

CHAPTER 22 Section 2 (pages 729–734)

U.S. Involvement and Escalation

BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read how the United States became involved in Vietnam.

In this section, you will read about the war America fought in Vietnam.

AS YOU READ

Use this diagram to take notes on why the United States had trouble fighting the Vietcong.



TERMS AND NAMES

Robert McNamara Secretary of Defense under Johnson

Dean Rusk Secretary of State under Johnson

William Westmoreland Commander of U.S. troops in Vietnam

napalm Gasoline-based explosive

Agent Orange Chemical that destroyed jungle land

search-and-destroy mission Tactic in which U.S. troops destroyed Vietnamese villages

credibility gap Situation in which the U.S. public no longer believed the Johnson administration

The Decision to Escalate

(pages 729–730)

Who supported Johnson's decision to send U.S. troops to Vietnam?

In 1965, Johnson began sending U.S. troops to Vietnam to fight the Vietcong. Some of Johnson's advisers had opposed this move. They argued it was too dangerous.

But most of the president's advisers supported sending in troops. They included Secretary of Defense **Robert McNamara** and Secretary of State **Dean Rusk**. These men believed that America had to help defeat communism in Vietnam. Otherwise, the Communists might try to take over other countries.

Much of the public also agreed with Johnson's decision. Many Americans believed in stopping the spread of communism.

By the end of 1965, the United States had sent more than 180,000 troops to Vietnam. The American commander in South Vietnam was General **William Westmoreland**. He asked for even more troops. By 1967, almost 500,000 American soldiers were fighting in Vietnam.

1. Name two groups that supported Johnson's decision to use troops in Vietnam.

A War in the Jungle (pages 730–733)

Why did the war drag on?

The United States believed that its superior weaponry would lead to a quick victory over the Vietcong. However, several factors turned the war

into a bloody *stalemate*.

The first factor was the Vietcong's fighting style. The Vietcong did not have advanced weapons. As a result, they used hit-and-run *ambush* tactics. The Vietcong struck quickly in small groups. They then disappeared into the jungle or an elaborate system of tunnels. These tactics frustrated the American troops.

The second factor was the Vietcong's refusal to surrender. Throughout the war, the Vietcong suffered many battlefield deaths. However, they continued to fight on.

The third factor was the American troops' inability to win the support of the Vietnamese peasants. In fighting the Vietcong, U.S. troops ended up hurting the peasants as well. For example, U.S. planes dropped **napalm**, a gasoline-based bomb that set fire to the jungle. They did this to expose Vietcong tunnels and hideouts. They also sprayed **Agent Orange**. This was a leaf-killing chemical that destroyed the landscape. Both of these weapons wounded villagers and ruined villages.

American soldiers also turned the peasants against them by conducting **search-and-destroy missions**. During these missions, soldiers destroyed villages they believed supported the Vietcong.

2. Name two reasons why the U.S. failed to score a quick victory against the Vietcong.

The Early War at Home

(pages 733–734)

How did the war affect Johnson's domestic programs?

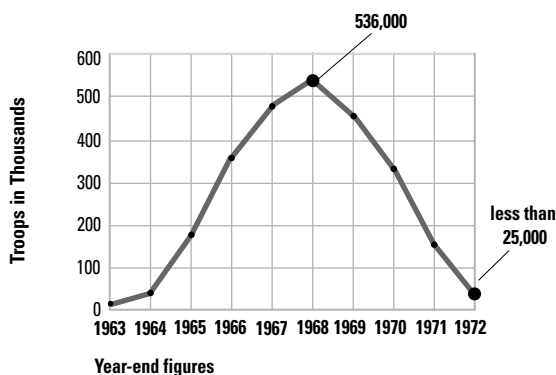
The number of U.S. troops in Vietnam continued to increase. So did the cost of the war. As a result, the nation's economy began to suffer. In order to pay for the war, President Johnson had to cut spending for his Great Society programs.

By 1967, many Americans still supported the war. However, the images of the war on television began to change that. The Johnson administration told the American people that the war was going well. But television told the opposite story. Each night, Americans watched the brutal scenes of the war on their television screens.

This led to a **credibility gap** in the Johnson administration. This meant that a growing number of people no longer believed what the president was saying.

3. How did the war affect Johnson's Great Society?

U.S. Troop Strength in Vietnam



Skillbuilder

Use the graph to answer the questions.

1. What year saw the largest number of U.S. forces in Vietnam?

2. By the beginning of what year had the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam dropped below 200,000?

Chapter 22: The Vietnam War Years (pages 722–757)

Section 2: U.S. Involvement and Escalation (pages 729–734)

1. many of Johnson's advisers; much of the American public
2. Possible responses: the Vietcong's hit and run tactics; the Vietcong's refusal to surrender
3. It hurt the Great Society by taking money away from its programs.

Skillbuilder

1. 1968
2. 1971