- Appointed family members to powerful positions
- Refused to hold elections, even for local councils
  - USA concerned and frustrated but supported regime with $1.6 billion in 1950s
  - Diem overthrown by own army leaders (Nov 1963)
    - Gov that followed equally corrupt – but received massive support from USA
- Actions of following gov increased opposition to SV gov and increased support amongst peasants for Communist-led National Front for the Liberation of SV (set up Dec 1960)
  - Movement referred to as Viet Cong
    - Included SV opponents of gov
    - And large numbers of Communist NV taking orders from Ho Chi Minh
      - Peasants not supportive received intimidation and violence
    - Started guerrilla war against SV gov
    - Using Ho Chi Minh trail – sent reinforcements and ferried supplies to guerrilla fighters
      - These attacked SV gov forces, officials and buildings
      - Gradually made countryside unsafe for gov forces
      - Attacked American air force and supply bases
  - By 1962 – JFK sending military personnel to fight VC
    - Supported policies such as Strategic Hamlet Programme
      - From 1962 – involved SV gov moving peasants from VC areas to areas run by SV gov
      - US supplied materials, money, food and equipment for villagers to build new improved farms and homes
  - 1963-64: tensions between NV and SV increased – as did US involvement
    - 11,500 US troops by end 1962
    - 23,000 by end 1964
      - JFK determined that USA wouldn’t “blunder into war, unclear about aims or how to get out again”
- JFK assassinated (1963)
  - Successor – Lyndon Johnson
    - More prepared than JFK to commit USA into full conflict with Vietnam to prevent Communist spread
    - Aug 1964 – NV patrol boats open fire on US ships in Gulf of Tonkin
      - Congress passed Tonkin Gulf Resolution

NV = North Vietnam/Vietnamese  SV = South Vietnam/Vietnamese  VC = Viet Cong
VC fighters helped in fields during busy periods
  - Could also be ruthless is peasant opposed them/co-operated in enemy
    - Conducted campaign of terror against police, tax collectors, teachers and other employers of SV gov
      - 1966-71: VC killed estimated 27,000 civilians

VC refused to give in
  - Depended on supplies from NV along Ho Chi Minh trail
  - US and SV planes bombed constantly
    - 40,000 Vietnamese worked to keep trail open whatever cost
  - Total VC and NV dead estimated at 1 million
    - Far higher than US losses
    - Price Ho Chi Minh prepared to pay – replacement troops available

**US Tactics**

**Bombing**

- Operation Rolling Thunder – Feb 7th 1965
  - Extensive bombing raids on military and industrial targets in NV
  - Lasted until 1972
  - Targets expanded to include towns and cities in NV and SV as well as in Cambodia and Laos on the Ho Chi Minh trail
  - More bombs dropped on NV than in whole of WW2 on Germany and Japan
- Was part effective
  - Damaged NV war effort and disrupted supply routes
  - Enabled USA to strike Communist forces whilst removing ground troops after 1969
  - 1970-1972: NV forced to negotiate after intense bombing of Hanoi (NV capital) and port of Haiphong
- Air power could not defeat Communism – only slowed them
  - VC continued to operate supply lines
    - VC launched major assault in SV even after large air raids in NV (1972)
  - Cost was horrendous
    - Communists shot down 14,000 US and SV aircraft
    - 1967 – American Life magazine calculated cost $400,000 to kill 1 VC fighter
      - Figure included 75 bombs and 400 artillery shells