

# 40th anniversary of U.S. exit from Vietnam

On January 27, 1973, the Paris Peace Accords formally ended direct U.S. military involvement in Vietnam – where U.S. troops were drafted in to fight communist forces in a bloody and ultimately unsuccessful war which left a bitter legacy both at home and abroad

## Ho Chi Minh:

North Vietnam's communist leader sought reunification of country. Inspired and supported **Viet Cong** – communist guerilla movement in South

**Vo Nguyen Giap:** Commander of North Vietnamese Army, masterminded historic victory over French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954

## President Lyndon B. Johnson:

Escalated **John F. Kennedy's** support for South Vietnamese army

## General William Westmoreland:

Boosted troop count to avoid repeat of French loss

U.S. tactics initially restrained by risk of war with Soviet Union and China – suppliers of North Vietnam's large arsenal

## B52 Stratofortress

USAF "carpet-bombs" vast areas with over 2.5m tons of bombs

## KEY EVENTS (1954-75)

- **1954:** French withdrawal ends First Indochina War. Vietnam split between communist north and pro-U.S. south
- **1957:** Communist insurgency begins in South Vietnam against government of President **Ngo Dinh Diem**
- **1960:** U.S. increases aid to Diem
- **1963:** **Viet Cong** guerrillas defeat units of South Vietnamese army. Diem overthrown and assassinated by dissident generals
- **1964:** North Vietnamese torpedo boats attack U.S. destroyer – triggering U.S. bombing raids on North
- **1965:** U.S. intensifies aerial bombing campaign. First 200,000 U.S. combat troops arrive in South Vietnam – rising to 540,000 by 1968
- **1968:** North Vietnamese army and Viet Cong launch **Tet Offensive** on over 100 cities in South including Saigon and Hue. U.S. troops kill 500 civilians in My Lai massacre
- **1969:** President **Richard Nixon** begins withdrawal of ground troops
- **1970:** U.S. National Security advisor, **Henry Kissinger**, and **Le Duc Tho**, for Hanoi government, start talks in Paris
- **1972:** Nixon orders unrestricted bombing of North to force resumption of on-off talks
- **Jan 27, 1973:** Ceasefire signed – last U.S. combat troops withdrawn March 29

Without U.S. military aid, Saigon falls to North Vietnamese forces in April 1975

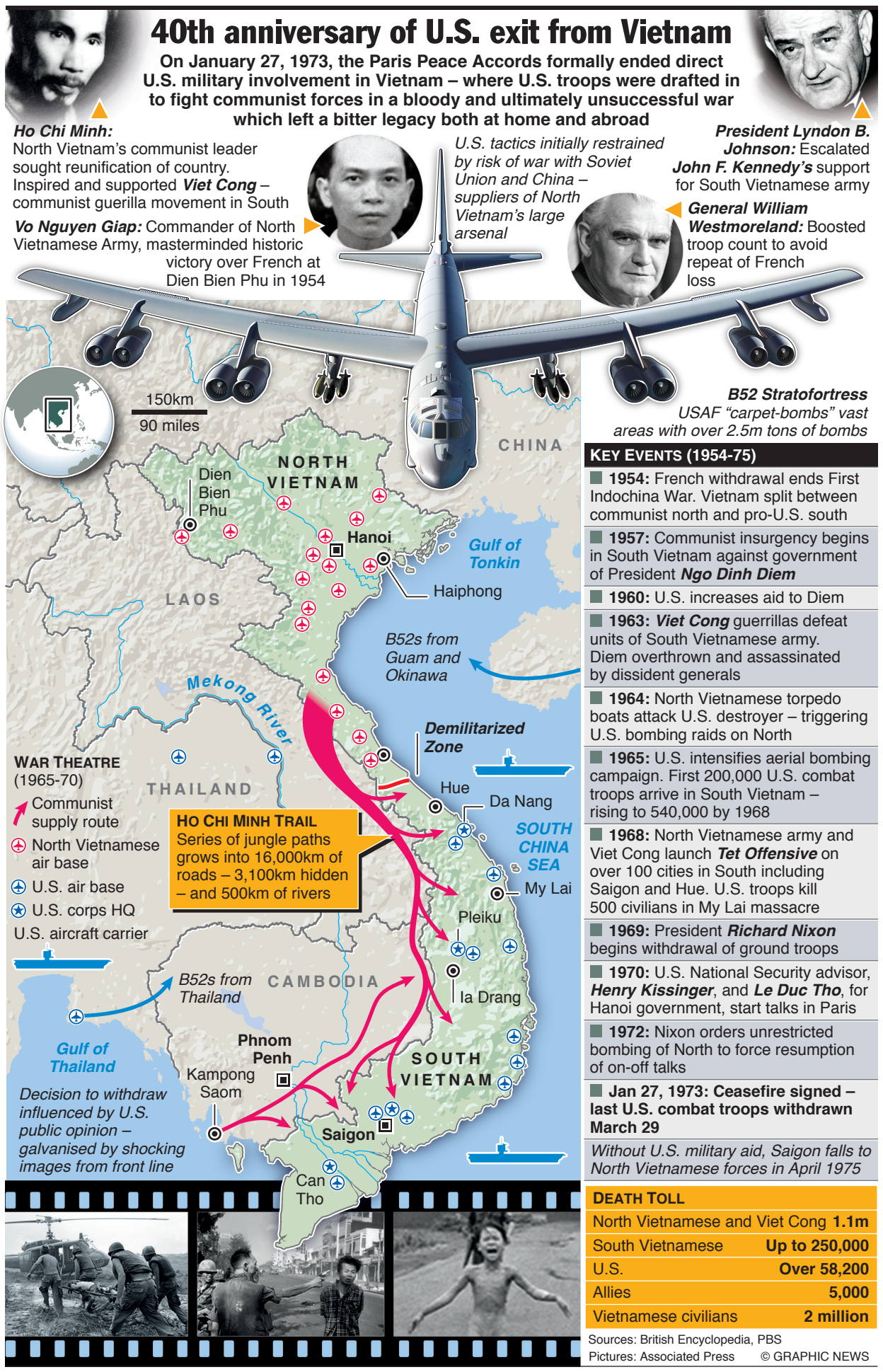
## DEATH TOLL

North Vietnamese and Viet Cong	1.1m
South Vietnamese	Up to 250,000
U.S.	Over 58,200
Allies	5,000
Vietnamese civilians	2 million

Sources: British Encyclopedia, PBS

Pictures: Associated Press

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## WAR THEATRE (1965-70)

- ➔ Communist supply route
- ⊕ North Vietnamese air base
- ⊕ U.S. air base
- ⊕ U.S. corps HQ
- ⊕ U.S. aircraft carrier

**HO CHI MINH TRAIL**  
Series of jungle paths grows into 16,000km of roads – 3,100km hidden – and 500km of rivers

Decision to withdraw influenced by U.S. public opinion – galvanised by shocking images from front line