

Study Guide



Chapter 30, Section 2

For use with textbook pages 896–901

GOING TO WAR IN VIETNAM

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

Vietcong a new guerrilla army organized by Ho Chi Minh and his followers (page 897)

Gulf of Tonkin Resolution a Congressional resolution that allowed President Johnson to use force to defend American troops in Vietnam (page 899)

napalm a jellied gasoline that explodes on contact (page 900)

Agent Orange a chemical that strips leaves from trees and shrubs (page 900)

Ho Chi Minh trail a network of paths, on which North Vietnam sent arms and supplies (page 901)

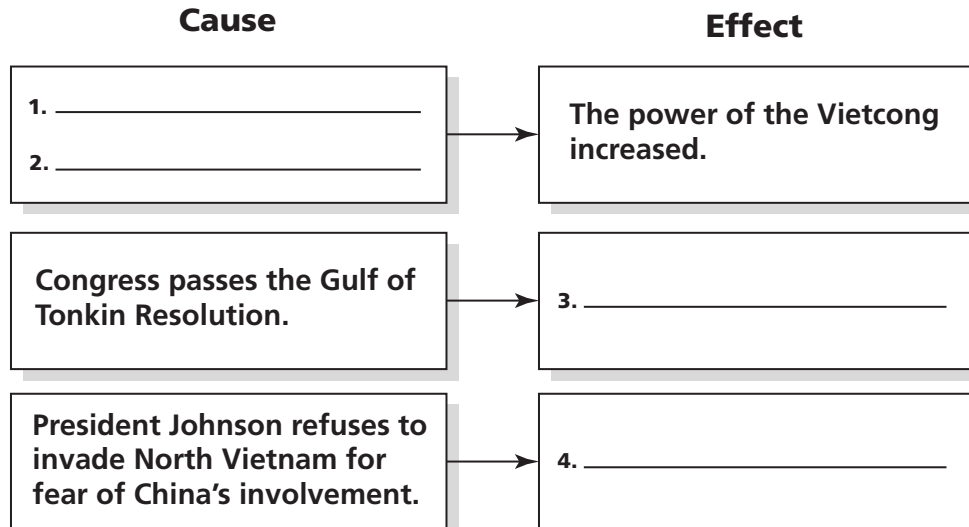
DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

Have you seen any movies or read any books about the Vietnam War? How did the movie or book depict it? What conditions did American troops face there?

The last section described the French involvement in Vietnam. This section discusses how the United States became militarily involved in Vietnam.

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the cause-and-effect diagram below to help you take notes. Identify the causes or the effects of the events listed.



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READ TO LEARN

- **American Involvement Deepens** (page 896)

After Diem refused to hold national elections, Ho Chi Minh began an armed struggle to reunify the nation. He and his followers organized a new guerrilla army, which became known as the **Vietcong**. After fighting began between the Vietcong and South Vietnam’s forces, President Eisenhower increased American aid and sent military advisers to train South Vietnam’s army. However, the Vietcong’s power increased. This was partly due to the fact that many Vietnamese were against Diem’s government. It was also due to the Vietcong’s use of terror. The Vietcong had killed thousands of government officials and gained control of much of the countryside. Diem looked increasingly to the United States for help.

President Kennedy continued to support South Vietnam, seeing it as an important part of fighting communism. He increased military aid and sent more advisers. The United States believed that the Vietcong were so popular because Diem’s government was corrupt and unpopular. They urged him to introduce more democratic reforms. He introduced some, but they had little effect. Diem, a Catholic, was also unpopular because he discriminated against Buddhism, which was one of the most practiced religions in Vietnam. When he banned traditional religious flags for Buddha’s birthday, Buddhists protested. Diem’s police killed 9 people and injured 14 others. In one of the demonstrations, a Buddhist monk set himself on fire. The photograph of this appeared on television and in newspapers around the world. It clearly showed the opposition to Diem.

When Henry Cabot Lodge arrived in Vietnam as American ambassador in August 1963, he found out that several Vietnamese generals were plotting to overthrow Diem. Lodge told them that the United States was sympathetic to their cause. The generals overthrew Diem and executed him. Although Diem was unpopular, he was a good administrator. After his death, the government became even more unstable. This forced the United States to become even more involved as it tried to prop up the weak South Vietnamese government. Shortly after Diem’s death, President Kennedy was assassinated. The conflict in Vietnam fell to President Johnson.

5. Why did the Vietcong’s power increase?

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• Johnson and Vietnam (page 898)

President Johnson was determined to stop South Vietnam from becoming Communist. Johnson also knew that many Republicans blamed the Democrats for losing China to communism. As a result, he did not want to be blamed for losing Vietnam to communism.

On August 2, 1964, President Johnson announced that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had fired on two American destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. He insisted that the attack was unprovoked. He ordered American aircraft to attack North Vietnamese ships. Johnson did not reveal that American warships had been helping South Vietnam in spying and raids on North Vietnam.

Johnson asked Congress for authorization to use force to defend American forces. On August 7, 1964, Congress passed the **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution**. It essentially handed over war powers to the president. Shortly afterward, the Vietcong began to attack American bases where U.S. advisers were stationed. In February 1965, after one Vietcong attack in which 7 Americans were killed and more than 100 were wounded, President Johnson ordered more than 100 American aircraft to strike North Vietnam. Most Americans approved of Johnson's actions. His advisers, including Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, also approved. Some, however, warned that if the United States got too involved in Vietnam, it might be difficult to get out.

In March 1965, Johnson increased American involvement. He switched from using individual air strikes to a bombing campaign, which was named Operation Rolling Thunder. Johnson also ordered the first combat troops into Vietnam. They fought alongside the South Vietnamese troops against the Vietcong.

6. How did American involvement in Vietnam change after March 1965?

• A Bloody Stalemate Emerges (page 899)

By 1966 more than 300,000 American soldiers were fighting in Vietnam. Americans believed that with such a large fighting force, the United States was destined to win. Not having this kind of power, the Vietcong used ambushes and hit-and-run tactics. The Vietcong also blended into the population in the

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cities and countryside and then vanished. To counter these tactics, American troops tried to find enemy troops and bomb their positions. They hoped to destroy their supply lines and force them out in the open.

American troops also wanted to get rid of the Vietcong's ability to hide in the thick jungles by destroying the landscape. American planes dropped **napalm**, a jellied gasoline that explodes on contact. They also used **Agent Orange**, a chemical that strips leaves from trees and shrubs. The chemical destroyed farmland and forests.

American military leaders believed that continuous bombing and killing of many Vietcong would destroy the enemy's morale and make them surrender. However, the guerrillas had no intention of surrendering. Although the Vietcong were made up of many South Vietnamese, North Vietnam supported them with arms and advisers. Later, North Vietnam began sending its own army to South Vietnam. They sent the supplies by a network of paths that went through Cambodia and Laos. The paths bypassed the border between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The network was known as the **Ho Chi Minh trail**. North Vietnam received its supplies from the Soviet Union and China. President Johnson refused to order an invasion of North Vietnam because he feared an attack would bring China into the war. This policy made it difficult to win the war. Instead of conquering enemy troops, American troops followed a strategy of defeating the enemy forces by slowly wearing them down.

Although American planes killed as many as 220,000 Vietnamese between 1965 and 1967, the Vietcong showed no signs of surrendering. American casualties also increased, with more than 6,700 American soldiers killed by the end of 1966.

7. Why did President Johnson refuse to order an invasion of North Vietnam?
