



THE VIETNAM WAR – NOT JUST A FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNISTS BUT A LOST BATTLE AGAINST DRUGS AND RACISM

1965

The United States military begins sending large amounts of ground soldiers to South Vietnam

Period of relative military success and constant increase of military personnel

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ON THE VIETNAM WAR

More than often, people hold a false view of America's involvement in Vietnam.

Common Misconceptions include:

- Most American soldiers in Vietnam were fighting the enemy
 - By 1969 less than 20% of American soldiers were stationed in combat zones, most were active in **"rear areas"**
- America could have easily withdrawn from Vietnam
 - *Quick withdrawal* → Instant defeat of South Vietnam
 - *Slow withdrawal* → Creation of a destructive atmosphere among US troops

THE REAR AREA

Definition: Regions along the Vietnamese coast and near large cities that contained American military bases, and rarely saw combat.



American military base at Bien Hoa, Vietnam

1968

On January 31st, Vietnamese New Year "Tet", Communist Vietnamese Forces launch a surprise offensive on American and South Vietnamese Troops

THE TET OFFENSIVE

- The Tet Offensive caught American troops and leadership by surprise. As a result, American civilians stopped believing that the war in Vietnam could be won. Thus many placed their trust in the 1968 presidential candidate Richard Nixon, a vehement war critic.



1969

THE NIXON DOCTRINE – "VIETNAMIZATION"



Period of rampant drug abuse and constant troop withdrawal

Nixon made the promise to the American electorate to achieve "peace with honor" in Vietnam. In order to fulfill this, he endorsed the strategy of gradually moving American troops from combat zones to non-combat areas whilst simultaneously strengthening the South Vietnamese military ("Vietnamization"). Thus the full collapse of South Vietnam, which would have been the result of an instant withdrawal of American troops, was avoided. At the same time, America progressively decreased its involvement in the Vietnam war.

INCREASE OF TROOPS IN REAR AREAS

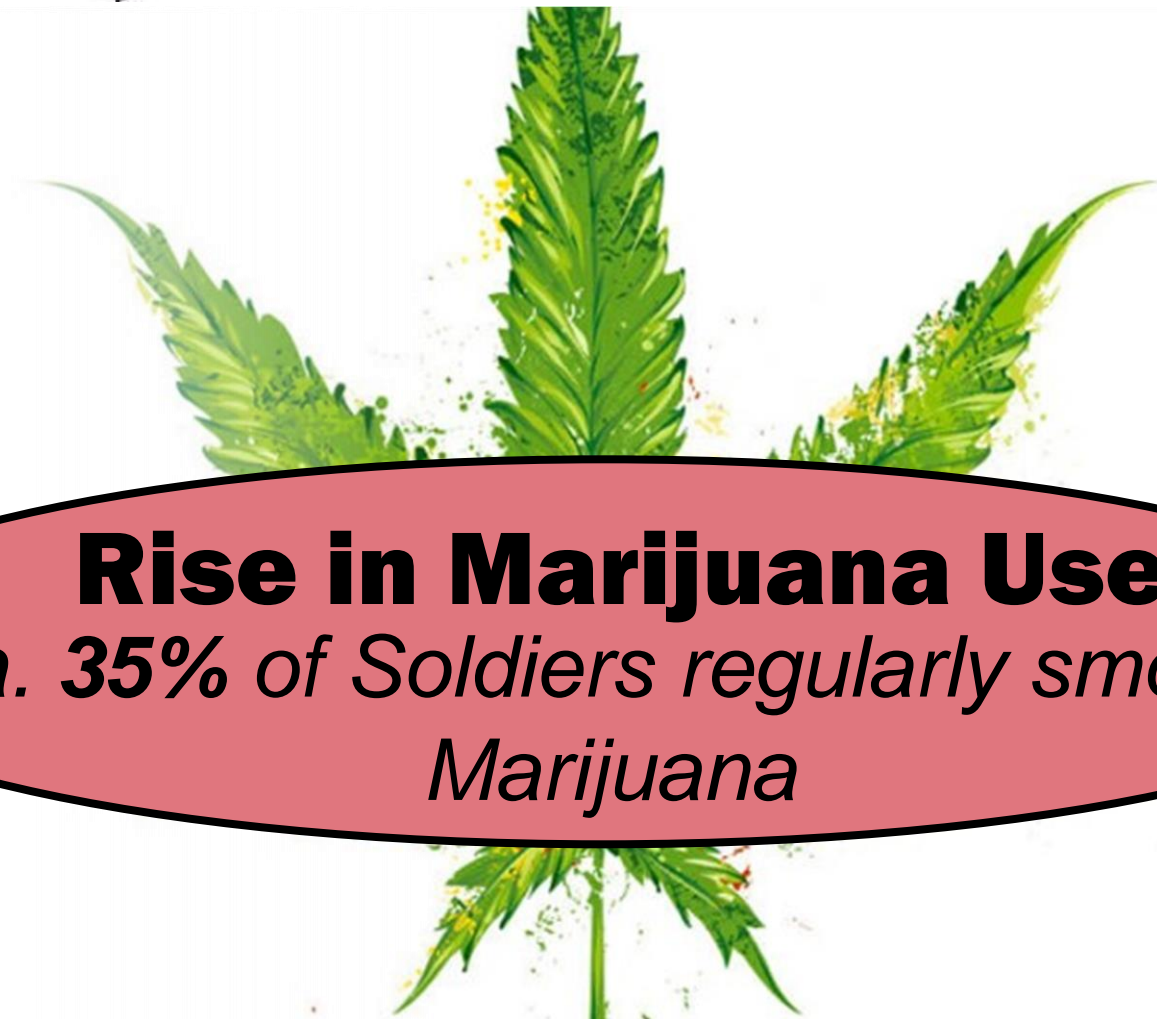
Rise in Heroin Use

Ca. 20% of soldiers regularly used Heroin



Rise in Marijuana Use

Ca. 35% of Soldiers regularly smoked Marijuana



LOSS OF MORALE & UNITY

The constant boredom that soldiers faced in the rear areas exacerbated morale, which then encouraged them to engage in illicit and destructive activities which further worsened morale and unity.

Rise in Alcohol Abuse

73 % of soldiers had alcoholism



Rise in Racial Tensions

534 complaints of racial discrimination in 1968-69 alone



1973

The last American regular ground soldiers depart South Vietnam

1975

South Vietnam falls to a North Vietnamese offensive and ceases to exist

The lowered morale and unity that came as a side-effect of the Vietnamization doctrine, severely encumbered America's war effort, and stained its handling of the conflict in Vietnam. The absence of morale and unity led to a strong rise in insubordination among soldiers and poorer handling of the Vietnamese civilian population. This unsustainable atmosphere ultimately played a large role in the US abandoning it's aid-effort to South Vietnam, and thus in the defeat of South Vietnam in 1975.