

The GULF of TONKIN RESOLUTION

When Lyndon Johnson became president, Secretary of Defense **ROBERT McNAMARA** told him that he needed to either send more troops to Vietnam or give up the war. In 1964, North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked two U.S. destroyers in international waters. This led Congress to issue the **GULF OF TONKIN RESOLUTION**, giving the president the power to take military action without declaring war. In March 1965, the U.S. committed combat forces to South Vietnam. U.S. offensive operations in Vietnam **ESCALATED**, led on the ground by **WILLIAM WESTMORELAND**.

The USSR was involved in the Vietnam War, but indirectly. The Soviets fought a **PROXY WAR**—they contributed supplies and used a **PROXY**, or stand-in, to do the fighting. The proxies were North Vietnamese Communists. Direct conflict between the U.S. and the USSR would have been too dangerous.

ESCALATION

The U.S. used **SEARCH-AND-DESTROY** missions to find Viet Cong bases. There was a high rate of civilian casualties because soldiers took refuge in villages.

The U.S. launched a bombing campaign called **OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER**—which lasted three years and involved dropping hundreds of thousands of bombs.

The fast-burning chemical **NAPALM** was used to wipe out forests and villages that lined the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The herbicide **AGENT ORANGE** was used to kill the jungle where Vietnamese guerillas took cover. Agent Orange was later shown to cause serious illnesses, including cancer.

Most U.S. soldiers were inexperienced draftees unprepared to fight guerrillas in an unfamiliar tropical climate. The Viet Cong seemed to have an endless reserve of highly motivated soldiers, who infiltrated the south by going through Laos and Cambodia.

The TET OFFENSIVE

On January 31, 1968, during a cease-fire in honor of the Vietnamese New Year celebration of *TET*, the Viet Cong and North Vietnam forces ambushed American bases and South Vietnamese villages in attacks called the **TET OFFENSIVE**.

They didn't make any gains, but the Vietnam War was getting costly.

THESE ATTACKS RAN
ALL ALONG THE
HO CHI MINH TRAIL.

The COUNTERCULTURE

Many people thought the U.S. didn't belong in another country's civil war. The **DRAFT** was controversial: Wealthy individuals and college students could **DEFER**, so poor or undereducated minorities were drafted at a larger proportion. Young people turned to the **COUNTERCULTURE**: movements led by **HIPPIES** and dedicated to peace.



DEFER
to put off

The **MY LAI MASSACRE** of March 16, 1968—during which American soldiers murdered hundreds of Vietnamese civilians—drove more people to the antiwar movement.

COUNTERCULTURE
a culture that is in opposition to (counter to) the mainstream culture

Some young men declared themselves **CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS**; others burned their **DRAFT CARDS**

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

someone excluded from military service on the grounds of a moral opposition to war

or went to Canada to avoid fighting. **STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY** led protests on college campuses. They were all accused of being unpatriotic.



Half a million people attended a counterculture event called the Woodstock Music and Arts Fair, better known as the **WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL**. The August 1969 concert was advertised as "3 Days of Peace & Music."