

A black and white historical photograph showing a group of soldiers in a field. In the foreground, several soldiers are seen from behind, wearing helmets and carrying gear. In the background, more soldiers are visible, and several helicopters are flying in the sky. The scene is set in a grassy field with trees in the distance.

Dien Bien Phu and the Vietnam War

1954-1975

**What do you know about
the Vietnam War?**

Post WWII

Under French control since 19th century

Japanese invasions led to creation of Viet Minh to
repel invaders

1945 - Viet Minh takeover creates the Democratic
Republic of Vietnam (DRV)

December 19, 1946 - First Indochina War

July 1949 - French supported state of Vietnam is
created



1945-1949

Dien Bien Phu

Battle fought between French Expeditionary Corps and Viet Minh

French supported by USA - Viet Minh supported by USSR and PRC

French operation to draw Viet Minh forces into battle with French air support, based on false belief that Viet Minh had no anti-aircraft capabilities

French were severely underprepared

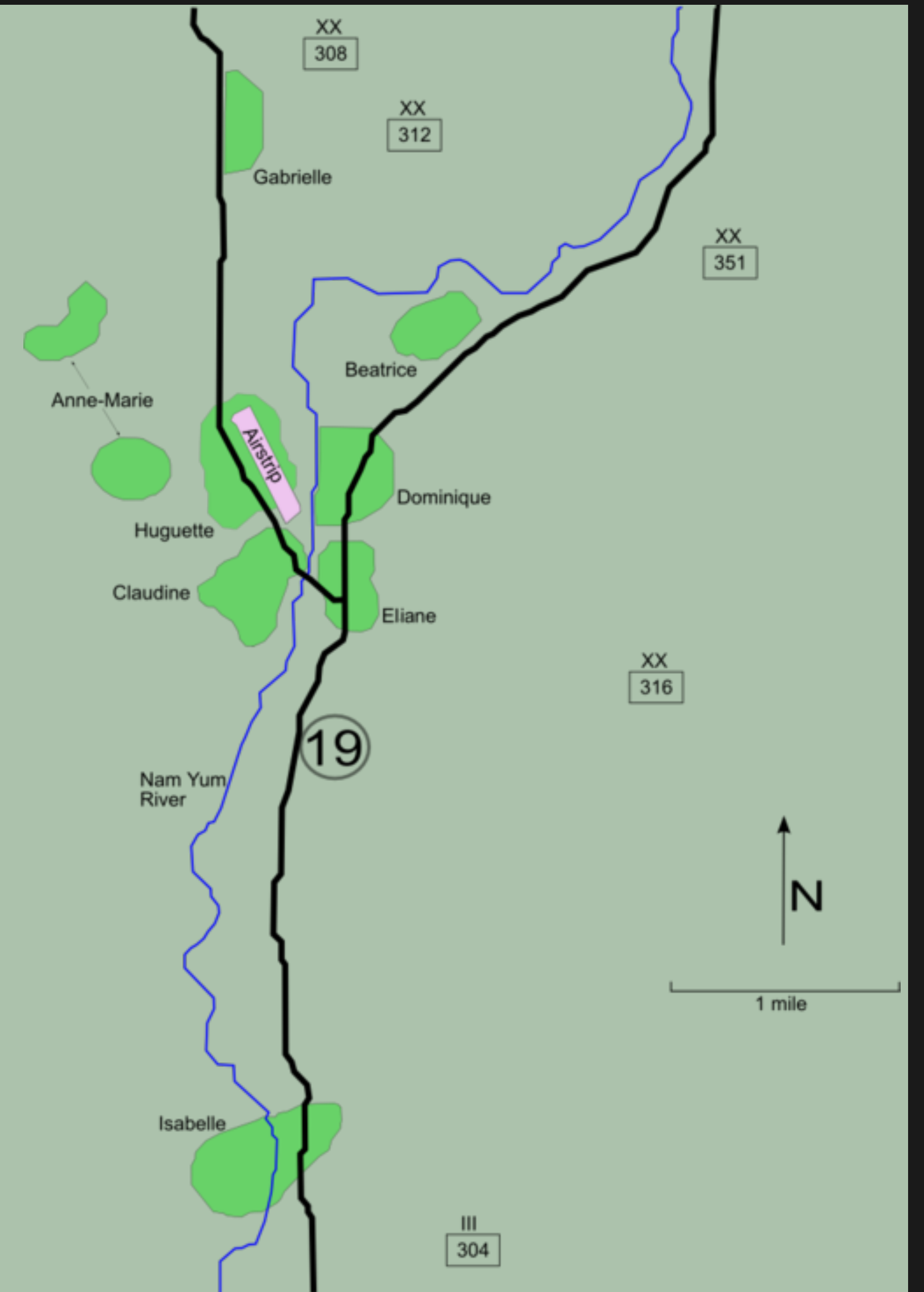
Viet Minh spent months digging tunnels to position artillery

March 13 - May 7, 1954



“Dien Bien Phu is like a rice bowl. We occupy the edges and the French the bottom”

- Commander Vo Nguyen Giap



Dien Bien Phu Aftermath

Exposed French weaknesses to the area, forcing withdrawal from Vietnam in 1956

11,700 French POW's - only 3,200 survived POW camps

May 8 1954 - Geneva Conference opens
Indochina peace talks

July 20, 1954 - Vietnam is "temporarily" divided
along the 17th parallel

May 8, 1954 - July 20, 1954



Ngo Dinh Diem

June 16, 1954 - Ngo Dinh Diem appointed Prime Minister of State of Vietnam

Heavy anti-communist

Diem's security arrests 100,000 "Viet Cong", who are tortured and executed

Nov 2, 1963 - Diem is assassinated. Political instability convinces President Johnson to increase military presence

January 3, 1901 - November 2, 1963



Vietnam War

1966 - 300,000 American troops deployed in Vietnam with heavy public support

Over 500,000 American troops deserted

A “war of attrition”

North Vietnam once again aided by USSR and China

Television allowed American public to view atrocities. Many thought USA supported a corrupt dictatorship and primary victims of the war were civilians

November 1, 1955 - April 30, 1975



Tet Offensive

Named after Vietnamese lunar new year

Series of fierce attacks on over 100 cities and towns in South Vietnam

Initially successful, but North Vietnam struggled to hold advances

Stunned US public, generals requested for reinforcements of 200,000

Jan 31, 1968



My Lai Massacre

US slaughter of 400 unarmed civilians in the village of My Lai, including children

Tipping point in the anti-war movement

Shattered the idea that Americans were playing peacekeepers

Divided the nation between 2 ideals: The war was a form of unchecked authority by the USA, or opposing the government was treasonous and unpatriotic

March 16, 1968



Vietnam War

May 1968 - Nixon begins "Vietnamization"

Thousands of troops receive dishonourable discharges for desertion. Mutinies and attacks against officers

January 1973 - Americans withdraw from Vietnam

April 30, 1975 - North Vietnam captures Saigon, ending the war

Estimated 2 million Vietnamese killed, 3 million injured

November 1, 1955 - April 30, 1975



Vietnam War Aftermath

12 million Vietnamese refugees

Destroyed the myth of American invincibility

Returning veterans faced negative attention for actions in the war

Rates of PTSD, suicide, drug addiction were higher among Vietnam veterans

Worldwide inflation and damaged American economy

Changed how war was viewed by the public

1975 - Today



**Should the Americans have
deployed into Vietnam?**



The background of the entire image is a silhouette of a soldier walking from left to right, carrying a rifle and a large backpack. In the sky above, a helicopter is visible. The scene is reflected in a body of water at the bottom. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

THE VIETNAM WAR

A FILM BY KEN BURNS & LYNN NOVICK

A LANDMARK DOCUMENTARY EVENT

SEPTEMBER 2017