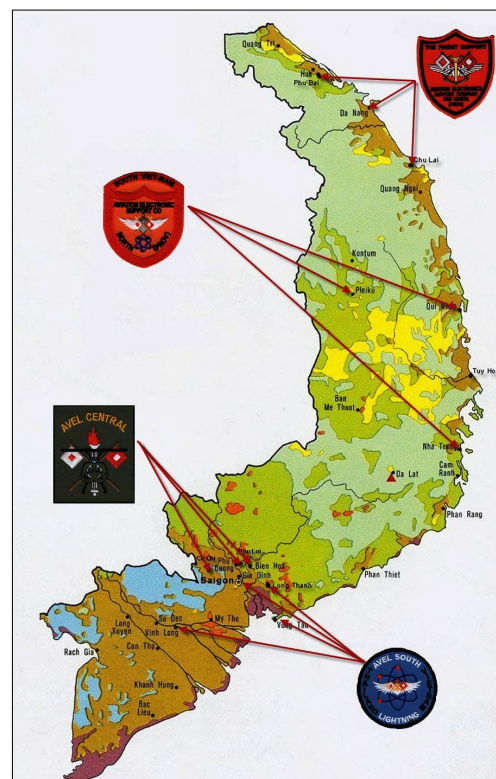


America Wasn't the Only Foreign Power in the Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was one of the 20th Century's most intractable conflicts. Also known as the Second Indochina War or simply the American War to the Vietnamese, the epic struggle claimed the lives of more than 2 million people, including some 60,000 U.S. personnel and more than a million civilians. The war also consumed hundreds of billions of dollars, scarred the landscape of much of South East Asia and created toxic divisions within the international community.

And while the conflict is largely remembered as a contest between the army of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong insurgency on the one side and South Vietnam and the United States on the other, it's worth pointing out that both opposing factions enjoyed *considerable* help from a host of other world powers both large and small. In fact, more than 10 other nations took an active role in the decade-long fight, losing more than 15,000 lives in the process. While some countries' contributions you likely already know about, others might come as a surprise. Let's examine some of the Vietnam War's other participants.



ALLIES OF THE SOUTH

Between 1964 and 1973, more than 2.7 million American troops served in Vietnam. Yet despite this hefty commitment, Washington was eager to portray the war as a multinational effort aimed at countering communist aggression. To that end, the White House invited (and pressured) a number its allies in the region to lend a hand in South Vietnam. More than 400,000 troops from six other countries answered the call. Here they are:



South Korea – Many might peg Australia as the next largest foreign contributor to the war after the United States. But South Korea was by far the most committed foreign ally of the American-led war effort in South East Asia.

Between 1965 and early 1973, more than 320,000 South Korean troops served in the war alongside U.S. and ARVN forces, although ROK troop levels never reached more than 50,000 at any given time. And in addition to financially backing the government in Saigon, the U.S. also helped bankroll Seoul's commitment to conflict to the tune of a quarter-billion dollars. Once deployed, the Korean contingent engaged in its own brutal counterinsurgency campaign throughout South Vietnam. In fact, ROK forces were responsible for a number of atrocities against Vietnamese civilians while prosecuting the conflict. In recent years, South Korea has sought to atone for this grizzly war record. All told, more than 5,000 of the country's soldiers were killed in nine years of fighting; 10,000 were wounded.



Australia – In total, more than 61,000 Australian soldiers also served in the war between 1962 and 1972, although that commitment never exceeded 8,000 troops at one time. In addition to sending infantry, airborne, special forces, medical and armored units.

Australia's task force also included squadrons of helicopters, transport planes and even Canberra bombers. The Royal Australian Navy contributed a destroyer to the effort as well. More than 500 Australian personnel were killed during 10 years of operations — 3,000 were wounded.



Philippines – The next largest partner in the U.S.-led war was the Philippines. Beginning in 1966, Manila deployed upwards of 10,000 troops to help support the Saigon government, but kept its contribution limited to medical and logistical operations.

Filipino casualties were minimal, yet the decision by the administration of Ferdinand Marcos to deploy troops to Indochina was still controversial domestically.



New Zealand – Between 1964 and 1972, more than 3,800 New Zealanders served as part of the Allied war effort. In addition to providing artillery batteries, combat engineers and medical personnel, Wellington sent elements of the country's elite Special Air Service.

Pilots also served as part of the larger Australian contingent. In all, 37 troops were killed during the eight-year mission and 187 were wounded. The war proved highly unpopular at home and eventually led to the downfall of the National Party government of Jack Marshall.



Thailand – In 1965 Bangkok committed a small army contingent to South Vietnam, known as the Queen's Cobra Battalion. It also pledged its national police force's air assets to monitor several segments of the Ho Chi Minh trail that passed through neighboring Laos.



Taiwan – One of the earliest foreign contributors to the Saigon government was the ardently anti-communist Republic of China. In fact, Taiwan provided transport aircraft and secretly offered several hundred of its special forces soldiers to the cause beginning in 1961.

Over the next 11 years, three aircraft were lost to enemy ground fire and a number of Taiwanese commandos were captured while on missions in North Vietnam. In all, 25 Taiwanese died in action in Vietnam.



Canada – Although *not* officially a military contributor to the American war effort, Canadian industry supplied the U.S. with more than \$2.5 billion worth of war materiel during the 1960s and early 1970s. Canadian factories manufactured everything from uniforms to Agent Orange.

While mainstream public opinion in Canada was largely against the U.S.-led war in Vietnam, more than 30,000 citizens volunteered to fight in the conflict. At least 100 Canadians died in American uniform during the war and one even was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1970 for heroism under fire. Following the 1972 Paris Peace Accord, 240 Canadian soldiers were deployed to Vietnam with a multinational UN peacekeeping force to monitor the agreement. Other contributors to that contingent included Hungary, Poland of the Warsaw Pact as well as Indonesia, and Iran.



HANOI'S COMRADES

As America's role in the war widened, the communist world was keen to see Hanoi prevail. While support to North Vietnam *largely* came in the form of weapons and material, a number of countries sent advisors and even a handful of combatants. Here's a rundown:



Soviet Union – Moscow proved to be North Vietnam's chief ally throughout the conflict, supplying both weapons and military advisors. They maintained a troop commitment that was in the thousands but the exact number isn't known.

The Soviet's lavished Hanoi with more than 2,000 tanks, 7,000 artillery pieces, 5,000 anti-aircraft guns and nearly 200 surface to air missile batteries. Aid from Russia eventually reached \$2 million a day. In at least one incident, Soviet advisors engaged American forces in combat. During an air raid on the North in 1965, Soviet anti-aircraft gunners fired on and destroyed American F-4 jets near Hanoi at Thanh Hoa.



China – Beginning in 1965, the People's Republic of China provided both military engineers and anti-aircraft batteries to the North Vietnamese war effort. This followed Beijing's policy of supplying millions of dollars in rice and more than 90,000 assault rifles to the communist regime.

By 1968, China began to withdraw its support following a widening rift with Hanoi's chief ally, the Soviet Union. Beijing gradually shifted its support to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Following the victory over the south in 1975, the unified Vietnam waged a four year war against Cambodia. China invaded Vietnam in 1979 by way of retaliation.



North Korea – Pyongyang also contributed to the communist north. In 1966, the reclusive regime dispatched two squadrons of MiG-17s and a squadron of MiG-21s — 30 planes in all. More than 200 of the country's aviators eventually rotated in and out of country.

Throughout the war they flew many combat missions. Two full regiments of air defense troops were also dispatched. North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung reportedly urged his men to protect the skies above Vietnam as if they were "their own."



Cuba – Cuba has never formally confirmed its participation in the Vietnam War, although several thousand military engineers reportedly aided the communist war effort. In addition, military advisors from Havana are believed to have taken part in the interrogation of at least 19 captured U.S. fliers.

In fact, their supposedly brutal methods have since been dubbed "the Cuban Program". Castro himself visited Quang Tri shortly after it fell to the communists in 1972.

NEW AVEL, AVIONICS AND VIETNAM VETERANS REGISTERED

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Retired: Army SSG E6 I was in 11 years

AGENT ORANGE

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317th Maintenance Co. (LEM), Vung Tau: 1971-1972

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AGENT ORANGE

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AGENT ORANGE

TAPS

None reported

PHOTOS

No photos submitted



SP/4 Gary Wayne Ball, AVEL South

Gary died at Long Thanh on 16 July 1968 when he was accidentally shot. His home town of Walpole, New Hampshire recently named its Hubbard Park Baseball Field after him and another soldier from Walpole who died in Vietnam.

Robert Roentsch was killed in action on his birthday, 14 February 1966. He was a medic with the 25th Division.



AVEL REUNION 2015 UPDATE

Register early please. You can always cancel if things change in your life. We have reserved the buses for the trip to Parris Island and will need an accurate count so we have enough but don't over book. **Register on the website** www.avelvietnam.com

Make your **Hotel Reservations** now. Call the hotel at the number below. If you have special needs be sure to tell them.

Tell the hotel you are with the "AVEL GROUP" for our special rate.

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We have 54 people who have registered for the Reunion so far. They include 34 Vets and 24 guests.

AVEL Far North: John Andes & Wanda Bennett, Keith & Sheila Marston, Gerald & Nancy Osgood, Pete & Mary Lee Poirier, Gary & Vada Timberlake, Marvin & Gale York

AVEL North: Aaron & Judy Bass, Leon Chlebowsky, Bob & Kathryn Crutchfield, Fred & Carla Enslen, Orbin & Carolyn Hall, Dan & Dee Harmon, John Peacock

AVEL Central: Pete & Bianca Biancalana, Mike & dawn Blatt, Bill Fesus, Greg & Gayle Garrison, Bruce & Ruth Goff, Dale & Marsha Link, Bob Madore, Jerry & Debbie Mahanay, Russ & Pat Mason, Jack & Pat McCabe, Lynn (Rock) Rothrock, Roger & Jane Shiley, Bob & Linda Smith, Tony & Jean Stribling, John & Jane Veers

AVEL South: Bill & Nettie Engels, Carl Hagenstein

Non-AVEL: Chuck James, Tom McCabe

Guest Speaker: Unfortunately General Livingston is not available so the hunt continues. If you have any suggestions please let us know.

Register early please. You can always cancel if things change in your life. We have reserved the buses for the trip to Parris Island and will need an accurate count so we have enough but don't over book. **Register on the website** www.avelvietnam.com

If you wish to donate to the Reunion, you can send your check payable to **"AVEL Reunion"** to:

Russ Mason

1083 Renwood Dr.

Charleston, SC 29412



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May 2015 Newsletter
