

## Did JFK have an Exit Strategy for Vietnam?

Written by Kieran Neeson

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In recent years declassified documents relating to attempts by the Kennedy administration at withdrawing US forces from the conflict in Vietnam have been released, causing much debate among scholars and historians. Previously not much was written about Kennedy's decision to withdraw US personnel from Vietnam in over 40 years of historical writing. Indeed much of the work covering the Kennedy administration fail to elaborate or even mention Kennedy's decision to withdraw. Most historians tend to agree with the assumption that when Johnson escalated the war in 1965 and increased troop deployments, he was essentially continuing Kennedy's policies.[1] However, because more official documents relating to Kennedy were declassified under the 1992 JFK Records Act we have seen more work published with a focus on Kennedy's decision to withdraw US personnel from Vietnam.[2]

This new information sheds light on Kennedy's misgivings about being embroiled in Vietnam. Even up to his death he refused to send combat troops. The declassified records prove there was a plan/timetable established and that ultimately there was a decision by Kennedy to begin a phased withdrawal of US personnel over a 2 year period in October 1963 this was a result of plans which began in the previous year. For the purposes of this paper I shall analysis this in more detail. However, before doing so I must discuss the definition of 'exit strategy' and its relation to US military interventions.

It is important to note that an exit strategy must not be confused with an exit date. Setting a specific exit date for withdrawal before a military intervention may prove to be counterproductive. An exit strategy is defining in advance the circumstances and criteria for ending a military intervention not setting a specific date for withdrawal. The term exit strategy itself is hard to clearly define within political and military circles in fact there is various definitions. One definition offered is "a plan to remove US combat forces once the end state has been achieved and the military instruments of power can give way to other instruments." [3] In other words for the military to exit an intervention, the political, economic, and other social instruments of power must be able to assume the dominant role. For this to be effective civil/military cooperation is essential and must be coherent from the outset so that a realistic and achievable exit strategy can be formulated.

The numerous US military publication documents, while acknowledging the need for an exit strategy from armed conflict, do not provide information on how to develop and execute an exit strategy. The reason for this is identified by Strednansky when she says that "planning an exit strategy is difficult because it involves translating political objectives into military termination strategy under the influence of political input." [4]

Like 'mission creep' and 'quagmire' the use of the term exit strategy tends to rise as public frustration with an overseas military intervention increases. Thus the question of when to formulate an exit strategy from armed conflict has been at the forefront of the debate surrounding its use in recent years. Many experts believe that the formulation of an exit strategy should ideally occur before a military intervention. As Lahneman notes,

"ideally policymakers decide on a set of goals that the intervention must achieve. Then they establish a method for measuring progress towards these goals. Next they determine the point at which progress toward the goals would be sufficient to declare the military intervention a success. The specific steps for achieving success form the exit strategy." [5]

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By addressing the exit strategy up front it ensures measures of effectiveness are formulated and forces the political decision-makers to think about the end state before military forces are committed. However, different interventions warrant different strategies. There may be good reasons for example to make long term commitments to regions such as the Sinai Peninsula and South Korea. Rose acknowledges that previous military interventions have ended in chaotic results however, he believes that the “idea of a formal exit strategy, with its anti-interventionist bias and stress on rigid public planning, is misguided in theory and unhelpful in practice”. [6] This exit strategy ‘delusion’ is further emphasised by Record who is of the view that exit strategies are hostage to military performance, that is, initial war aims especially in long wars, rarely survive intact, and new aims may emerge during the course of hostilities. He goes on to say,

“In the dangerous and unpredictable arena of using force, an exit strategy, like any other plan, may not be sustainable. This means that having an exit strategy in mind is not the same thing as being able to stick to it. A preconceived exit strategy is sustainable only if it can be militarily forced down the enemies throat and remains political acceptable at home.” [7]

The key in relation to the commitment of US forces is, as Rose puts it is “not how we get out, but why we are getting in.” [8] However, in order to avoid a dangerous quagmire and confusion over national interests and objectives, and loss of support, both domestically and internationally, I must agree with Johnson when he suggests that “no matter what size or intensity of the conflict or the unique challenges it poses, an exit strategy must be formulated as thoroughly as possible, and as soon as possible in the planning cycle.” [9] However this was not the case for the Vietnamese intervention.

## JFK and Vietnam

The US had become increasingly involved in Vietnamese affairs since the French withdrew in 1954. The number of US personnel gradually grew in Vietnam in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It must be acknowledged however, that the numbers were military advisors and not combat troops. The biggest increase in numbers occurred during the Kennedy administration. Indeed by the end of 1961 the number had risen to 3,164; by the time Kennedy was assassinated in 1963 it was 16,263. Paradoxically it was Kennedy who gave the orders to begin planning a phased withdrawal of US personnel.

Like the previous administration, those involved in policy planning in the Kennedy administration viewed the problems in Vietnam in geopolitical terms, as part of the containment policy. As Secretary of Defense during the Kennedy administration McNamara points to the fact that “the United States viewed Indochina as a necessary part of our containment policy – an important bulwark in the Cold War.” [10] Kissinger also emphasizes this point,

“Like his predecessors, Kennedy considered Vietnam a crucial link in America’s overall geopolitical position. He believed, as had Truman and Eisenhower, that preventing a Communist victory in Vietnam was a vital American interest. Like his predecessors, he viewed the Communist leadership in Hanoi and in Beijing as a surrogate of global Kremlin design.” [11]

There were two significant geopolitical developments closer to US interests that heavily influenced the thinking and policy planning in relation to Vietnam in Kennedy’s first year in office. There was an intensification of relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union and there were Soviet provocations in Berlin the epic-centre of the Cold War. These developments reinforced the belief of the domino theory and Communist aggression in South East Asia. As Kissinger notes,

“In the American analysis, the global equilibrium was under assault by North Vietnam, assumed to be controlled from Beijing, which, in turn, was conceived to be controlled by Moscow.” [12]

Thus, it seemed reasonable at that time to expand the American effort in Vietnam. However, with this expanded effort came major problems in terms of the formulation of policy. One such vital problem was that Kennedy and all his senior advisors on Vietnam knew little of the country’s history, language, culture or values. Moreover, at that time there

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seemed to be a misinterpretation by the Kennedy administration concerning the policies of Communist China and the Soviet Union towards Vietnam. In an interview conducted in 1998 for the Archival Institute based at George Washington University, McNamara acknowledges this problem,

"I don't believe we fully understood the Vietnamese, or the Chinese, or for that matter the Soviets, as they were acting in East Asia.... I think we were seriously and adversely affected as a result." [13]

In his memoirs, *In Retrospect*, he goes on to say, "when it came to Vietnam we found ourselves setting policy for a region that was terra incognita.... The foundations for our decisions were gravely flawed." [14] These flawed decisions concerning the intervention and subsequent counterinsurgency strategy that was developed obviously had implications for the planning of withdrawing forces.

Conventional military might alone could not defeat what was basically a guerrilla insurgency gripping South Vietnam. The Vietcong (VC) insurgency was first and foremost a political struggle that could not be defeated by military means alone. Indeed as Record points out effective counterinsurgency requires the greatest discretion of the use of force. [15] Counterinsurgency involves linking military force with other forms of forces to create stability. In other words it required the application of social and economic as well as military power which would in turn create stability for the political institutions to function smoothly in South Vietnam. On 11<sup>th</sup> May 1961 National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy signed National Security Action Memorandum 52 which stated the US counterinsurgency objective. It read,

"The US objective and concept of operations stated in report are approved: to prevent domination of South Vietnam; to create in that country a viable and increasingly democratic society, and to initiate, on an accelerated basis, a series of mutually supporting actions of a military, political, economic, psychological and covert character designed to achieve this objective." [16]

However, there is an argument I must point out which states that the counterinsurgency policies developed by the Kennedy administration had a consequence for US policy. As Palmer notes "it contradicted the reason given for breaking the Geneva declaration, that the war was really aggression from the North." [17]

## Strategic Hamlet Program

At the centre of the counterinsurgency strategy was the Strategic Hamlet Program. Upon advice from Robert Thompson, the British advisor on counterinsurgency in Malaya, where the British had fought a jungle war against Communist guerrillas, the Americans initiated the Strategic Hamlet Program. It unofficially began in the summer of 1961 and was announced officially in Jan 1962. The strategy was designed to pacify rural Vietnam a VC stronghold and to develop support among the peasants for the central government. The program basically attempted to clear the insurgents from rural areas and establish a provision of government services which would lead to the peasants identifying with the government. Plans for the counterinsurgency strategy were developed after former US advisor to Diem General Edward Lansdale produced a report when he visited South Vietnam in January 1961. He reported on the deteriorating political situation in South Vietnam and made recommendations. He advised that "The principal task facing the GVN is restoration of individual security." He went on to state that,

"In view of known communist objectives in SVN, the known general situation and the dangerous political and military situation, if the GVN does not take immediate and extraordinary action to regain popular support and to correct the organizational and procedural weaknesses which contribute to the growth of the Viet Cong power, the Viet Cong can cause the overthrow of the present GVN government in the months to come."

He went on to recommend that "The U.S. should recognize that Vietnam is in a critical condition and should treat it as a combat area of the cold war, as an area requiring emergency treatment." [18] The implementation of the strategic hamlet program was designed to do just that. It was a strategy that involved other measures of national power including a limited military role, to achieve the political objective. According to the Pentagon Papers,

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"The strategic hamlet program was, in short, an attempt to translate the newly articulated theory of counterinsurgency into operational reality. The objective was political though the means to its realization were a mixture of military, social, psychological, economic, and political measures." [19]

It continued at an accelerating rate while at the same time the number of US personnel increased. At the early stage of the program it was believed that it would be successful as it was for the British in Malaya. A memorandum to the Ambassador in Vietnam on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1962 stated that "success will depend in large measure on continued emphasis on the strategic hamlet program." [20] Less than a month later on May 1962 McNamara visited Vietnam and reported that, "It would appear, at this early moment that the strategic hamlet program promises solid benefits, and may well be the vital key to success of the pacification program." [21]

### Plan to Withdraw Forces

By July of 1962 with the continuing optimistic reports of progress formal planning for a phased withdrawal of US personnel from Vietnam was initiated. The planning for withdrawal was ordered by McNamara on behalf of Kennedy at the Honolulu Conference on Vietnam in July 1962. Here, once again positive reports of progress in the war against the VC were given. For example COMUSMACV General Paul D. Harkins opened the conference stating that, "There is no doubt we are on the winning side. If our programs continue we can expect Vietcong actions to decline." [22] McNamara noted that there was "tremendous progress" made in the previous six months and directed that a "long-range program be laid out to include training requirements, equipment requirements, US advisory requirements, and US units assuming that it is going to require approximately 3 years to bring the VC in SVN under control." [23] This 3 year timescale was developed after McNamara acknowledged that they were behind schedule in defending the villages in the Strategic Hamlet Program and that the problem was wresting areas from VC control and protecting the population. On a conservative estimate this would take 3 years.

Overall the principle objective was to give SVN an adequate military capability without the need for special US military assistance, thus phasing out US military involvement. The formulation of the decisions made and the directives for action to be taken resulting from the conference were as follows:

- a) Prepare plans for the gradual scaling down of USMACV during the next three year period, eliminating US units and detachments as Vietnamese were trained to perform their functions.
- b) Prepare programs with the objective of giving South Vietnam an adequate military capability without the need for special US military assistance, to include (1) a long-range training program to establish an officer corps able to manage GVN military operations, and (2) a long-range program and requirements to provide the necessary materiel to make possible a turnover to RVNAF three years from July 1962. [24]

Just days later the JCS directed CINCPAC to develop a Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam CPSVN whose stated objective was given as:

Develop a capability within military and para-military forces of the GVN by the end of CY 65 that will help the GVN to achieve the strength necessary to exercise permanent and continued sovereignty over that part of Vietnam which lies below the demarcation line without the need for continued US special military assistance.

Development of the plan was to be based on the following assumptions:

- a) The insurgency will be under control at the end of three years (end of CY 65).
- b) Extensive US support will continue to be required during the three year period, both to bring the insurgency under control and to prepare GVN forces for early take-over of US activities.
- c) Previous MAP funding ceilings for SVN are not applicable. Program those items essential to do this job. [25]

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The next Honolulu Conference was in May 1963 and again there were reports that suggested that the strategic hamlet program was producing the required results. Indeed Department of Defense (DOD) reports declassified in 1997 was of the view that by May 1963,

“The program has progressed well with about 6000 hamlets completed and 2000 under construction. A total of 11,000 strategic hamlets are planned. There are 8 million people now in strategic hamlets.” [26]

This resulted in the withdrawal of US personnel once again being cited as a fundamental objective. Indeed a plan was developed to withdraw 1,000 personnel by the end of that year.

“As a matter of urgency a plan for the withdrawal of about 1,000 US troops before the end of the year should be developed based upon the assumption that the progress of the counterinsurgency campaign would warrant such a move. Plans should be based upon withdrawal of US units (as opposed to individuals) by replacing them with selected and specially trained RVNAF units.” [27]

McNamara believed the pace of the withdrawal was too slow and ordered the JCS to direct a more rapid plan.

“SECDEF advised that the phase-out program presented during 6 May conference appeared to slow. In consonance with part III request you develop a revised plan to accomplish more rapid phase-out of US forces. SECDEF expressed special interest in the development of training plans which would accelerate replacement of US by GVN units, such as an accelerated training program for VNAF.” [28]

It was envisaged at the conference that the total number of US forces would decrease, as the South Vietnamese assumed more responsibility, from 11,600 in 1963 to 1,500 by 1968. [29] However, it was acknowledged that there was continuing political problems and that the GVN did not want to see complete withdrawal of US forces in the foreseeable future.

The political problems continued over the summer months. The Buddhist crisis that erupted was damaging the foundations of what little there was of political stability and there was concern that this would have an effect on the war against the VC and the improvements of the South Vietnamese military. The crisis continued throughout the summer months and resulted in Diem declaring martial law on 20<sup>th</sup> August. Concerned about this Kennedy sent McNamara and General Maxwell Taylor on a fact finding mission to South Vietnam on 26<sup>th</sup> September. Kennedy was deeply concerned over the political and military situation and its effect on the withdrawal. Having spend a number of days accessing the situation, McNamara essentially concluded in his report that conditions were good and prospects improving stating that, “The military campaign has made great progress and continues to progress.” [30] Once again the US policy objectives and the plan to withdraw US forces was reinforced,

“The security of South Vietnam remains vital to United States security. For this reason, we adhere to the overriding objective of denying this country to Communism and of suppressing the Viet Cong insurgency as promptly as possible. (By suppressing the insurgency we mean reducing it to proportions manageable by the national security forces of the GVN, unassisted by the presence of U.S. military forces.) We believe the U.S. part of the task can be completed by the end of 1965, the terminal date which we are taking as the time objective of our counterinsurgency programs.” [31]

The 2<sup>nd</sup> October report was generally an optimistic one in relation to the political crisis effecting the military situation however it did recognize that this could change, “The political situation in Vietnam remains deeply serious. It has not yet significantly affected the military effort, but could do so at some time in the future.” [32] That evening, based on the McNamara/Taylor report, the White House issued the US policy on Vietnam statement, once again reiterating the objective of the phasing out of US forces,

“Secretary McNamara and General Taylor reported their judgment that the major part of the US military task can be completed by the end of 1965, although there may be a continuing requirement for a limited number of US training personnel. They reported that by the end of this year, the US program for training Vietnamese should have

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progressed to the point where 1,000 US military personnel assigned to South Vietnam can be withdrawn.”[33]

In reality however, the political situation did continue to worsen with the November Coup and the overthrow of Diem. He was replaced by a military junta. Once again a fundamental issue for Kennedy was how this new political situation would affect the strategy for the withdrawal of forces. On 20<sup>th</sup> November he convened a special all-agencies conference on Vietnam in Honolulu for an in-depth review of the situation. Again it was reported that the situation did not seem as bleak as first thought with positive reports being presented. Ambassador Lodge described the outlook for the immediate future of Vietnam as hopeful.

“The Generals appear to be united and determined to step up the war effort. They profess to be keenly aware that the struggle with the Viet Cong is not only a military problem, but is also political and psychological. They attach great importance to a social and economic program as an aid to winning the war.”[34]

It was again acknowledged that the counterinsurgency strategy was the key to any phasing out of US forces,

“as regards all U.S. programs-military, economic, psychological-we should continue to keep before us the goal of setting dates for phasing out U.S. activities and turning them over to the Vietnamese; and these dates, too, should be looked at again in the light of the new political situation. The date mentioned in the McNamara-Taylor statement of October 2 on U.S. military withdrawal had-and is still having-a tonic effect.”[35]

The Kennedy administration was worried that the recent coup was going to give the VC an added advantage. But General Harkins reported that, “after the coup VC incidents shot up to 300-400% of what they were before. However, after the 6 November they dropped down to normal and have remained that way ever since.”[36] Overall the assessment of the situation was one of an encouraging outlook for the objective of US policy in South Vietnam. The application of counterinsurgency against the VC continued. There had been good working relationships between the new South Vietnamese government and US officials and significantly plans for the phasing out of US forces was to go ahead as scheduled.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> November Kennedy was assassinated. However, there still existed a desire for continuity in US policy towards Vietnam during the critical interregnum period of the new Johnson administration. This continuity of Kennedy’s policies was rubber stamped by Johnson on 26 November when at a NSC meeting the President “reaffirmed that US objectives with respect to the withdrawal of US military personnel remain as stated in the White House statement on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1963.”[37]

During December the 1,000 man withdrawal was executed as required. However, in hindsight this may have been an accounting exercise, as many of those were part of a normal turnover cycle. It may also have been some sort of token gesture to Congress and the American public to emphasize a continuation of Kennedy’s withdrawal policy. Because by late December and the subsequent months that followed the situation in South Vietnam got worse and the earlier predictions of success and progress were called into question. In a memo to Johnson on 21<sup>st</sup> December following a trip to Vietnam, McNamara wrote,

“The situation is very disturbing. Current trends, unless reversed in the next 2-3 months, will lead to neutralization at best and more likely to a Communist-controlled state... The new government is of greatest concern... it is indecisive and drifting. The Country team lacks leadership and has been poorly informed. There was a grave reporting weakness on the US side. Vietcong progress has been great since the period since the coup, with my best guess being that the situation has in-fact been deteriorating in the countryside since July to a far greater extent than we realized because of our undue dependence on distorted Vietnamese reporting.”[38]

This presented a dangerous situation for the continued withdrawal of forces. Thus, McNamara proposed to hold the line, in other words continue with current personnel levels. This subsequently resulted in policymakers setting aside the withdrawal strategy and indeed increasing the US personnel numbers to include combat troops after the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

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McNamara emphasized the bright hopes and predictions of past reports of the situation in South Vietnam were distorted by Vietnamese reporting that went back to July of that year. This distorted reporting may have even begun at an earlier stage thus hindering the policy formulation in relation to the withdrawal, from when it was first initiated in July 1962. The mistaken optimism that emerged from the numerous conferences reports and memos during the formulation of the withdrawal plan is also acknowledged in January 1964 by the CIA director John McCone,

“Information furnished to us from MACV and the Embassy concerning Vietcong activities in a number of provinces and the relative position of the SVN government vs the Vietcong was incorrect, due to the fact that the field officers... had been grossly misinformed by the South Vietnamese province and district chiefs... The province and district chiefs felt obliged to ‘create statistics’ which would meet the approbation of the central government.”[39]

After the Gulf of Tonkin incident the Gulf of Tonkin resolution was signed which effectively gave Johnson the go-ahead to Americanise the war. By March 1965 any plans for the withdrawal of US forces had been forgotten as operation Rolling Thunder was launched.

## Conclusion

So to conclude for Kennedy Vietnam was the testing ground for the new style of warfare, counterinsurgency. The Kennedy administration hoped the US counterinsurgency strategy would ultimately prove successful by changing the minds of the local population by way of the strategic hamlet program which they hoped would lead to an increase in support for the government, while at the same time building up the South Vietnamese military forces in the hope that they could be fully responsible for the war against the VC. Thus, the strategic hamlet program and counterinsurgency strategy was inextricably linked to the withdrawal plan.

However, as history has shown us the program failed in its overall objective. Many reasons are given for its failure.[40] Some reasons often mentioned are that the hamlets suffered from lack of control and some hamlets often fought its own war with the VC without direct control from Washington or Saigon. Furthermore, there is a view that there was inadequate planning, coordination, and resources with unrealistic timetables established. Moreover, as Record points out the difference between the kinds of war fought by both sides may also result in the occupying power failing in their counterinsurgency war.

“Insurgents have a greater interest in the outcome of the war and therefore bring to it a superior political will, a greater determination to fight and die; the insurgents wage total war, whereas the government or occupying power fight for what is necessarily a limited war.” [41]

While there was some success in terms of falling numbers and influence of VC recruits, along with an improvement of personal safety for the average Vietnamese, these were counterbalanced with the conflicts between the different factions and interest groups within Vietnamese society. Only American presence could exert some form of control. However they refused believing it was best to leave it to the Vietnamese to win their own war. Mott emphasizes the aim of the American's on the one hand and the expectations of the South Vietnamese on the other as a major factor in the programs failure. He says,

“Whereas Americans saw the program as a means to the end of Vietnamese self-reliance through grassroots political and economic growth, Saigon expected quick victory through moral force and isolation of the peasantry from the Viet Cong.”[42]

It has been acknowledged that the US military have a profound aversion to counterinsurgency resulting in the US not being good at defeating enemies who don't fight the conventional way. This aversion has its roots in the failed counterinsurgency policies of the Kennedy administration which was basically America's first attempt at counterinsurgency warfare. Furthermore in relation to the time spent implementing the counterinsurgency strategy, the British took over a decade for their counterinsurgency strategy to prove successful in Malaya, while the US did not even meet half of that. Consequently the US the counterinsurgency strategy failed to achieve its objective and as a result the strategy of withdrawing forces did not work.

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It is also widely acknowledged that the US underestimated the strength and resolve of the VC insurgency. Their willingness to give it their all and never give up further proved to be a major factor in the failure of the counterinsurgency strategy. As Kissinger was later to acknowledge, "If American had searched the world over, it could not have found a more intractable adversary." [43] Furthermore, as McNamara notes there was clearly a lack of understanding of the country, its history, culture, and its people and this contributed to flawed policy making. This is evident in the failure by both the military leaders and political policy makers to recognize the distorted reports of success and progress on the ground by the Vietnamese, this in turn ultimately led to a failed strategy.

I must also point out the fact that Kennedy had not been unequivocal on the subject on withdrawing US personnel. At times it did not look as if the withdrawal strategy was consistent with statements on national objectives. For example, in Kennedy's last news conference on Vietnam on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1963 he stated that it was his objective to "bring Americans home, and permit the South Vietnamese to maintain themselves as a free and independent country." [44] But just weeks earlier in another interview he had stated that, "I think we should stay. We should use our influence in as effective a way as we can... we should not withdraw." [45]

What was put in place by Kennedy and his advisors in 1962/63 was an attempt, albeit a flawed attempt from the beginning, to withdraw US personnel from Vietnam. As noted earlier setting a date for the withdrawal of forces does not constitute an exit strategy and may prove counterproductive, as was the case for Kennedy in Vietnam. Thus Kennedy's plan may not actually constitute an exit strategy per se, but rather an exit date. However it was the first attempt at withdrawing US forces from Vietnam and one that remains understudied in academia, and therefore is extremely important. The term exit strategy in relation to military interventions was not part of the Cold War vocabulary especially around this period of the Cold War, with other international crisis prevalent in the minds of the administration's policy-makers and many Americans. Kennedy inherited the intervention from the previous three administrations who had no strategy for withdrawing US forces. It must be noted that Kennedy was clear in his conviction that it was a Vietnamese war and the US was merely there to assist and advise against Communist aggression. He had consistently refused to deploy combat troops. But because there was a fear of being labeled weak on Communism the attempt at withdrawing US forces ultimately proved unsuccessful. It was not until the end of the decade in which the international atmosphere changed, when the Nixon administration was in a better position to deal effectively with the main players in the Cold War – the Soviet Union and China, did a long drawn out strategy finally withdraw US forces after being involved in armed conflict.

## Abbreviations

CINCPAC – Commander in Chief Pacific Command

COMUSMACV – Commander United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam

CPSVN – Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam

DOD – Department of Defense

GVN – Government of Vietnam

JCS – Joint Chief's of Staff

MACV – Military Assistance Command Vietnam

MAP – Military Assistance Plan

RVNAF – Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces

SECDEF – Secretary of Defense

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SVN – South Vietnam

USMACV – United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam

VC – Vietcong

VNAF – Vietnam Air Force

## Footnotes

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