north but there was never any full-scale ground fighting north of the 17th parallel (For more details of the events during the war, see: Timeline of the Vietnam War.) A coalition of forces fought for South Vietnam, including its army

the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (or ARVN), the United States, South Korea, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines. Participation by the South Korean military was financed by the United States, but Australia and New Zealand fully funded their participations. The United Kingdom and Canada did not participate in the war militarily, although a few of their citizens volunteered to join the US forces and Canada led peace talks between the two countries for years. The Spanish government sent a small group of military medical personnel from 1966 to 1971. The North Vietnamese government directed the fighting against that of South Vietnam, using forces including their People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN, better known to the US as the NVA) and the guerrilla forces of the National Liberation Front, better known as the Viet Cong. The USSR provided military and financial aid, along with diplomatic support to the North Vietnamese as did the People's Republic of China. Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and North Korea provided minor assistance through provision of supplies and armor. North Vietnamese pilots and other specialized members of the PAVN often received training in the USSR or in North Korea, as did many of their Southern counterparts in Arizona or Hawaii.

- **The war begins**

NLF (National Liberation Front) in the South

Communist forces initiated guerilla activities in South Vietnam in 1957. Two years later these forces named themselves the National Liberation Front (NLF). Although considered by many to have been composed of northern agents under the control of Hanoi, ostensibly the NLF was an organization of South Vietnamese communists committed to establishing a communist state in South Vietnam. By 1959 the Hanoi government were supplying the NLF via the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a supply route running from North Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia (a violation of neutrality) into South Vietnam. Further supplies were sent by sea to Sihanoukville in Cambodia until that outlet was closed by Lon Nol in 1970. The Ho Chi Minh Trail was steadily expanded to become the vital lifeline for communist forces in South Vietnam, which included the North Vietnamese Army in the 1960s when it became a major target of US air operations.

The Diem government was initially able to cope with the insurgency with the aid of US advisors, and by 1962 seemed to be winning. Senior U.S. military leaders were receiving positive reports from the

US commander, Gen. Paul D. Harkins of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. However outside Saigon large areas of the country were not under government control. In 1963 a Communist offensive beginning with the Battle of Ap Bac inflicted major defeats on the South Vietnamese army, while disorganization reigned in the Saigon government.

- **John F. Kennedy and Vietnam**

In June 1961, John F. Kennedy met with Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev in Vienna, where Khrushchev sought to bully him over key U.S.-Soviet issues. Kennedy left the meeting convinced that the Russians were committed to conflict. This led to the conclusion that Southeast Asia would be an area where Soviet forces would test the USA's commitment to the containment policy.

Although Kennedy's election campaign had stressed long-range missile parity with the Soviets, Kennedy was particularly interested in Special Forces.

The Kennedy administration remained essentially committed to the Cold War foreign policy inherited from the Truman administration. Fearing that another failure on the part of the United States to stop Communist expansion would fatally damage the West's position and his reputation, Kennedy was determined to prevent a Communist victory in Vietnam.

The Kennedy administration grew increasingly frustrated with Diem. In 1963 a violent crackdown by Diem's forces against Buddhist monks protesting government policies prompted self-immolation by monks, leading to embarrassing press coverage. The U.S. attempted to pressure Diem by asking South Vietnamese generals to act against the excesses. The South Vietnamese military interpreted these messages as tacit U.S. support for a coup d'etat which overthrew and killed Diem on November 1, 1963.

Initially the death of Diem made the South more unstable. The new military rulers were politically inexperienced and unable to provide the strong central authority of Diem's rule and a period of coups and countercoups followed. The communists, meanwhile, stepped up their efforts to exploit the vacuum.

- **Escalation**

The U.S. involvement in the war has been described as an escalation. This is typically meant to refer to the incremental increase in forces in response to greater need, rather than an intentional strategy. However a key element was that there was no traditional declaration of war which would have involved a national commitment to using all available means to secure victory.

Instead U.S. involvement increased over several years, beginning with the deployment of noncombatant military advisors to the South Vietnamese army, followed by the use of special forces for commando-style operations, followed by the introduction of regular troops for defensive purposes, until regular troops were used in offensive combat. Once U.S. troops were engaged in active combat, escalation meant increasing their numbers.

The escalation of the war complicated its ambiguous legal status. The treaty agreements between the U.S. and South Vietnam allowed each escalation to be seen as simply another step in helping an ally resist Communist aggression. This allowed the U.S. Congress to vote appropriations for war operations without requiring the Johnson Administration to meet the Constitutionally mandated requirement that Congress declare war.

Successive U.S. administrations also hoped that by limiting its involvement it could support South Vietnam without provoking a major response from China or the Soviet Union, as had happened in the Korean War. President Johnson maintained the Kennedy administration's position that South Vietnam's independence was a crucial U.S. defense against Soviet aggression, while at the same time trying to avoid provoking direct participation in the conflict by the Warsaw Pact.

The situation caused friction between the US armed services and the civilian authorities in Washington. Military officials such as General William Westmoreland resented the Johnson Administration's restraints on their operations but feared making outspoken policy criticisms lest they suffer the same fate as General Douglas MacArthur who had been dismissed by Truman on such grounds during the Korean War.

- **Intervention by the USA**

Johnson and the Gulf of Tonkin

Johnson raised the level of U.S. involvement on July 27, 1964, when 5,000 additional U.S. military advisors were ordered to South Vietnam. This brought the total number of U.S. forces in Vietnam to 21,000.

On July 31, 1964, the US destroyer USS Maddox was in international waters conducting a reconnaissance mission in the Gulf of Tonkin. Critics of President Johnson have suggested that the purpose of the mission was to provoke a reaction from North Vietnamese coastal defense forces as a pretext for a wider war. North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the Maddox and in response, with the help of air support from the nearby carrier USS Ticonderoga, she destroyed one of the torpedo boats, damaging two others. The Maddox suffered only superficial damage and retired to South Vietnamese waters where she was joined by USS C. Turner Joy.

On August 3, the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN or South Vietnam) again attacked North Vietnam; the Rhon River estuary and the Vinh Sonh radar installation were bombarded under cover of darkness.

On August 4, a new DESOTO patrol to the North Vietnam coast was launched, with Maddox and C. Turner Joy. The latter got radar signals later claimed to be another attack by the North Vietnamese. For some two hours the ships fired on radar targets and maneuvered vigorously amid electronic and visual reports of torpedoes. Later, Captain John J. Herrick admitted that it was nothing more than an "overeager sonarman" who "was hearing the ship's own propeller beat".

In consequence the U.S. Senate approved the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution on 7 August 1964, which gave broad support to President Johnson to escalate U.S. involvement in the war "as the President shall determine". National Security Council members, including Robert McNamara, Dean Rusk, and Maxwell Taylor agreed on November 28, 1964, to recommend that President Johnson adopt a plan for a two-stage escalation of bombing in North Vietnam.

With the decision to escalate its involvement in the conflict, The USA's ANZUS Pact allies Australia

and New Zealand were pressured to contribute troops and material to the war effort. As a result, in late 1964 the Australian government controversially re-introduced conscription for compulsory military service by eligible males aged 18-25, and many Australian conscripts served alongside US troops.

- **Operation Rolling Thunder**

Operation Rolling Thunder was the code name for bombing raids in North Vietnam conducted by the United States armed forces during the Vietnam War. Its purpose was to destroy the will of the North Vietnamese to fight, to destroy industrial bases and air defenses (SAMs), and to stop the flow of men and supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Starting in March 1965 Operation Rolling Thunder gradually escalated in intensity to force the Communists to negotiate.

In March 1968 Operation Rolling Thunder was suspended after the North agreed to negotiate in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive.

- **The Tet Offensive**

General Westmoreland had asserted that US forces were on the verge of victory, infamously claiming he "could see the light at the end of the tunnel." As a result it was a considerable shock to public opinion when on January 30, 1968 NLF and NVA forces broke the Tet truce and mounted the Tet Offensive in South Vietnam attacking nearly every major city in South Vietnam. The goal of the attacks was to ignite an uprising among the Vietnamese people which would result in the overthrow of the South Vietnamese government and withdrawal of US forces. To the contrary, no such uprising occurred and it drove some previously apathetic Vietnamese to fight with the RVN government. Attacks everywhere were shortly repulsed except in Saigon where the fighting lasted for three days and in Hue for a month. During the temporary communist occupation of Hue 2,800 Vietnamese were killed by the Viet Cong in what was the worst single massacre during the war .

Although the Communists' military objectives had not been achieved, the propaganda effect was considerable and had a profound impact on public opinion. Many US citizens felt that the government was misleading them about a war without a clear end. When General Westmoreland called for still more troops to be sent to Vietnam, Clark Clifford, a member of Johnson's own cabinet, came out against the war.

- **Opposition to the war**

Small-scale opposition to the war began in 1964 on college campuses. This was happening during a time of unprecedented leftist student activism, and of the arrival at college age of the demographically significant Baby Boomers.

Protests against the draft began on October 15, 1965, when the student-run National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam staged the first public burning of a draft card in the United States. The first draft lottery since World War II in the United States was held on 1 December 1969, and was met with large protests and a great deal of controversy; statistical analysis indicated that the methodology of the lotteries unintentionally disadvantaged men with late year birthdays.

U.S. public opinion became polarized by the war. Many supporters of the war argued for what was known as the Domino Theory, which held that if the South fell to communist guerillas, other nations, primarily in Southeast Asia, would succumb like falling dominoes. Military critics of the war pointed out that the conflict was political and that the military mission lacked clear objectives. Civilian critics of the war argued that the government of South Vietnam lacked political legitimacy and that support for the war was immoral. Some anti-war activists were themselves Vietnam Veterans, as evidenced by the organization Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Some of the US citizens opposed to the Vietnam War, as for instance Jane Fonda, stressed their support for ordinary Vietnamese civilians struck by a war beyond their influence. President Johnson's undersecretary of state, George Ball, was one of the lone voices in his administration advising against war in Vietnam.

The growing anti-war movement alarmed many in the U.S. government. On August 16, 1966 the House Un-American Activities Committee began investigations of US citizens who were suspected of aiding the NLF. Anti-war demonstrators disrupted the meeting and 50 were arrested.

In Australia, resistance to the war was at first very limited, although the Australian Labor Party (in opposition for most of the period) steadfastly opposed conscription. However anti-war sentiment escalated rapidly in the late 1960s as more and more Australian conscripts were killed in battle. Growing public unease about the death toll was fuelled by a series of highly-publicised arrests of conscientious objectors, and exacerbated by the shocking revelations of atrocities against Vietnamese civilians, leading to a rapid increase in domestic opposition to the war between 1967 and 1970. The Moratorium marches, held in major Australian cities to coincide with the marches in the USA, were among the largest public gatherings ever seen in Australia up to that time, with over 200,000 people taking to the streets in Melbourne alone.

On 15 October 1969, hundreds of thousands of people took part in National Moratorium antiwar demonstrations across the United States. A second round of "Moratorium" demonstrations was held on November 15.

On April 22, 1971, John Kerry became the first Vietnam veteran to testify before Congress about the war, when he appeared before a Senate committee hearing on proposals relating to ending the war. He spoke for nearly two hours with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in what has been named the Fulbright Hearing, after the Chairman of the proceedings, Senator J. William Fulbright. Kerry presented the conclusions of the Winter Soldier Investigation, where veterans had described personally committing or witnessing war crimes.

In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson began his reelection campaign. A member of his own party, Eugene McCarthy, ran against him for the nomination on an antiwar platform. McCarthy did not win the first primary election in New Hampshire, but he did surprisingly well against an incumbent. The resulting blow to the Johnson campaign, taken together with other factors, led the President to make a surprise announcement in a March 31 televised speech that he was pulling out of the race. He also announced the initiation of the Paris Peace Talks with Vietnam in that speech. Then, on August 4, 1969, U.S. representative Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese representative Xuan Thuy began secret peace negotiations at the apartment of French intermediary Jean Sainteny in Paris. This set of negotiations failed, however, prior to the 1972 North Vietnamese offensive.

- **Vietnamization**

Nixon was elected President and began his policy of slow disengagement from the war. The goal was to gradually build up the South Vietnamese Army so that it could fight the war on its own. This policy became the cornerstone of the so-called "Nixon Doctrine". As applied to Vietnam, the doctrine was called "Vietnamization". The stated goal of Vietnamization was to enable the South Vietnamese army to increasingly hold its own against the NLF and the North Vietnamese Army. The unstated goal of Vietnamization was that the primary burden of combat would be returned to ARVN troops and thereby lessen domestic opposition in the U.S to the war.

During this period, the United States conducted a gradual troop withdrawal from Vietnam. Nixon continued to use air power to bomb the enemy, along with an US troop incursion in Cambodia. Ultimately more bombs were dropped under the Nixon Presidency than under Johnson's, while US troop deaths started to drop significantly. The Nixon administration was determined to remove US troops from the theater while not destabilizing the defensive efforts of South Vietnam.

Many significant gains in the war were made under the Nixon administration, however. One particularly significant achievement was the weakening of support that the North Vietnamese army received from the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China. One of Nixon's main foreign policy goals had been the achievement of a "breakthrough" in U.S. relations with the two nations, in terms of creating a new spirit of cooperation. To a large extent this was achieved. China and the USSR had been the principal backers of the North Vietnamese army through large amounts of military and financial support. The eagerness of both nations to improve their own U.S. relations in the face of a widening breakdown of the inter-Communist alliance led to the reduction of their aid to North Vietnam.

The morality of U.S. conduct of the war continued to be a political issue under the Nixon Presidency. In 1969, US investigative journalist Seymour Hersh exposed the My Lai massacre and its cover-up, for which he received the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting. It came to light that Lt. William Calley, a platoon leader in Vietnam, had led a massacre of several hundred Vietnamese civilians, including women, babies, and the elderly, at My Lai a year before. The massacre was only stopped

after three US soldiers (Glenn Andreotta, Lawrence Colburn and Hugh Thompson, Jr.) noticed the carnage from their helicopter and intervened to prevent their fellow soldiers from killing any more civilians. Calley was given a life sentence after his court-martial in 1970, but was later pardoned by President Nixon. Cover-ups may have happened in other cases, as contended in the Pulitzer Prize-winning article series about the Tiger Force by the Toledo Blade in 2003.

In 1970, Prince Sihanouk was deposed by Lon Nol in Cambodia, who became the chief of state. The Khmer Rouge guerillas with North Vietnamese backing began to attack the new regime. Nixon ordered a military incursion into Cambodia in order to destroy NLF sanctuaries bordering on South Vietnam and protect the fragile Cambodian government. This action prompted even more protests on US college campuses. Several students were shot and killed by National Guard troops during demonstrations at Kent State.

One effect of the incursion was to push communist forces deeper into Cambodia, which destabilized the country and in turn may have encouraged the rise of the Khmer Rouge, who seized power in 1975. The goal of the attacks, however, was to bring the North Vietnamese negotiators back to the table with some flexibility in their demands that the South Vietnamese government be overthrown as part of the agreement. It was also alleged that US and South Vietnamese casualty rates were reduced by the destruction of military supplies the communists had been storing in Cambodia. All U.S. forces left Cambodia on June 30.

In an effort to help assuage opposition to the war, Nixon announced on October 12, 1970, that the United States would withdraw 40,000 more troops before Christmas. Later that month on October 30, the worst monsoon to hit Vietnam in six years caused large floods, killed 293, left 200,000 homeless and virtually halted the war.

Backed by US air and artillery support, South Vietnamese troops invaded Laos on 13 February 1971. On August 18 of that year, Australia and New Zealand decided to withdraw their troops from Vietnam. The total number of US troops in Vietnam dropped to 196,700 on 29 October 1971, the lowest level since January 1966. On November 12, 1971, Nixon set a 1 February 1972 deadline to remove another 45,000 US troops from Vietnam.

By this time, facilitated by general instability in the region and the U.S.-backed ousting of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, the opium and heroin trade that had arisen in the infamous Golden Triangle region was also beginning to escalate. Significant amounts of heroin started to flow into Vietnam during 1970 and this was followed soon after by the first large-scale seizures of Asian heroin in the United States and Europe. Historian and drug trafficking expert Dr Alfred W. McCoy claims that there was significant covert US involvement in the drug trade which, he alleges, was the result of what he calls the CIA's policy of "radical pragmatism".

McCoy claims that this policy led to the creation of a new Asian-based heroin trade, organised as a collaboration between the Sicilian-US and Corsican-French Mafia, with assistance from elements of the CIA. Although McCoy's broader claims remain controversial, the indisputable fact was that by late 1970 heroin use was emerging as a major health issue among US servicemen, with some medics reporting that as more than 10% of GIs in some units were regular heroin users by the end of 1970. The penetration of drugs into US military in Vietnam also led to a rapid increase in drug importation into Australia, thanks in part to the the thriving Rest and Recreation circuit, with some US personnel sent to Sydney on R&R leave being used as drug "mules". Around this time, US journalists also began to report allegations that South Vietnamese politicians were using money from the drug trade to finance their election campaigns, and that senior intelligence personnel were directly involved in drug running operations.

In the 1972 election, the war was once again a major issue in the United States. An antiwar candidate, George McGovern, ran against President Nixon. Nixon's Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, declared that "peace is at hand" shortly before election day, dealing a death blow to McGovern's campaign, which was already far behind in opinion surveys. However, the peace agreement was not signed until the next year, leading many to conclude that Kissinger's announcement was just a political ploy. Kissinger's defenders assert that the North Vietnamese negotiators had made use of Kissinger's pronouncement as an opportunity to embarrass the Nixon Administration to weaken it at the negotiation table. White House Press Secretary Ron Ziegler on 30 November 1972, told the press that there would be no more public announcements concerning US troop withdrawals from Vietnam due to the fact that troop levels were then down to 27,000. The U.S. halted heavy bombing of North Vietnam on December 30, 1972.

- **The end of U.S. involvement**

On 15 January 1973, citing progress in peace negotiations, President Nixon announced the suspension of offensive action in North Vietnam which was later followed by a unilateral withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. The Paris Peace Accords were later signed on 27 January 1973, which officially ended U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict. This won the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize for Kissinger and North Vietnamese Politburo member and lead negotiator Le Duc Tho while fighting continued, leading songwriter Tom Lehrer to declare that 'irony had died'. However, five days before the peace accords were signed, Lyndon Johnson, whose presidency was marred by the war, died. The mood during his state funeral was one of intense recrimination because the war's wounds were still raw. However, there was relief that not only U.S. involvement in Vietnam ended, but also a chapter on one of the most tragic and divisive eras in the life of the United States came to a close.

- **Casualties**

Estimating the number killed in the conflict is extremely difficult. Official records from North Vietnam are hard to find or nonexistent and many of those killed were literally obliterated by bombing. For many years the North Vietnamese suppressed the true number of their casualties for propaganda purposes. It is also difficult to say exactly what counts as a "Vietnam war casualty"; people are still being killed today by unexploded ordnance, particularly cluster bomblets. More than 40,000 Vietnamese have been killed so far by landmines and unexploded ordnance.

Environmental effects from chemical agents and the colossal social problems caused by a devastated country with so many dead surely caused many more lives to be shortened.

The lowest casualty estimates, based on North Vietnamese statements which are now discounted by Vietnam, are around 1.5 million Vietnamese killed. Vietnam's Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs released figures on April 3, 1995, reporting that 1.1 million fighters—Viet Cong guerrillas and North Vietnamese soldiers—and nearly 2 million civilians in the north and the south were killed between 1954 and 1975. Other figures run as high as 4 million civilian casualties with 1 million casualties being NVA or VC fighters. Robert McNamara, in his regretful memoir of the war,

references a figure of 3.2 million. The number of wounded fighters was put at 600,000. It remains even more unclear how many Vietnamese civilians were wounded.

Of the US military, 58,226 were killed in action or classified as missing in action. A further 153,303 US military personnel were wounded to give total casualties of 211,529. The United States Army took the majority of the casualties with 38,179 killed and 96,802 wounded; the Marine Corps lost 14,836 killed and 51,392 wounded; the Navy 2,556 and 4,178; with the Air Force suffering the lowest casualties both in numbers and percentage terms with 2,580 killed and 931 wounded.

US allies took casualties as well. South Korea provided the largest outside force and suffered between 4,400 and 5,000 killed full details including WIA and MIA appear difficult to find. Australia lost 501 dead and 3,131 wounded out of the 47,000 troops they had deployed to Vietnam. New Zealand had 38 dead and 187 wounded. Thailand had 351 casualties. It is difficult to locate accurate figures for the losses of the Philippines. Although Canada was not involved in the war, thousands of Canadians joined the US armed forces and served in Vietnam. The US fatal casualties include at least 56 Canadian citizens. It is difficult to estimate the exact number because some Canadians crossed the border to volunteer for service under false pretenses whereas others were permanent residents living in the United States who either volunteered or were drafted. See also Canada and the Vietnam War.

In the aftermath of the war many US citizens came to believe that some of the 2,300 US soldiers listed as Missing in Action had in fact been taken prisoner by the DRV and held indefinitely. The Vietnamese list over 200,000 of their own soldiers missing in action, and bodies of MIA soldiers from World War I and II continue to be unearthed in Europe.

Both during and after the war, significant human rights violations occurred. Both North and South Vietnamese had large numbers of political prisoners, many of whom were killed or tortured. In 1970, two US congressmen visiting South Vietnam discovered the existence of "tiger cages", which were small prison cells used for torturing South Vietnamese political prisoners. After the war, actions taken by the victors in Vietnam, including firing squads, torture, concentration camps and "reeducation," led to the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese. Many of these refugees

fled by boat and thus gave rise to the phrase "boat people." They immigrated to Hong Kong, France, the United States, Canada, Australia, and other countries, creating sizable expatriate communities, notably in the United States.

Among the many casualties of the war were the people of the neighboring state of Cambodia. Approximately 50,000–300,000 died as a result of U.S. bombing campaigns. The bombing campaigns also drove some Cambodians into the arms of the nationalist and communist Khmer Rouge, who took power after the USA cut off funds for bombing them in 1973, and continued the slaughter of opponents or suspected opponents. About 1.7 million Cambodians were murdered or fell victim to starvation and disease before the regime was overthrown by Vietnamese forces in 1979.

Source: wikipedia.org

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