US Escalation in Vietnam

* Initially most Americans supported containment efforts in Vietnam
* LBJ had won re-election in 1964 stating that he didn’t want to send troops to Vietnam
* March 1965 LBJ sent ground troops as requested by General *William Westmoreland*



* Westmoreland didn’t believe that *ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam)* was able to fight capably



* By 1967 there were over 500,000 troops in Vietnam

Jungle Fighting

* US believed that superior fire power would lead to quick and easy victory
* Vietcong had “home field advantage”



* They were more familiar with terrain and were able to blend in with civilians
* Vietnam became a war with no front
* An elaborate tunnel system allowed VC to attack and disappear quickly



* Many booby traps and land mines

War of Attrition

* Westmoreland wanted to destroy VC morale
* He believed that mounting body counts would further do so
* Also encouraged winning over S. Vietnamese citizens
* *Search & Destroy Missions:* missions designed to kill VC and suspected VC



* *Napalm:* gasoline based substance used to burn the jungle



* *Agent Orange:* toxic chemical used to kill leaves



* Many civilians killed and long-term health effects



Morale of Soldiers

* Morale steadily declined as war continued
* Guerilla warfare was very frustrating
* VC booby traps and mines were effective
* Brutal jungle conditions
* Many soldiers were legally required to fight



* S. Vietnamese gov’t remained corrupt and inefficient
* Many soldiers fought proudly
* Some wished to carry on proud legacy like WWII vet relatives