

# Timeline

From Page 2A

## NOVEMBER 17, 1965

Elements of the 66th North Vietnamese Regiment moving east toward Plei Mei encounter and ambush an American battalion. Neither reinforcements nor effective firepower can be brought in. When fighting ends that night, 60 percent of the Americans were casualties, and almost one of every three soldiers in the battalion had been killed.

## 1966

### JANUARY 8, 1966

U.S. forces launch Operation Crimp. Deploying nearly 8,000 troops, it is the largest American operation of the war. The goal of the campaign is to capture the Vietcong's headquarters for the Saigon area, which is believed to be located in the district of Chu Chi. Though the area in Chu Chi is razed and repeatedly patrolled, American forces fail to locate any significant Vietcong base.

### FEBRUARY 1966

Hoping for head-on clashes with the enemy, U.S. forces launch four search and destroy missions in the month of February. Although there are two minor clashes with Vietcong regiments, there are no major conflicts.

### MARCH 5, 1966

The 272nd Regiment of the Vietcong 9th Division attack a battalion of the American 3rd Brigade at Lo Ke. U.S. air support succeeds in bombing the attackers into retreat. Two days later, the American 1st Brigade and a battalion of the 173rd Airborne are attacked by a Vietcong regiment, which is driven away by artillery fire.

### APRIL-MAY 1966

In Operation Birmingham, more than 5,000 U.S. troops, backed by huge numbers of helicopters and armored vehicles, sweep the area around north of Saigon. There are small scale actions between both armies, but over a three week period, only 100 Vietcong are killed. Most battles are dictated by the Vietcong, who prove elusive.

### LATE MAY-JUNE 1966

In late May 1966, the North Vietnamese 324B Division crosses the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and encounters a Marine battalion. The NVA holds their ground and the largest battle of the war to date breaks out near Dong Ha. Most of the 3rd Marine Division, some 5,000 men in five battalions, heads north. In Operation Hastings, the Marines backed by South Vietnamese Army troops, the heavy guns of U.S. warships and their artillery and air power drive the NVA back over the DMZ in three weeks.

### JUNE 30, 1966

On Route 13, which links Vietnam to the Cambodian border, American forces are brutally assaulted by the Vietcong. Only American air and artillery support prevents a complete disaster.

### JULY 1966

Heavy fighting near Con Thien kills nearly 1,300 North Vietnamese troops.

### OCTOBER 1966

The Vietcong's 9th Division, having recovered from battles from the previous July, prepares for a new offensive. Losses in men and equipment have been replaced by supplies and reinforcements sent down the Ho Chi Minh trail from North Vietnam.

### SEPTEMBER 14, 1966

In a new mission code-named Operation Atleboro, the U.S. 196th Brigade and 22,000 South Vietnamese troops begin aggressive search and destroy sweeps through Tay Ninh Province. Almost immediately, huge caches of supplies belonging to the NLF 9th Division are discovered, but again, there is no head-to-head conflict. The mission ends after six weeks, with more than 1,000 Vietcong and 150 Americans killed.

### END OF 1966

By the end of 1966, American forces in Vietnam reach 385,000 men, plus an additional 60,000 sailors stationed offshore. More than 6,000 Americans have been killed in this year, and 30,000 have been wounded. In comparison, an estimated 61,000 Vietcong have been killed. However, their troops now numbered more than 280,000.

## 1967

### JANUARY-MAY 1967

Two North Vietnamese divisions, operating out of the DMZ that separates North and South Vietnam, launch heavy bombardments of American bases south of the DMZ. These bases include Khe Sanh, the Rockpile, Cam Lo, Dong Ha, Con Thien and Gio Linh.

### JANUARY 8, 1967

America forces begin Operation Cedar Falls, which is intended to drive Vietcong forces from the Iron Triangle, a 60 square mile area lying between the Saigon River and Route 13. Nearly 16,000 American troops and 14,000 soldiers of the South Vietnamese Army move into the Iron Triangle, but they encounter no major resistance. Huge quantities of enemy supplies are captured. Over 19 days, 72 Americans are killed, victims mostly of snipers emerging from concealed tunnels and booby traps. Seven hundred and twenty Vietcong are killed.

### FEBRUARY 21, 1967

In one of the largest air-mobile assaults ever, 240 helicopters sweep over Tay Ninh province, beginning Operation Junction City. The goal of Junction City is to destroy Vietcong bases and the Vietcong military headquarters for South Vietnam, all of which are located in War Zone C, north of Saigon. Some 30,000 U.S. troops take part in the mission, joined by 5,000 men of the South Vietnamese Army. After 72 days, Junction City ends. American forces succeed in capturing large quantities of stores, equipment and



PHOTO: EDDIE ADAMS

**One of the iconic images of the Vietnam War, showing South Vietnamese General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a Viet Cong prisoner in Saigon during the 1967 Tet offensive.**

weapons, but there are no large, decisive battles.

### APRIL 24, 1967

American attacks on North Vietnam's airfields begin. The attacks inflict heavy damage on runways and installations. By the end of the year, all but one of the North's Mig bases has been hit.

### MAY 1967

Desperate air battles rage in the skies over Hanoi and Haiphong. America air forces shoot down 26 North Vietnamese jets, decreasing the North's pilot strength by half.

### LATE MAY 1967

In the Central Highlands of South Vietnam, Americans intercept North Vietnamese Army units moving in from Cambodia. Nine days of continuous battles leave hundreds of North Vietnamese soldiers dead.

### AUTUMN 1967

In Hanoi, as Communist forces are building up for the Tet Offensive, 200 senior officials are arrested in a crackdown on opponents of the Tet strategy.

## 1968

### MID-JANUARY 1968

In mid-January 1968 in the remote northwest corner of South Vietnam, elements of three NVA divisions begin to mass near the Marine base at Khe Sanh. The ominous proportions of the build-up lead the U.S. commanders to expect a major offensive in the northern provinces.

### JANUARY 21, 1968

At 5:30 a.m., a shattering barrage of shells, mortars and rockets slam into the Marine base at Khe Sanh. Eighteen Marines are killed instantly, 40 are wounded. The initial attack continues for two days.

### JANUARY 30-31, 1968

On the Tet holiday, Vietcong units surge into action over the length and breadth of South Vietnam. In more than 100 cities and towns, shock attacks by Vietcong sapper-commandos are followed by wave after wave of supporting troops. By the end of the city battles, 37,000 Vietcong troops deployed for Tet have been killed. Many more had been wounded or captured, and the fighting had created more than a half million civilian refugees. Casualties included most of the Vietcong's best fighters, political officers and secret organizers; for the guerrillas, Tet is nothing less than a catastrophe. But for the Americans, who lost 2,500 men, it is a serious blow to public support.

### FEBRUARY 23, 1968

More than 1,300 artillery rounds hit the Marine base at Khe Sanh and its outposts, more than on any previous day of attacks. To withstand the constant assaults, bunkers at Khe Sanh are rebuilt to withstand 82mm mortar rounds.

### MARCH 6, 1968

While Marines wait for a massive assault, NVA forces retreat into the jungle around Khe Sanh. For the next three weeks, things are relatively quiet around the base.

### MARCH 11, 1968

Massive search-and-destroy sweeps are launched against Vietcong remnants around Saigon and other parts of South Vietnam.

### MARCH 16, 1968

In the hamlet of My Lai, U.S. Charlie Company kills about 200 civilians. Although only one member of the division is tried and found guilty of war crimes, the repercussions of the atrocity are felt throughout the Army. However rare, such acts undid the benefit of countless hours of civic action by Army units and individual soldiers and raised unsettling questions about the conduct of the war.

### MARCH 22, 1968

Without warning, a massive North Vietnamese barrage slams into Khe Sanh. More than 1,000 rounds hit the base, at a rate of a hundred every hour. At the same time, electronic sensors around Khe Sanh indicate NVA troop movements. American forces reply with heavy bombing.

### APRIL 8, 1968

U.S. forces in Operation Pegasus finally retake Route 9, ending the siege of Khe Sanh. A 77-day battle, Khe Sanh had been the biggest single battle of the Vietnam War to that point. The official assessment of the North Vietnamese Army dead is just more than 1,600 killed, with two divisions all but annihilated. But thousands more were probably killed by American bombing.

### JUNE 1968

With strong, highly mobile American forces now in the area, and the base no longer needed for defense, General Westmoreland approves the abandonment and demolition of Khe Sanh.

### NOVEMBER 1, 1968

After 3 1/2 years, Operation Rolling Thunder comes to an end. In total, the campaign had cost more than 900 American aircraft. Eight hundred and eighteen pilots are dead or missing, and hundreds are in captivity. Nearly 120 Vietnamese planes have been destroyed in air combat or accidents, or by friendly fire. According to U.S. estimates, 182,000 North Vietnamese civilians have been killed. Twenty thousand Chinese support personnel also have been casualties of the bombing.

## 1969

### JANUARY 1969

President Richard M. Nixon takes office as the new President of the United States. With regard to Vietnam, he promises to achieve "Peace With Honor." His aim is to negotiate a settlement that will allow the half-million U.S. troops in Vietnam to be withdrawn, while still allowing South Vietnam to survive.

### FEBRUARY 1969

In spite of government restrictions, President Nixon authorizes Operation Menu, the bombing of North Vietnamese and Vietcong bases within Cambodia. During the following four years, U.S. forces will drop more than a half-million tons of bombs on Cambodia.

### FEBRUARY 22, 1969

In a major offensive, assault teams and artillery attack American bases all across South Vietnam, killing 1,140 Americans. At the same time, South Vietnamese towns and cities are also hit. The heaviest fighting is around Saigon, but fights rage all over South Vietnam. Eventually, American artillery and airpower overwhelm the Vietcong offensive.

### APRIL 1969

U.S. combat deaths in Vietnam exceed the 33,629 men killed in the Korean War.

### JUNE 8, 1969

President Nixon meets with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu on Midway Island in the Pacific, and announces that 25,000 U.S. troops will be withdrawn immediately.

## 1970

### APRIL 29, 1970

South Vietnamese troops attack into Cambodia, pushing toward Vietcong bases. Two days later, a U.S. force of 30,000 -- including three U.S. divisions -- mount a second attack. Operations in Cambodia last for 60 days, and uncover vast North Vietnamese jungle supply depots. They capture 28,500 weapons, as well as over 16 million rounds of small arms ammunition, and 14 million pounds of rice. Although most Vietcong manage to escape across the Mekong, there are more than 10,000 casualties.

## 1971

### FEBRUARY 8, 1971

In Operation Lam Son 719, three South Vietnamese divisions drive into Laos to attack two major enemy bases. Unknowingly, they are walking into a North Vietnamese trap. During the next month, more than 9,000 South Vietnamese troops are killed or wounded. More than two-thirds of the South Vietnamese Army's armored vehicles are destroyed, along with hundreds of U.S. helicopters and planes.

### SUMMER 1971

While herbicides containing Dioxin were banned for use by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1968, spraying of Agent Orange continues in Vietnam until 1971. Operation Ranchhand has sprayed 11 million gallons of Agent Orange -- containing 240 pounds of the lethal chemical Dioxin -- on South Vietnam. More than one-seventh of the country's total area has been laid waste.

## 1972

### JANUARY 1, 1972

Only 133,000 U.S. servicemen remain in South Vietnam. Two-thirds of America's troops have gone in two years. The ground war is now almost exclusively the responsibility of South Vietnam, which has more than 1 million men enlisted in its armed forces.

### MARCH 30, 1972

Massed North Vietnamese Army artillery open a shattering barrage, targeting South Vietnamese positions across the DMZ. Upwards of 20,000 NVA troops cross the DMZ, forcing the South Vietnamese units into a retreat. The Southern defense is thrown into complete chaos. Intelligence reports had predicted a Northern attack, but no one had expected it to come on the DMZ.

### APRIL 1, 1972

North Vietnamese soldiers push toward the city of Hue, which is defended by a South Vietnamese division and a division of U.S. Marines. But by April 9, the

NVA are forced to halt attacks and resupply.

### APRIL 13, 1972

In an assault spearheaded by tanks, NVA troops manage to seize control of the northern part of the city. But the 4,000 South Vietnamese men defending the city, reinforced by elite airborne units, hold their positions and launch furious counterattacks. American B-52 bombers also help with the defense. A month later, Vietcong forces withdraw.

### APRIL 27, 1972

Two weeks after the initial attack, North Vietnamese forces again battle toward Quang Tri City. The defending South Vietnamese division retreats. By April 29, the NVA takes Dong Ha, and by May 1, Quang Tri City.

### JULY 19, 1972

With U.S. air support, the South Vietnamese Army begins a drive to recapture Binh Dinh province and its cities. The battles last until Sept. 15, by which time Quang Tri has been reduced to rubble. Nevertheless, the NVA retains control of the northern part of the province.

### DECEMBER 13, 1972

In Paris, peace talks between the North Vietnamese and the Americans break down.

### DECEMBER 18, 1972

By order of the president, a new bombing campaign starts against the North Vietnamese. Operation Linebacker Two lasts for 12 days, including a three-day bombing period by up to 120 B-52s. Strategic surgical strikes are planned on fighter airfields, transport targets and supply depots in and around Hanoi and Haiphong. U.S. aircraft drop more than 20,000 tons of bombs in this operation. Twenty-six U.S. planes are lost, and 93 airmen are killed, captured or missing. North Vietnam admits to between 1,300 and 1,600 dead.

## 1973

### JANUARY 8, 1973

North Vietnam and the United States resume peace talks in Paris.

### JANUARY 27, 1973

All warring parties in the Vietnam War sign a cease fire.

### MARCH 1973

The last American combat soldiers leave South Vietnam, though military advisors and Marines, who are protecting U.S. installations, remain. For the United States, the war is officially over. Of the more than 3 million Americans who have served in the war, almost 58,000 are dead, and more than 1,000 are missing in action. Some 150,000 Americans were seriously wounded.

## 1974

### JANUARY 1974

Though they are still too weak to launch a full-scale offensive, the North Vietnamese have rebuilt their divisions in the South, and have captured key areas.

### AUGUST 9, 1974

President Richard M. Nixon resigns, leaving South Vietnam without its strongest advocate.

### DECEMBER 26, 1974

The 7th North Vietnamese Army division captures Dong Xoai.

## 1975

### JANUARY 6, 1975

In a disastrous loss for the South Vietnamese, the NVA take Phuoc Long city and the surrounding province. The attack, a blatant violation of the Paris peace agreement, produces no retaliation from the United States.

### MARCH 1, 1975

A powerful NVA offensive is unleashed in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. The resulting South Vietnamese retreat is chaotic and costly, with nearly 60,000 troops dead or missing.

### DURING MARCH

Another NVA offensive sends 100,000 soldiers against the major cities of Quang Tri, Hue and Da Nang. Backed by powerful armored forces and eight full regiments of artillery, they quickly succeed in capturing Quang Tri province.

### MARCH 25, 1975

Hue, South Vietnam's third largest city, falls to the North Vietnamese Army.

### EARLY APRIL 1975

Five weeks into its campaign, the North Vietnamese Army has made stunning gains. Twelve provinces and more than 8 million people are under its control. The South Vietnamese Army has lost its best units, more than a third of its men, and almost half its weapons.

### APRIL 29, 1975

U.S. Marines and Air Force helicopters, flying from carriers off-shore, begin a massive airlift. In 18 hours, more than 1,000 American civilians and almost 7,000 South Vietnamese refugees are flown out of Saigon.

### APRIL 30, 1975

At 4:03 a.m., two U.S. Marines are killed in a rocket attack at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport. They are the last Americans to die in the Vietnam War. At dawn, the last Marines of the force guarding the U.S. embassy lift off. Only hours later, looters ransack the embassy, and North Vietnamese tanks roll into Saigon, ending the war. In 15 years, nearly a million NVA and Vietcong troops and a quarter-million South Vietnamese soldiers have died. Hundreds of thousands of civilians had been killed.

# Ghosts

From Page 1A

pacted American strategic thinking for many years, and the term "another Vietnam" entered our lexicon as a cancerous political warning. The veterans of the conflict suffered for it, some of them very deeply. In many movies and television shows of the post-Vietnam era, the character of the "troubled Vietnam veteran" became a handy stereotype and a source for plot tension.

It wasn't until the Persian Gulf War in 1991 that our military strategy changed and our perception of our veterans rightfully corrected it-

self. Whether it was too late to offer solace to the Vietnam vets remains an open question.

This year, the *Press & Dakotan* has turned its annual "Heritage" edition into a "70/40" edition, putting a spotlight both on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II and the 40th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. These two anniversaries represent important chapters to American history. They were completely different kinds of wars, but as noted above, they contained the same elements of sacrifice and devotion, and exacted the same toll from each participant.

In particular, we are also using this edition to spotlight the work of

two Yankton men, financial planner Dave Hosmer and teacher Doug Haar, who are tackling a herculean project to gather accounts about the World War II veterans before those old soldiers are gone. It's a race against time. Nevertheless, these two men have already collected an enormous amount of material, a tiny sample of which was on display during a World War II open house in Yankton during Riverboat Days. They are searching for more, to collect the stories that will provide insight for future generations about what another generation of people did to defend this nation and this civilization once upon a time. We will continue to spotlight their work in this regard in the coming

weeks and months.

We are also casting a spotlight on the Vietnam War, and this, to be honest, has been more difficult. There is still a reticence for some to discuss this conflict, to exhume the recollections of what was asked of them and what they endured.

It took many, many years for the World War II veterans to really open up about their experiences. Works like Tom Brokaw's "The Greatest Generation" helped shine a new light on these stories, which are seemingly as countless as stars in the sky. Slowly, gradually, these stories have been coming to light. Alas, many other stories have been left untold, lost to us for all time.

In turn, the Vietnam veterans are

now approaching retirement age.

Time, as ever, is moving along, and there are many stories from this war that have yet to be told. We can hope that, for their sake as well as our enlightenment, more of those tales are revealed in the coming years before it's too late.

History is not a static enterprise. It's organic, constantly being re-considered, re-studied and reassessed. In that sense, the story of World War II is still changing. The story of Vietnam is still forming. Here is our hope that the veterans of these conflicts -- as well as other conflicts, ranging from Korea to Afghanistan -- tell their stories and provide lessons and insights for all time.

# Thank You Veterans & Soldiers!

We recognize the many sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform both today and throughout our nations history. We honor their courage and dedication, and we thank them for their contribution to our country.

EMPLOYEE OWNED

2100 Broadway, Yankton • 665-3412