

War in Vietnam



Tonight Americans and Asians are dying for a world where each people may choose its own path of change. Why must this nation endanger its ease for the sake of a people so far away?

We fight because we must fight if we are to live in a world where every country can shape its own destiny. Any only in such a world will our own freedom be finally secure.

The first reality is that Communist North Vietnam has attacked the independent nation of South Vietnam. Its object is total conquest.

Of course, some of the people of South Vietnam are participating in an attack on their own government. But trained men and supplies, orders, and arms, flow in a constant stream from north to south.

This support is the heartbeat of the war.

Over this war-and all of Asia-is another reality: Communist China. The rulers in Hanoi are urged on by Peking. This is a government which is helping the forces of violence in almost every continent. The contest in Vietnam is part of a wider pattern of aggressive purposes.

Why are we in Vietnam?

We are there because there are great stakes in the balance. Let no one think for a moment that retreat from Vietnam would bring an end to the conflict. The battle would be started again in one country then another. The central lesson of our time is that the appetite of aggression is never satisfied.

Our objective is the independence of South Vietnam, and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves-only that the people of South Vietnam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way.

Adapted from President Johnson's speech from "Peace Without Conquest," an address by Lyndon B. Johnson at Johns Hopkins University, April 7, 1965.

Ho Chi Minh's position on the Vietnam War

**To His Excellency Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson
President, United States of America**

Your Excellency,

Vietnam is thousands of miles away from the United States. The Vietnamese people have never done any harm to the United States. But contrary to the pledges made by its representatives at the 1954 Geneva Conference, the U.S. Government has ceaselessly intervened in Vietnam, it has unleashed and intensified the war of aggression in South Vietnam with a view to prolong the partition of Vietnam and turning South Vietnam into a neo-colony and a military base of the United States. For over two years now, the U.S. Government has, with its air and naval forces, carried the war to North Vietnam, an independent and sovereign country.

The Vietnamese people deeply love independence, freedom and peace. But in the face of the U.S. aggression, they have risen up, united as one man, fearless of sacrifices and hardships; they are determined to carry on their resistance until they have won genuine independence and freedom and true peace. Our just cause enjoys strong sympathy and support from the peoples of the whole world including broad sections of the American people.

The U.S. Government has unleashed the war of aggression in Vietnam. It must stop the aggression. That is the only way to the restoration of peace. The U.S. Government must stop definitively and unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against North Vietnam, withdraw from South Vietnam all U.S. and satellite troops, and let the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs.

**Sincerely,
Ho Chi Minh**

Letters Home - The following are excerpts from actual letters of American GIs in Vietnam

December 12, 1965

Dear Mom,

I am writing this in the event that I am killed during my remaining tour of duty in Vietnam.

First of all I want to say that I am here as a result of my own desire. I don't like being over here, but I am doing a job that must be done - I am fighting an inevitable enemy that must be fought - now or later.

I am fighting to protect and maintain what I believe in and what I want to live in-a democratic society. If I am killed while carrying out this mission, I want no one to cry or mourn for me. I want people to hold their heads high and be proud of me for the job I did.

I also want to be buried in my Marine Corps uniform with all the decorations, medals, and badges I rate. I also want Rabi Hirschberg to officiate, and I want to be buried in the same cemetery as Dada and Gramps.

That is about all, except I hope I never have to use this letter-I love you, Mom, and Sue, and Nan, and I want you all to carry on and be very happy, and above all be proud-

Love and much more love,
Rick (Richard E. Marks)

August 1969

Dear Yolanda

...Things are picking up around here. We're starting to train the Vietnamese to do our jobs so they can take over when the time comes for the Air Force to pull out.

The local people are not very enthusiastic about our leaving because, for one reason, they don't want to lose all the money they are making off the American GIs.

We cannot blame them for wanting a way of life that they have never had, and a continuation of the war is not going to bring any solution. They do not want to fight, they're tired of suffering, and they've finally realized this is more a political war with no gains for the common people. It's a complicated problem. I just can't begin to go into it without ending up with a book. I've always felt that if the North would agree to a peaceful settlement, both the North and South could make progress toward helping their people, whether it be under a communistic or democratic system, than by killing each other. I've learned only one lesson from this and that is if man has been fighting his fellow man since the beginning of time, he will continue to do so, and the United States as powerful as it may be, cannot play the role of God and solve all the problems of the world, and sometimes I wonder if there really is a God.

Love,
Chicky (Hector Ramos)

Questions:

Answer the following questions using complete sentences, in short-paragraph form. Please make sure that your name is on top of your answers....

1. In the statement made by President Lyndon B. Johnson why is the United States fighting in Vietnam?
2. According to the President, who is to blame for the war?
3. In the response by Ho Chi Minh, who does he believe started the Vietnam War and why?
4. What is Ho Chi Minh's solution to the conflict in Vietnam?
5. In the first Letter Home - from Richard E. Marks - why is he fighting in Vietnam?
6. Does Richard Marks believe that his government should be in Vietnam? Explain.
7. Why does Hector Ramos believe there is no end to the solution of the war?
8. What has Hector learned from being stationed in Vietnam?
9. If you had lived during the 1960's would you have volunteered to fight in Vietnam based on the speech made by the President of the United States? Explain your answer in full.