

# For Service



Legion of Merit



Distinguished Flying Cross



Soldiers Medal



Army of Honor



Joint Services Commendation Medal



Army Commendation Medal



Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal



Vietnam Service Medal



Vietnam Campaign Medal



Unit Award



Meritorious Unit Commendation



# 1965

## The Buildup Begins

United States involvement in South Vietnam increased sharply during 1965. Other Free World Forces joined in the commitment of ground combat troops. Australia, New Zealand and Korea responded with the United States during the year in answer to the challenge of Communist aggression.

The complexion of the war developed from guerrilla warfare and terrorism to large unit actions on the part of the Viet Cong, reinforced by North Vietnamese regular army units. The South Vietnamese Army and the Communists were now engaging in battalion and larger force actions. Guerrilla actions occurred from time to time, and terror still played a prominent part in the Viet Cong strategy.

On February 7, the Viet Cong attacked a U.S. compound at Pleiku and Camp Holloway nearby. Later that same day U.S. aircraft struck the Dong Hoi military barracks just north of the 17th parallel in North Vietnam. Americans were now definitely a Communist target and America was bombing North Vietnam for the first time.

### DEPENDENTS EVACUATED

With the war intensifying, President Johnson ordered immediate evacuation of all U.S. dependents in Vietnam. His concern for their safety was warranted, for two days later the VC blew up a hotel in Qui Nhon that housed American enlisted men. Twenty-three died in the attack and 21 were injured. Fourteen Vietnamese were also injured from the attack.

The Viet Cong also suffered a serious toll in February. A supply ship attempting to smuggle 80 tons of arms and ammunition was sunk at Vung Ro Bay.

By mid-March Air Force and Navy aircraft were striking regularly at Communist targets in North and South Vietnam. March also saw the first ground offensive unit from the United States arrive. It was the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines of the 3rd Marine Division.

Little significant ground action took place during the two months of March and April; however, terror attacks on the Americans continued. A car filled with explosives was driven next to the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. When the explosives detonated a few moments later two Americans and 11 Vietnamese lost their lives while 143 others were injured.

While killing and maiming scores of civilians, the Communists were keeping a steady barrage of propaganda flowing into the international press decrying the American bombing of North Vietnam, claiming hundreds of civilians were becoming casualties from American raids.

### 173rd AIRBORNE ARRIVES

In May U.S. forces began to build up in earnest. The Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade was landed in-country and



The old U. S. Embassy in Saigon with many of its windows blown out after a car filled with explosives was detonated beside it. Thirteen died in the vicious enemy attack.



immediately went into tactical operations around Bien Hoa. They were followed by additional Marines and Seabees landing at Chu Lai in the I Corps Tactical Zone. (I CTZ).

The buildup continued in June with the arrival of Australia's first combat troops, the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. U.S. combat engineers arrived in force to begin the construction of a deep-draft port and airfield at Cam Ranh Bay. The port was needed to ease the congestion of supply ships at Saigon port.

During this time the VC had been active. A week-long battle round Quang Ngai City resulted in about 500 ARVN casualties. A four-day battle at Dong Xoai, 55 miles northeast of Saigon, resulted in 650 friendly casualties. A bomb exploded in Tan Son Nhut civilian air terminal injuring 46 persons.

Another terrorist incident occurred at the My Canh floating restaurant in the Saigon River. Two claymore mines cost 44 persons their lives and injured 81 others.

A multi-battalion attack on Duc Hoa showed the Communists were settling into conventional warfare in an attempt for complete victory in 1965. They thought they could overcome the Free World and South Vietnamese Forces before the buildup could be accomplished.

## BUILDUP CONTINUES

American troops continued to arrive. In July the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and elements of the 1st Logistical Command added to the strength of military forces in the southern portion of the country. Two Marine battalions bolstered forces in the northern provinces.

Communist forces were increasing on a large scale also. The North Vietnamese Army's (NVA) 101st Regiment was definitely identified as being in South Vietnam and the 18th and 95th NVA Regiments were also believed to be completely within South Vietnam's borders.

In the central section of the country, a tactical headquarters was placed at Nha Trang to control new units arriving in the II CTZ. Originally designated Task Force Alpha, the headquarters later became I Field Force Vietnam

(I FFV). The 1st Cavalry Division moved into An Khe while the 173rd Airborne Brigade protected the arrival with Operation Gibraltar in the immediate vicinity. The September operation resulted in 226 Viet Cong killed in three days.

A regimental force of VC attacked the Phu Co outpost near Qui Nhon and before the battle was complete, ARVN troops took a staggering toll of the attackers. Seven hundred Viet Cong died in the encounter.

## KOREA CONTRIBUTES DIVISION

Another Free World Force entered Vietnam in October. The Republic of Korea sent its Capitol Division into South Vietnam to help aid a country invaded from the north by Communists as Korea was a decade and a half earlier. During the same period the remaining elements of the 1st Infantry Division arrived.

By November the 1st Cavalry was conducting tactical operations. The prelude to the largest-scale action of the war took place during the first 12 days of the month when the cavalry tangled with a large force west of Plei Me. At the same time the 173rd Airborne battled VC units in War Zone "D" 30 miles northwest of Saigon. The two engagements resulted in over 600 enemy dead and nearly 20 captured.

## IA DRANG VALLEY

To the west of Plei Me Communist forces were moving into the Ia Drang Valley intent on colliding with the 1st Cavalry and winning a victory over their "green" troops. The enemy met the 3rd Brigade of the Division, and stood and fought, rather than melt into the jungle after initial contact. When the smoke of battle cleared 1,238 enemy soldiers had died while only one-fifth that number of Americans were killed. The "green" troops and the airmobile concept had proven themselves.

The Communists had suffered a stunning defeat against the Americans in the Ia Drang Valley, but they overran an ARVN unit at the Michelin Plantation in Binh Duong Province, inflicting heavy casualties on the South Vietnamese.



The American buildup in South Vietnam required large quantities of supplies and equipment. Saigon Port is lined with ships unloading. Photo by Sp5 Jim Thornberry.

The VC also countered with terror by detonating a truck laden with explosives at the Metropole Bachelor Enlisted Quarters in Saigon. Eight Americans were killed and 137 injured as a result of the attack.

Before the year closed, the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division deployed from Hawaii. This brought the total strength of U.S. and Free World Military Forces in Vietnam to 181,000 from a beginning figure of 24,000 men—an increase of over seven times. Meanwhile enemy forces had increased from 103,000 at the beginning of the year to an estimated 230,000.

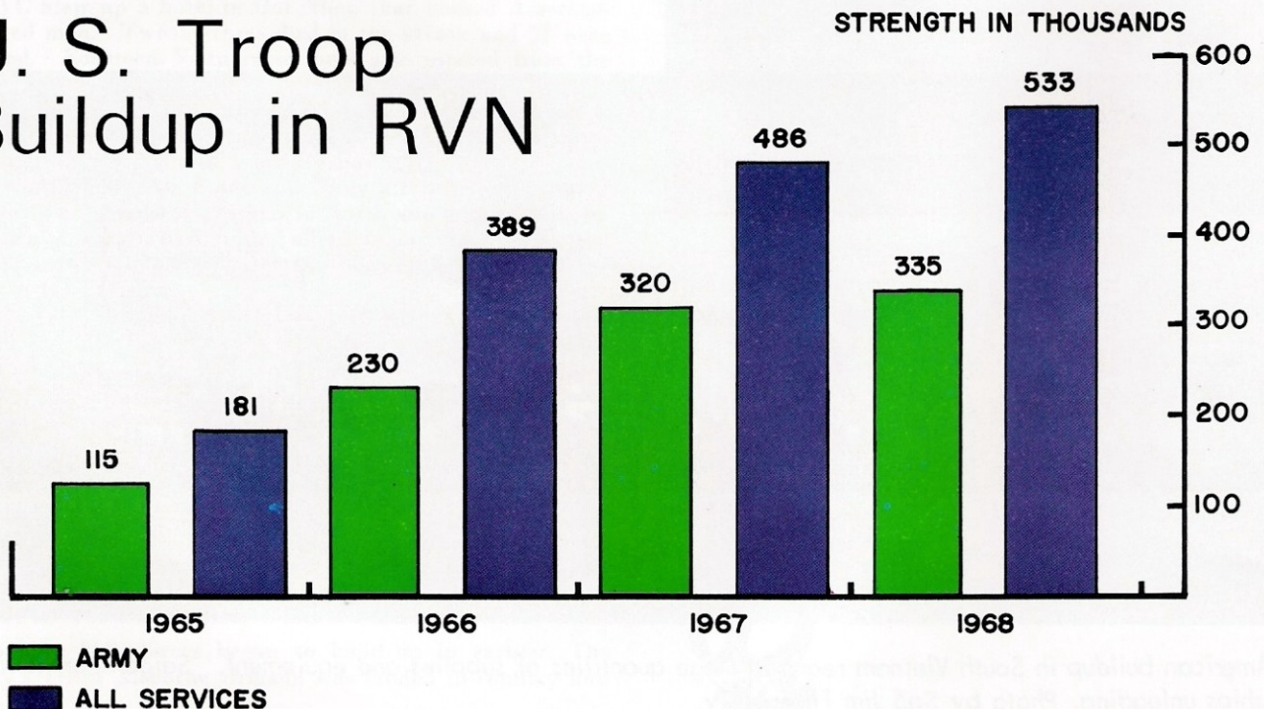
The year had seen U.S. troops penetrate into areas Communists had controlled for years. With the aid of saturation bombing by B-52 bombers, the 1965 monsoon offensive the VC had promised was little more than a small splash. Superior firepower, rapid artillery and air power response, coupled with the helicopter's mobility, were proving that the Communists' attempt to wrap up the war by 1966 was not going to materialize.

On the diplomatic scene Hanoi scorned America's peace overture of a 37-day pause in air strikes over North Vietnam. On the Saigon political front the governmental turmoil was eliminated by the emergence of a military National Leadership Council. The Air Force Commander, Brigadier General Nguyen Cao Ky became premier, bringing long-needed calm to the government.

### 1961—1965 CASUALTIES

<i>ENEMY KILLED</i>	
27,191	
<i>HOI CHANH</i>	
11,112	
<i>VIETNAMESE CIVILIANS KILLED</i>	
1,800	
<i>ARVN CASUALTIES</i>	
Killed	Wounded
1,124	23,118
<i>FWMF CASUALTIES</i>	
Killed	Wounded
31	139
<i>U. S. MILITARY CASUALTIES</i>	
Killed	Wounded
U.S.—1,369	U.S.—6,114

## U. S. Troop Buildup in RVN



## PROVINCES AND CAPITALS

- 1 QUANG TRI, Quag Tri
- 2 THUA THIEN, Hue
- 3 QUANG MAM, Da Nang, Hoi An
- 4 QUANG TIN, Tam Ky
- 5 QUANG NGAI, Quang Ngai
- 6 KONTUM, Kontum
- 7 BINH DINH, Bong Son, Qui Nhon
- 8 PLEIKU, Pleiku
- 9 PHU BON, Hau Bon
- 10 PHU YEN, Song Cau, Tuy Hoa
- 11 DARLAC, Ban Me Thuot
- 12 KHANH HOA, Nha Trang
- 13 QUANG DUC, Gia Nghia
- 14 TUYEN DUC, Dalat
- 15 NINH THUAN, Phan Rang
- 16 PHUOC LONG, Phuoc Binh
- 17 LAM DONG, Bao Loc, Di Linh
- 18 BINH THUAN, Phan Thiet
- 19 BINH LONG, An Loc
- 20 PHUOC THANH, Phuoc Vinh
- 21 LONG KHANH, Xuan Loc
- 22 BINH THUY, Ham Tan
- 23 TAY NINH, Tay Ninh
- 24 BIHN DUONG, Phu Cuong
- 25 BIEN HOA, Bien Hoa
- 26 PHUOC TUY, Ba Ria
- 27 HAU NGHIA, Khiem Cuong
- 28 CHAU DOC, Chau Doc
- 29 KIEN PHONG, Cao Lanh
- 30 KIEN TUONG, Moc Hoa

- 31 LONG AN, Tan An
- 32 KIEN GIANG, Ha Tien
- 33 AN GIANG, Long Xuyen
- 34 DINH TUONG, My Tho
- 35 VINH LONG, Vinh Long
- 36 KIEN HOA, Truc Giang
- 37 GO CONG,
- 38 PHONG DINH, Can Tho
- 39 VINH BINH, Phu Vinh
- 40 CHUONG THIEN, Vi Thanh
- 41 BA XUYEN, Khanh Hung
- 42 BAC LIEU, Bac Lieu
- 43 AN XUYEN, Quan Long
- 44 PHU QUOC, Duong Dong
- 45 GIA DINH, Saigon

## CAPITAL ZONE

I CORPS

II CORPS

III CORPS

IV CORPS

## LEGEND

- CORPS BOUNDARIES
- - - - - PROVINCE BOUNDARIES
- LOCATION, PROVINCE CAPITALS
- NATIONAL CAPITAL



*The Presidential inauguration included the oath-taking ceremonies of President Nguyen Van Thieu and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, and a parade celebrating both the inauguration and National Day.*