

0. THE EARLY YEARS - Story Preface

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In this photo by Horst Faas, taken during December of 1964, South Vietnamese troops are in Long An province where they were defending against Viet Cong operations in the South's Mekong Delta area. Copyright, Horst Faas/AP, all rights reserved. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

Although America provided non-combat advisors to South Vietnam during the Kennedy Administration, some of those advisors were getting killed. Their families were extremely upset.

President Kennedy attempted to explain his motives for involvement in Vietnam, but not everyone agreed with the White House and Pentagon decision makers.

Meanwhile ... the war of aggression, by the North against the South, was about to worsen, dramatically. Photos from the National Archives (and other web sites) document some of the events:

- Napalm bombs, ready for loading, 1962.
- "Viet Cong" captives, 1962.
- South Vietnamese paratroopers during the initial phase of an air-ground strike against Viet Cong in Tay Ninh Province, 45 miles northwest of Saigon. (Note they are jumping from a USAF C-123 transport.)
- An elderly Vietnamese couple is protected at a U.S. Marine Corps-sponsored refugee camp. The National Archives description states: "Hundreds of such Vietnamese families have been evacuated from Viet Cong terrorism to the center by Leathernecks of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines Regiment, 3rd Marine Division."

By late summer, 1964, the role of America's military had dramatically expanded. No longer were U.S. troops merely giving advice and providing shelter. Events in the Gulf of Tonkin provided the Johnson Administration with a reason to drastically change the course of the war.

For the next 8½ years, Americans would die in Vietnam.

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South Vietnamese Troops - Combat in 1964

In this photo, by Horst Faas, South Vietnamese troops are in Long An province where they were defending against Viet Cong operations in the South's Mekong Delta area. Before the U.S. began combat operations in Vietnam, Americans provided mostly unarmed help. They would serve as advisers, but the South-Vietnamese military did all the fighting.



The photo, from December of 1964, also depicts U.S. "Eagle Flight" choppers which ferried South Vietnamese airborne troops to combat areas. These troops would support South Vietnamese ground forces engaged in combat with Vietcong guerillas from North Vietnam.

Click on the image for a better view.

Horst Faas photo, from December of 1964, published by the Associated Press (AP).

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White House, Washington, D.C.

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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The Pentagon Complex

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Napalm Bombs, Vietnam - 1962

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. ARC Identifier 69357. USAF movie 342-USA-38581.

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Vietnam, 1962 - "Vietcong" Captives

Image online, courtesy U.S. Department of Defense.

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Striking the Viet Cong in Tay Ninh Province

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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South Vietnamese Paratroopers

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Vietnam - Elderly Couple

U.S. National Archives image, ARC Identifier 532436, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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