The Air War

- **Operation Rolling Thunder**: Bombing of North Vietnam: We bombed bridges, roads, power plants, etc.
  
- A major target was the **Ho Chi Minh Trail**: Which were secret trails into South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese **sent troops and guns** into South Vietnam on this trail.
  
  - The US used **Agent Orange** to burn out the forests.
  
  - They also used **Napalm, Cluster bombs and carpet bombing**.

Bombing fails

- But the **bombing did not work**, the flow of troops and supplies actually **increased** during the bombings.
  
- One reason was that North Vietnamese rebuilt bridges and roads quickly or went around them.
  
- Another was that the Soviet Union and China were sending them massive amounts of aid.
  
- US increased bombing in response to this.
  
- Many South Vietnamese actually joined the Vietcong in response to bombing.
US Strategy

- Johnson called for a buildup of ground troops: 485,000 by 1967
- **William Westmoreland**: Commander of ground forces came up with the strategy
- **Search-and Destroy**: Search for the guerilla soldiers by ground then call in air strikes to blow them up.
- But once destroyed, Vietcong reoccupied the land quickly.
- **Pacification**: US strategy of winning the hearts and minds of the local South Vietnamese.
- When the Vietcong was close they would move whole villages to safety and burn down the village so it could not aid the North Vietnamese.
- Pacification turned South Vietnamese against Americans.

Troop Morale Declines

- American troops were very **confident**
- But Vietcong attacked, then melted back into the jungle
- Farmers by day, warriors by night.
- **Ambush attacks** and **booby traps** (Punji sticks) were a constant danger
- Troops could not trust citizens.
- Americans killed lots of Vietcong, but they **were constantly replaced** by new recruits
- China and the Soviet Union kept replacing supplies.
- **The enemy seemed unbeatable**

**Essential Questions**

1. What was Operation Rolling Thunder?
2. Why did bombing not work in Vietnam?
3. What was the US strategy in Vietnam?
4. Why did Pacification not work in Vietnam?
5. List some reasons why troop morale declined in Vietnam?
US Forces Mobilize

- As the war demanded more soldiers, the US instituted a draft.
- Since college students got out of the draft, a higher proportion of poorer Americans served in the war.
- By 1973: the US ended the draft and went back to volunteers.
- Many young soldiers fled to Canada to escape the draft.
- Most soldiers served in non-combat positions but it was still dangerous.
- Women served mainly as nurses.

Media's impact on the War

- Most Americans supported the war in the beginning.
- But by 1968 that was changing due to the media's coverage of the war.
- Vietnam was called the first “Living room war.”
- The media covered all aspects of the war.
- The scenes on TV contradicted what the government said was going on in Vietnam.
- Some of the media even criticized the war.

Doves and Hawks

- Hawks: people who supported the war.
- Doves: people who opposed the war.
- Hawks complained that we needed more bombs and troops to fight this war.
- Doves complained that the war was not important to American security.
- Many civil rights leaders wondered why African-Americans were fighting for Democracy when they did not have it at home.
- African-Americans supported the war less than did whites for this reason.
The Antiwar Movement

- A growing antiwar movement was started in the US mainly by students, civil rights workers and teachers.
- Most activity took place on college campuses.
- SDS Students for a Democratic Society led the movement.
- They burned draft cards, American flags, marched, and petitioned.
- Although it was a strong movement, most Americans did not support these movements and the burning of flags and draft cards.

Essential Questions

1. Why did a higher proportion of poor people serve in the Vietnam war?
2. Why was this called the 1st “Living Room War”?
3. How did the Hawks and Doves differ on how the Vietnam War should be fought?
4. Why did African-Americans support the war less than whites?
5. Who led the Anti-war movements? Did most Americans agree with them?