

DATE	ACTION
1954	Vietnam is divided into North and South Vietnam.
1959	The North Vietnam army creates the Ho Chi Minh Trail to carry supplies down to South Vietnam.
1960	North Vietnam creates the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (usually called the Viet Cong).
1961	Around 16,000 American 'advisers' help to organise the South Vietnam army.
1962–63	The Viet Cong use guerrilla tactics against South Vietnam's army and government. More American advisers and equipment arrive.
1964	North Vietnamese patrol boats fire on American warships in the Gulf of Tonkin. The American Congress gives President Johnson the authority to do whatever he thinks is necessary.
1965 February	Operation Rolling Thunder – a gigantic bombing campaign against North Vietnam. Factories and army bases are bombed, as well as the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the capital of North Vietnam, Hanoi.
March	The first American combat troops (3,500 marines) come ashore at Da Nang.
June–September	A major Viet Cong offensive.
November	Battle in La Dreng Valley. The Communists suffer heavy losses.
1966	American forces build heavily-armed camps. They control towns. The Viet Cong largely control the countryside.
1967	Continuous running battles between American and Communist forces around the North–South Vietnam border. The Communists are unable to force out American troops.
1968 January	The Tet Offensive: a large-scale Communist attack on over 100 major towns and cities in South Vietnam. Even the American embassy in Saigon is attacked. Some of the fiercest fighting of the war takes place. The city of Hue is almost flattened by intense fighting. Tet is a defeat for the Communists but is also a major shock to the American military and public who thought the war was almost won. Intense fighting continues throughout 1968. Casualties on both sides mount.
October	Operation Rolling Thunder finishes after three and a half years. More bombs have been dropped on North Vietnam than all the bombs dropped on Germany and Japan during the Second World War.
1969	The USA begins its policy of 'Vietnamisation'. This means building up the South Vietnam army and withdrawing American combat troops. American air power continues to bomb North Vietnam. Intense fighting continues throughout the year. This includes the Battle for Hamburger Hill in May.
1970–71	The fighting spreads to Cambodia. US Secretary of State Kissinger and North Vietnam leader Le Duc begin secret peace talks
1972	Most American forces are now out of Vietnam. A major Communist offensive in March captures much ground. Most land is recaptured by the South Vietnam army by the end of the year. American heavy bombers bomb Hanoi and Haiphong.
1973	Ceasefire signed in Paris and end of draft in the USA. The last US troops leave Vietnam.
1974	Major North Vietnam Army offensive against South Vietnam.
1975	South Vietnam capital Saigon falls to Communists; US officials are evacuated by helicopter.