

The Legacy of Hamburger Hill

Thirteen years into the war in Vietnam, the army won, then lost control of a mound along the famed Ho Chi Minh Trail supply route in a terrifying ten-day conflict known as Hamburger Hill, because of the battle's tendency to transform human bodies into corpses resembling chewed-up meat.

Although the original effort largely avoided field skirmishes through the Gulf of 'Tonkin Resolution (permitting use of any means necessary to rebuff acts of aggression, most notably played out in a three-year *rolling thunder* campaign that dropped a million tons of bombs over the north), just prior to that May 1969, the military had been roped into messy ground fighting by the communists' massive escalations ("Tet Offensive").

Historians identify surrender of Hill 937 as a decisive turning point because it marks a shift in public support, when vocal opposition became widespread. Later that year, Nixon announced the official strategy for gradual U.S. withdrawal ("Vietnamization"). Despite his proclamation, a significant percentage of the total sixty thousand American casualties was still to be lost in fighting ahead.

