

# Highlights of the Period

The United States military effort in Vietnam, according to the Pentagon study, continued to intensify—both on the ground and in the air—throughout 1965 and well into 1966, despite continuing evidence that this escalation was bringing “an acceptable outcome” no closer to realization.

Here, in chronological order, are highlights of this period:

## JULY, 1965

John T. McNaughton, Assistant Secretary of Defense, defines “win” for U. S. as “demonstrating to the VC that they cannot win.”

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, assured by special study group headed by Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of Joint Chiefs, that “there appears to be no reason we cannot win if such is our will,” approves request by Gen. William Westmoreland, U. S. military commander in Vietnam, for 100,000 more U. S. troops.

Mr. McNamara, in memo to President, says he thinks General Westmoreland’s three-phase strategy plan “stands a good chance” of success, notes casualties will increase, suggests U.S. “killed-in-action might be in the vicinity of 500 a month by the end of the year . . . .”

Pentagon study notes U.S. strategy “did not take escalatory reactions into account.”

## NOVEMBER, 1965

General Westmoreland asks for 154,000 more men; this would bring total U.S. troops in Vietnam to 375,000, study says. General explains to Adm. U.S. Grant Sharp, U.S. commander in the Pacific, that Vietcong-North Vietnamese rate of troop build-up is expected to be “double that of U.S.”

Mr. McNamara, in memo to President, recommends U.S. supply total of nearly 400,000 men by end of 1966, adds that this “will not guarantee success.”

## DECEMBER, 1965

General Westmoreland asks for total of 443,000 troops by end of 1966. Air war continues at rate of 1,500 sorties weekly.

## JANUARY, 1966

General increases request to 459,000 men.

McNamara memorandum concedes

that air war “has not successfully interdicted infiltration.” Second memo warns, “We are in an escalating military stalemate.” Includes coalition, neutralist “or even anti-U.S.” Government as among outcomes U.S. should be able to accept. Still urges more troops, bombing.

## MARCH, 1966

Secretary McNamara, after months of pressure from Joint Chiefs, recommends U.S. bomb petroleum, oil and lubricant supplies in North Vietnam. Admiral Sharp had predicted this would “bring the enemy to the conference table or cause the insurgency to wither.”

## APRIL, 1966

White House policy meetings to consider Vietnam options. George W. Ball, Under Secretary of State, urges “cutting our losses,” concedes “no really attractive options open to us.”

## MAY, 1966

President decides to order P.O.L. air strikes. C.I.A. estimates this will not halt “infiltration of men and supplies.”

## JUNE, 1966

Oil strikes begin, hitting Haiphong, Hanoi storage sites.

## JULY, 1966

By month’s end, Defense Intelligence Agency estimates 70 per cent North Vietnam’s original storage capacity destroyed.

## AUGUST, 1966

Major storage sites destroyed; study calls flow of men and material to South “undiminished,” notes North Vietnam’s adaptability and resourcefulness” in switching to small, dispersed sites, almost impossible to bomb.

Joint Chiefs pass on new Westmoreland ground-troop request to Mr. McNamara: 542,588 total for 1967.

## SEPTEMBER, 1966

Report to Secretary McNamara from study group says Operation Rolling Thunder “had no measurable direct effect” on Hanoi’s capability in South Vietnam; concludes that “there is no firm basis for determining if there is any feasible level of effort that would achieve” U.S. air-war objectives.

Study group recommends building electronic barrier across Vietnamese demilitarized zone.