

On May 14, we started up the hill. We heard gunfire and air strikes. The battle was well underway.

We weren't a quarter of the way to the top of the hill before we were attacked. I didn't even see the enemy. They jumped out of these deeply dug bunkers and fired at us from every angle. The noise was deafening.

The fighting was so bad that helicopters couldn't land to resupply our ammo. They hovered overhead and kicked guns down to us on the ground.

**U.S. TROOPS** fight their way up the hill in this scene from the 1987 film *Hamburger Hill*.



## Vietnam

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. fought with South Vietnam against the North. Hill 937, known as Hamburger Hill, was in South Vietnam, in the A Shau Valley. The Ho Chi Minh Trail ran through the valley. The North Vietnamese used the trail to move troops and weapons into South Vietnam.



### KEY

- North Vietnam
  - South Vietnam
  - DMZ (demilitarized zone)
  - Ho Chi Minh Trail
  - national capital
- 0 100 mi.  
0 100 km



IN DEPTH  
CHINA

**NORTH VIETNAM**  
(Democratic Republic  
of Vietnam)

Hanoi

NORTH

WEST EAST

SOUTH

Gulf of Tonkin

Mekong River

Hill 937  
(Hamburger Hill)

DMZ

China Beach

THAILAND

CAMBODIA

**SOUTH VIETNAM**  
(Republic of  
Vietnam)

Saigon

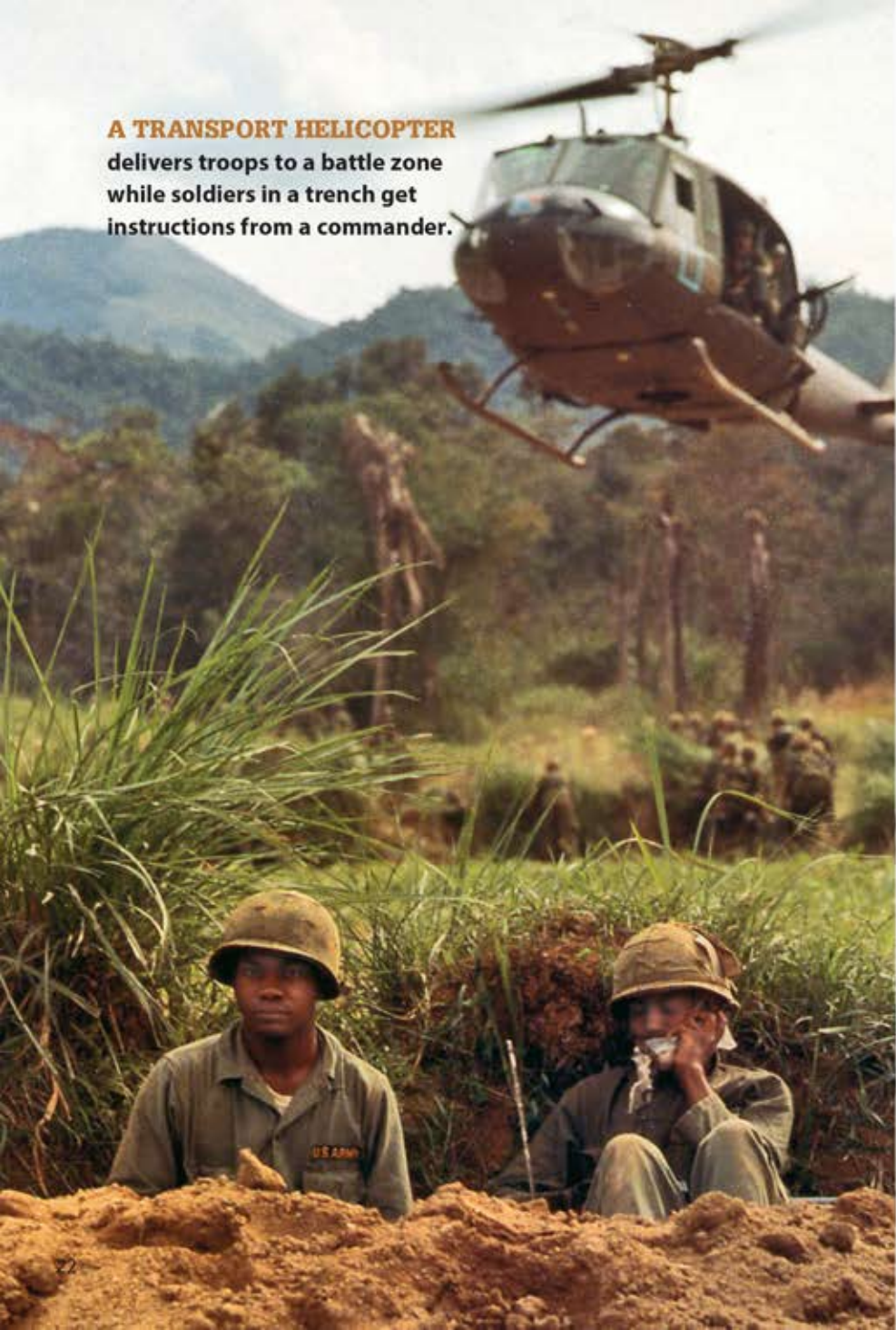
Gulf of  
Thailand

MEKONG  
DELTA

South  
China Sea

### **A TRANSPORT HELICOPTER**

delivers troops to a battle zone while soldiers in a trench get instructions from a commander.



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# The Point Man

**On May 16, NVA soldiers are poised to attack Serrano's platoon.**

At dawn, Roger [Pedue] walked by as I was strapping on the radio. At first, he didn't say anything. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a pack of cigarettes. He lit one and handed the rest to me. Then he calmly told me that our platoon would lead the attack.

There was silence between us. Roger looked me in the eyes. "You know, they're waiting for us, Mike," he said. I nodded. The NVA were planning an ambush. The point man in our unit—the soldier in the lead—would be as good as dead.

Roger blew smoke into the air. Our squad was a

# Timeline: The Vietnam War



**1954:** France withdraws from Vietnam, which it had ruled as a colony for 100 years. North Vietnam establishes a communist government, while South Vietnam is noncommunist.

**1965:** More than 200,000 U.S. troops are fighting in Vietnam. They're supported by massive aerial bombing.

**1970:** During an antiwar protest at Kent State University in Ohio, National Guardsmen fire into a crowd of protesters. Four students are killed.



**1973:** With many Americans now against the war, President Richard Nixon vows to bring "peace with honor" to Vietnam.



The Paris Peace Accords produce a cease-fire. Two months later, the last U.S. troops withdraw from Vietnam.

1954      1961      1964      1965      1968      1969      1970      1972      1973      1975

**1961:** To aid South Vietnam against communist attacks, the U.S. increases its military and economic support. By 1963, 16,000 American military advisers are in Vietnam.

**1964:** Congress approves President Lyndon Johnson's request to use armed forces to help South Vietnam.



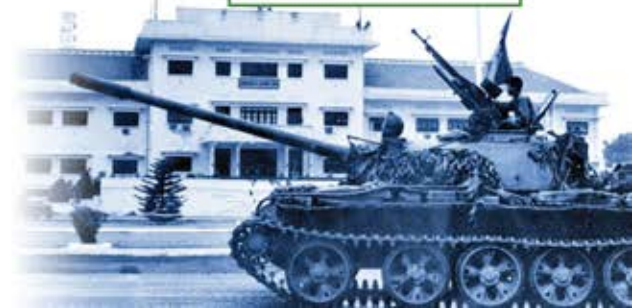
**1968:** The NVA and the Viet Cong (communist rebels in South Vietnam) launch the Tet Offensive. They make more than 100 surprise attacks on targets throughout South Vietnam.

**1969:** 1,800 U.S. troops battle to capture Hamburger Hill. Within weeks, they abandon the hill, and the NVA re-establishes control of the area.



**1972:** With American troops leaving, the North Vietnamese attack a weakened South Vietnam in the Easter Offensive.

**1975:** North Vietnamese troops overrun Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam. The South surrenders, ending the war. Months later, Vietnam unifies as a communist country, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.



U.S. soldiers kill 500 civilians in the town of My Lai. The massacre shocks the American public.



# The Helicopter War

During the Vietnam War, helicopters like the UH-1 Huey and the CH-47 Chinook were used for a variety of purposes.

## MEDICAL EVACUATION

MedEvac “air ambulances” such as the Huey airlifted wounded soldiers to hospitals at nearby military bases. Some soldiers received treatment within 30 minutes of being injured. Thanks to MedEvacs, 81% of soldiers wounded in Vietnam survived, compared to 71% in World War II.

## AIRBORNE ASSAULT

Armor-plated gunships known as “Cobras” or “Hogs” supported ground troops by attacking enemy positions from the air. They were equipped with machine guns, grenade launchers, and rocket launchers.

UH-1 Huey



CH-47 Chinook

## TROOP TRANSPORT

Transport helicopters such as the Chinook airlifted troops in and out of the jungle. During a major battle, hundreds of choppers—each carrying up to 32 soldiers—could be called into action. “Door gunners” firing machine guns from the helicopters’ open doors provided some protection from enemy fire.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

When pilots were shot down, or when ground troops were separated from their units, helicopters like the Sikorsky CH-3C Jolly Green Giant were sent to find and rescue them. They carried 250-foot cables so they could pull troops out of thick jungles.

## MOVING EQUIPMENT

Big helicopters carried artillery guns and other heavy equipment to distant combat zones. The CH-54 Tarhe was large enough to airlift damaged helicopters.