

US Military Deaths in Vietnam

Year	Deaths
1964	206
1965	1,863
1966	6,144
1967	11,153
1968	16,589
1969	11,614
1970	6,083
1971	2,357
1972	640
1973	168
1974	178
Total	58,178

The Draft During the Vietnam War

The draft was unpopular both for its impact on those drafted and as a focal point for opposition to a controversial war. Most draft exemptions were for college and graduate students. As U.S. troop strength in Vietnam increased, more and more young men were drafted for service there and more sought means of avoiding the draft. For those seeking a relatively safe alternative, service in the Coast Guard was an option (provided one could meet the more stringent enlistment standards). Since the National Guard was slated only for domestic security, service in the National Guard guaranteed protection from deploying to Vietnam. Applications for church ministry soared, as divinity students were exempt from the draft.

Doctors found themselves being pressured by relatives or family friends to exempt potential draftees on medical grounds. Physical reasons such as high blood pressure could get a man exempted. Various methods to worsen physical reasons included, in at least one case, a man who went to the movies every night on the week before the draft to eat buttered popcorn (he was still approved and drafted). In addition, antiwar psychiatrists could often find small mental conditions to be serious enough to warrant exemptions.



“Draft Dodger Rag”, a 1965 anti-war song by Phil Ochs, circumvented laws against counseling evasion by employing satire to provide a how-to list of available deferments: ruptured spleen, homosexuality, poor eyesight, flat feet, asthma, caregiver for invalid relative, college enrollment, war industry worker, spinal injuries, epilepsy, flower and bug allergies, multiple drug addictions, and lack of physical fitness.

Draft counselors, and the Selective Service System itself, emphasized that there was no such thing as an “exemption” from the draft, only a “deferment”.

Rather than submit to being drafted, tens of thousands of young men migrated to Canada, which did not support war in Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, about 100,000 draft dodgers, in total, went abroad. Those who went abroad faced imprisonment or forced military service if they returned home. The U.S. continued to prosecute draft dodgers after the end of the Vietnam War. President Jimmy Carter issued unconditional amnesty in the form of a pardon to all remaining draft evaders, as part of a general climate of “cultural reconciliation” after the end of the controversial and unpopular war.

Agent Orange



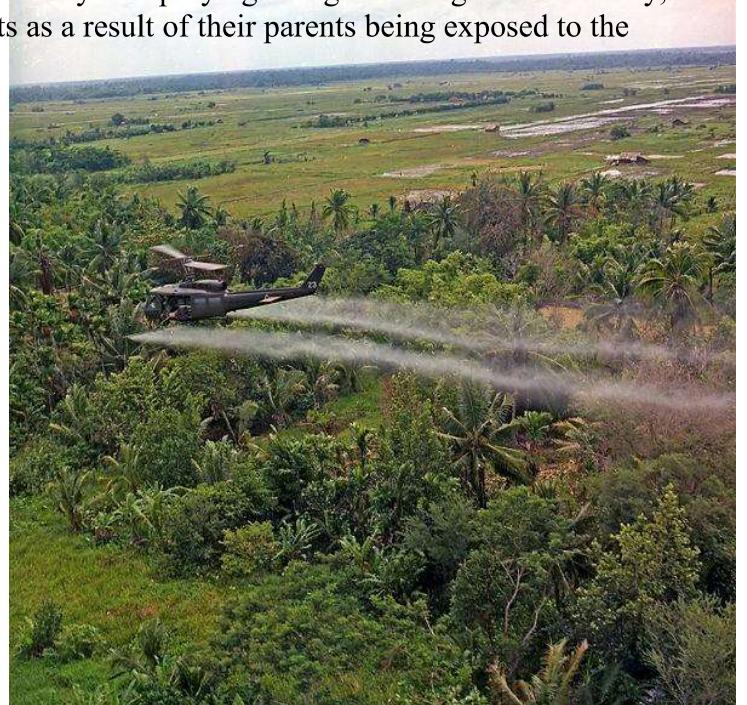
Agent Orange is code name for a herbicide and defoliants used by the U.S. military as part of its chemical warfare program, Operation Ranch Hand, during the Vietnam War.

A herbicide or defoliant is something that burns away plants and trees, so that hidden enemy positions could be located.

During the Vietnam War, the United States military sprayed nearly 20 million gallons of Agent Orange mixed with jet fuel in Vietnam, eastern Laos and parts of

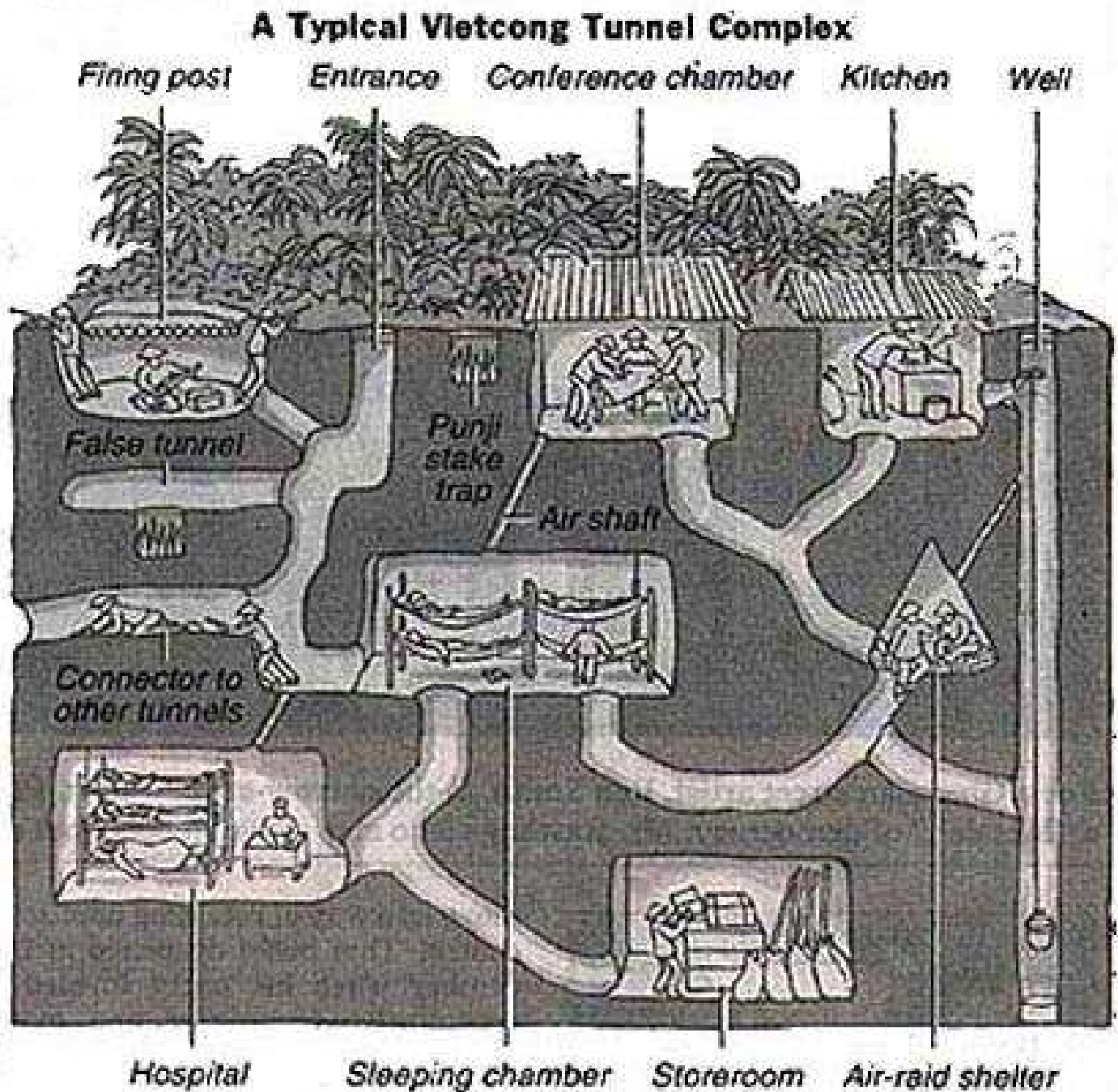
Cambodia, as part of Operation Ranch Hand. As a result, millions of Vietnamese fled the countryside to cities that were more under US control. The urban population in South Vietnam nearly tripled: from 2.8 million people in 1958, to 8 million by 1971. The rapid flow of people led to a fast-paced and uncontrolled urbanization; an estimated 1.5 million people were living in Saigon slums.

United States Air Force records show that at least 6,542 spraying missions took place over the course of Operation Ranch Hand. By 1971, 12 percent of the total area of South Vietnam had been sprayed with defoliating chemicals. Vietnam estimates that more than 400,000 people were killed by the spraying of Agent Orange. Additionally, more than 500,000 children were born with horrific birth defects as a result of their parents being exposed to the chemicals.



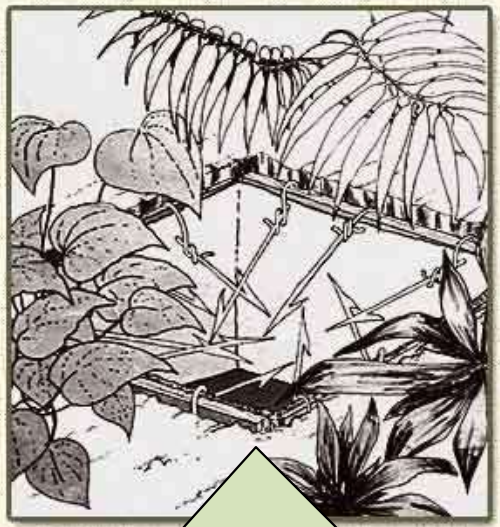
The Cu Chi Tunnels

The Cù Chi Tunnels were an immense network of connecting underground tunnels near Saigon, and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country. The Cù Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War, and were the Viet Cong's base of operations for the Tết Offensive in 1968



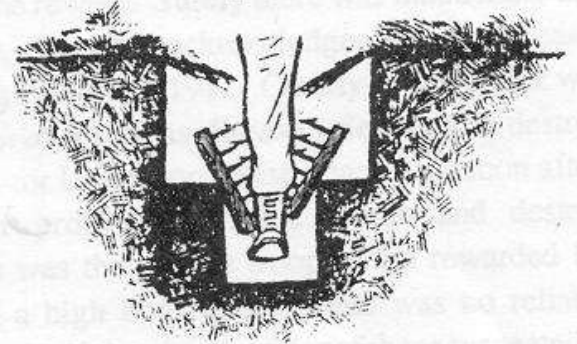
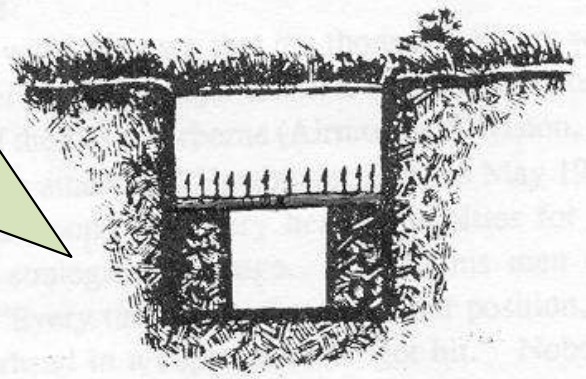
Sources: "The Tunnels of Cu Chi," Tom Mangold and John Porycate, Cornell University

Vietcong Booby Traps



Punji Steak Pit

The most basic trap. It was very cheap to make and very common. Basically a small hole covered with leaf litter, the victim's foot is impaled when stood on.



The Venus Fly Trap

A rectangular frame with overlapping barbs placed in a pit, or along trails. It was made from a metal container sunk into the ground until the top is flush and then covered with grass or leaf camouflage. The barbs inflict injury especially when the victim attempts to withdraw his leg out of the trap.

Arrow Trap

The arrow trap is constructed of a length of bamboo fastened to a board. An arrow, powered by a strong rubber band passes through it. The rubber band is held in the extended position by a catch device triggered by a trip wire.



Grenade Trap

These were placed along the likely paths of soldiers with a two stakes embedded on both sides of a creek or stream with the grenade tied to one and the safety pin partially removed from the striker lever and tied by trip wire to the other stake. When a soldier walked through the trap, it pulled the grenade pin and set it off.

Ho Chi Minh

Hồ Chí Minh was the communist revolutionary leader of North Vietnam who served as prime minister (1945–1955) and president (1945–1969). During the Vietnam War, he led the Việt Cộng, or communist army of North Vietnam.

He initially fought the French for Vietnam's independence, then the Japanese when Japan invaded during World War II, and then the French again after World War II. When America got involved in protecting South Vietnam from invasion, he again got involved in taking on a larger world power.

As president, he installed a communist, single-party government. During the 1950s, political opposition groups were suppressed; those publicly opposing the government were imprisoned in hard labor camps. Many middle-class, intellectual Northerners had been lured into speaking out against Ho's communist regime, and most of them were later imprisoned in gulags, or executed.

With the outcome of the Vietnam War still in question, Ho Chi Minh died in September 1969 from heart failure at his home in Hanoi, aged 79. After the war, Saigon, the capital of the Republic of Vietnam, was renamed Hồ Chí Minh City.

