## Document C: Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Modified)

*President Johnson sent airplanes to attack North Vietnamese targets after hearing the reports of attacks in the Gulf of Tonkin. He asked Congress to support his actions. Congress passed this Joint Resolution, or law, with only two senators voting against it. The law would become controversial over the course of the war and was repealed, or canceled, in 1971.*

The North Vietnamese Navy, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters, and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace; and…

These attacks are part of a deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression that the Communist regime in North Vietnam has been waging against its neighbors and the nations joined with them in the defense of their freedom; and…

The United States is assisting the peoples of Southeast Asia to protect their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these peoples should be left in peace to work out their own destinies in their own way.

*Therefore* the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America have decided that we approve and support the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary military actions to resist any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

The United States is prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

**Source**: Excerpt from the Congressional Joint Resolution**,** passed by the 88th U.S. Congress, August 7, 1964.

## Document D: President Eisenhower’s interview (Modified)

*At a press conference in 1954, President Eisenhower talks about the importance of Vietnam and Indochina to the rest of the world.*

*Indochina is the Asian peninsula that includes Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.*

*Q. Robert Richards, Copley Press*: Mr. President, would you mind commenting on the strategic importance of Indochina for the free world? I think there has been some lack of understanding on just what it means to us.

*The President*. You have, of course, both the specific and the general when you talk about such things.

First of all, you have the specific value of a place in its production of materials that the world needs.

Then you have the possibility that many human beings pass under a dictatorship that is opposed to the free world.

Finally, you have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the “falling domino” principle. You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a breakup that would have the vast influence.

Now, with respect to the first one, two of the items from this particular area that the world uses are tin and tungsten. They are very important. There are others, of course, the rubber plantations and so on.

Then with respect to more people passing under this domination, Asia, after all, has already lost some 450 million of its peoples to China’s Communist dictatorship, and we simply can’t afford greater losses.

But when we come to the possible sequence of events, the loss of Indochina, of Burma, of Thailand, of the Peninsula, and Indonesia following, now you begin to talk about areas that not only multiply the disadvantages that you would suffer through the loss of materials, sources of materials, but now you are talking about millions and millions of people.

Finally, the geographical position does many things. . . it moves in to threaten Australia and New Zealand and the economic region that Japan must have as a trading area.

So, the possible consequences of the loss are just incalculabe to the free world.

**Source:** Excerpt from a press interview with President Eisenhower, April 7, 1954.

## Document E: President Kennedy’s Sympathy Letter (Modified)

*Below President Kennedy replies to a letter written to him by a woman whose brother had been killed in a helicopter crash in Vietnam. He was serving as an advisor there.*

Dear Mrs. Pendergrass,

I would like to express to you my deep and sincere sympathy in the loss of your brother. I can, of course, well understand your loss and the feelings which prompted you to write.

The questions which you posed in your letter can, I believe, best be answered by realizing why your brother – and other American men—went to Viet Nam in the first place. . .

Americans are in Viet Nam because we have determined that this country must not fall under Communist domination. Ever since Viet Nam was divided, the Viet Namese have fought bravely to maintain their independence in the face of the continuing threat from the North. . . it became apparent that they could not be successful in their defense without extensive assistance from other nations of the Free World community.

In the late summer of 1955, with the approval of President Eisenhower, an Advisory Group was established in Viet Nam to provide them with adequate weapons and equipment and training in basic military skills . . . Even with this help, the situation grew steadily worse under the pressure of the Viet Cong. By 1961 it became apparent that the troubles in Laos and the troubles in Viet Nam could easily expand.

It is also apparent that the Communist attempt to take over Viet Nam is only part of a larger plan for bringing the entire area of Southeast Asia under their domination. Though it is only a small part of the area geographically, Viet Nam is now the most crucial.

If Viet Nam should fall, it will show the people of Southeast Asia that complete Communist domination of their part of the world is almost unavoidable. Your brother was in Viet Nam because the threat to the Viet Namese people is, in the long run, a threat to the Free World community and ultimately a threat to us also. For when freedom is destroyed in one country, it is threatened throughout the world.

… Forty-five American soldiers, including y our brother, have given their lives in Viet Nam. In their sacrifice, they have earned the eternal gratitude of this Nation and other free men throughout the world.

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy

**Source:** Excerpt from John F. Kennedy’s sympathy letter to Mrs. Bobbie Lou Pendergrass in Santa Ana, California, March 6, 1963.

## Document F: Table, U.S. Military (Modified)

*Between 1954-1960 there was an average of about 650 U.S. military advisors in South Vietnam. The chart below shows how many U.S. military personnel [staff] were in South Vietnam between 1960 and 1969.*

# U.S. ARMY AND TOTAL U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL IN SOUTH VIETNAM

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **U.S. Army Personnel [People]** | **Total U.S. Military Personnel [People]** |
| 31 Dec 1960 | 800 | 900 |
| 31 Dec 1961 | 2,100 | 3,200 |
| 31 Dec 1962 | 7,900 | 11,300 |
| 31 Dec 1963 | 10,100 | 16,300 |
| 31 Dec 1964 | 14,700 | 23,300 |
| 31 Mar 1965 | 15,600 | 29,100 |
| 30 Jun | 27,300 | 59,900 |
| 30 Sep | 76,200 | 132,300 |
| 31 Dec | 116,800 | 184,300 |
| 31 Mar 1966 | 137,400 | 231,200 |
| 30 Jun | 160,000 | 267,500 |
| 30 Sep | 189,200 | 313,100 |
| 31 Dec | 239,400 | 485,300 |
| 31 Mar 1967 | 264,600 | 420,900 |
| 30 Jun | 285,700 | 448,800 |
| 30 Sep | 296,100 | 459,700 |
| 31 Dec | 319,500 | 485,600 |
| 31 Mar 1968 | 337,300 | 515,200 |
| 30 Jun | 354,300 | 534,700 |
| 30 Sep | 354,200 | 537,800 |
| 31 Dec | 359,800 | 536,100 |
| \*31 Jan 1969 | 365,600 | 542,400 |

\* Indicates peak strength in South Vietnam

**Source:** Excerpt from Lieutenant General Joseph M. Heiser, Jr., *Logistic Support*, published by the Department of the Army, 1991, page 14.

# Credits

Document C: Tonkin Gulf Resolution; Public Law 88-408, 88th Congress, August 7, 1964; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.

Documents D: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1958), pp. 381-90. <http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/domino.html>

# Document E: (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives] from Cantu, D.A., & Cantu, S. (2003). The Vietnam War: a national dilemma. Los Angeles: Regents of the University of California.

Document F: From: <http://www.history.army.mil/books/Vietnam/logistic/chapter2.htm> p.14