

ON THE LINE

INTREPID & THE VIETNAM WAR

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Understanding and Teaching the Exhibition





ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Use the Essential Questions below to connect the themes of the exhibition to your curriculum. Identify key points that you would like students to learn. Text in blue corresponds to different sections in the exhibition. Text in **blue** refers to key topics addressed in this exhibition. Definitions are provided in the **Key Topics** section of this Educator's Guide.

What led the United States to get involved in Vietnam?

Cold War Fears

The Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh, was dedicated to the goal of an independent, unified and Communist Vietnam. U.S. involvement in Vietnam was intended to stop the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia, protect American interests and preserve the balance of power during the Cold War. The domino theory—the belief that if one nation in an unstable region fell to Communism, others might follow—influenced American foreign policy between the 1950s and the 1980s. American military advisors were sent to South Vietnam in 1955.

Gulf of Tonkin Incident

The U.S. presence in Vietnam escalated significantly following what came to be known as the Gulf of Tonkin incident. In August 1964, as fighting between North and South Vietnam intensified, American destroyers secretly patrolled North Vietnam's territorial waters

to gather military intelligence. On August 2, during a covert patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin, the destroyer USS *Maddox* came under fire from North Vietnamese torpedo boats. *Maddox* responded with fire. Two days later, *Maddox* and USS *Turner Joy* reported coming under attack again in the Gulf of Tonkin and returning fire.

No clear evidence of this second attack was ever found. On August 4, in a nationally televised speech, President Lyndon B. Johnson asked for the authority to engage in defensive military actions against North Vietnam. The next day Johnson ordered retaliatory air strikes.

On August 7, 1964, the U.S. Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, authorizing the president to use conventional military force in Southeast Asia without a formal declaration of war. In the absence of physical evidence, the second attack on U.S. ships in the Gulf of Tonkin remained in question.

In 2007, citing its own declassified documents, the National Security Agency (NSA) confirmed

that the second attack, which prompted Congressional action, never occurred. The NSA and the Johnson administration had misrepresented the incident used to justify the escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

How did the experience of *Intrepid* crew members differ from the experience of non-Navy servicemen during the Vietnam War?

On the Line

American involvement in the Vietnam War lasted from 1961 to 1975. Between 1966 and 1969, the crew of USS *Intrepid*, an Essex-class aircraft carrier, served three tours of duty off the coast of Vietnam. "On the line" refers to the times when the ship and its crew were engaged in launching aircraft on strike missions over mainland Vietnam. These young men, some still teenagers, were removed from the fiercest fighting of the ground war, but they faced danger in the air and at sea.

3,000 Men

During the ship's service in Vietnam, the vast majority of *Intrepid's* crew members had one thing in common: they were volunteers. Draftees accounted for about 25 percent of the military personnel who served in Vietnam, but the vast majority of draftees served in the U.S. Army and the Air Force rather than the Navy.

Coming Home

Upon each return home, *Intrepid* sailors were greeted by family and friends who gathered to welcome them. These homecomings, unique to naval personnel, shielded them from the protesters who often gathered at commercial airports to confront returning veterans from other branches of service.

How did this war differ from wars in the past?

The Unpopular War

The war in Vietnam was the first televised war. Graphic images from the evening news made their way into millions of American living rooms and had a profound influence on public opinion. Returning veterans, many of them wounded in body and mind, and the shocking news of U.S. war crimes against Vietnamese civilians caused many Americans to question the motives for the war and to doubt the possibility of victory.

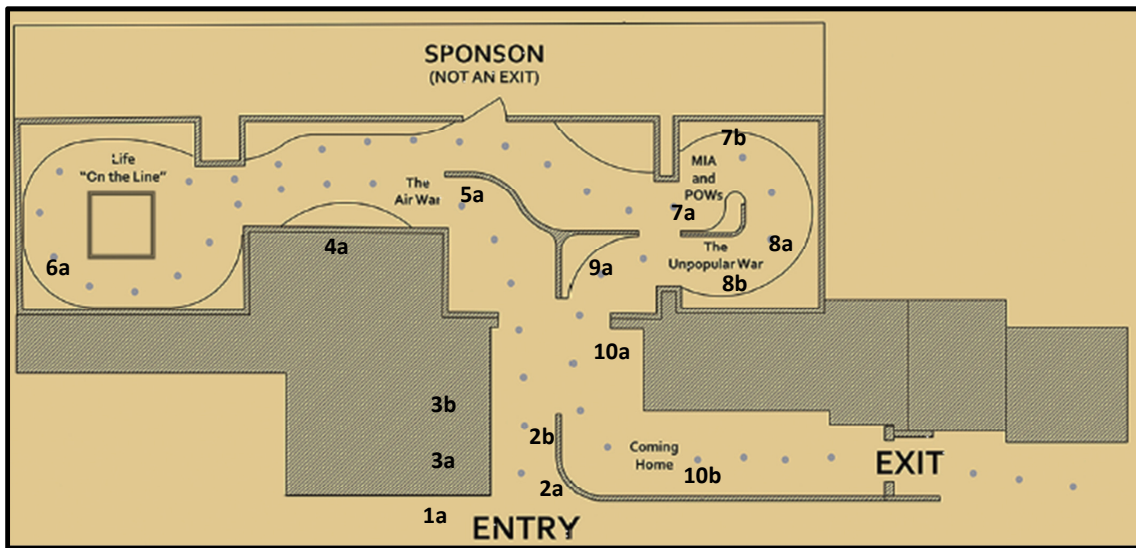
Dissent in the Ranks

Those who served overseas learned of the antiwar movement in letters from home, popular magazines and other news sources. Some servicemen felt that the protests struck a blow to military morale and that their service was unappreciated. Others saw their own growing disillusionment reflected in the movement. Overseas, some servicemen spoke openly about their opposition to the war. At home, many draftees defiantly burned their draft cards, and some veterans took to the streets to protest the war that they had just returned from.

INTREPID ON THE LINE AND THE VIETNAM WAR



EXHIBITION MAP



1. Introduction

1a. Exhibition Introduction (text panel)

2. Cold War Fears

2a. Map of Vietnam
2b. Domino Theory Cartoon

3. Facts and Fictions

3a. Gulf of Tonkin Wall
3b. Gulf of Tonkin Screen

4. The Air War

4a. The Air War Panel

5. 3,000 Men

5a. U.S. Navy Recruitment Poster

6. Dangerous Skies

6a. Survival, Escape and Evasion Kit

7. Missing in Action and Prisoners of War

7a. Photograph of U.S. Prisoners of War
7b. POW: Lt. Wilson Denver "Denny"
Key Screen

8. The Unpopular War

8a. Photographs of Protest
8b. Photograph of Flag-Covered Caskets

9. The Intrepid Four

9a. Newspaper, 1968

10. Coming Home

10a. Photographs of Helicopter and Refugees
10b. Photographs of *Intrepid* Returning Home

TEACHING THE EXHIBITION

1. Introduction

1a. Exhibition Introduction (text panel)

The United States was involved in the Vietnam War from 1961 to 1975. USS *Intrepid* served three tours of duty between 1966 and 1969. The ship's service provides a window into the events of the war but only part of the overall picture. In this exhibition, we will discover how the United States became involved in the war, the role *Intrepid* played in it and how the crew's experience was different from that of many non-Navy personnel involved in combat.



Collection of the Intrepid Museum. Gift of Seaman Danny Camp, *Intrepid* crew member, 1967–1968. P2014.12.54

2. Cold War Fears

2b. Map of Vietnam

This is a map of the borders of Vietnam as they existed during *Intrepid's* involvement in the Vietnam War. The United States saw the independent Communist nation of North Vietnam as a threat to the non-Communist South Vietnamese government. Students can compare the risk of being stationed at Yankee Station versus Dixie Station.

2c. Domino Theory Cartoon

The theory that if one nation fell to Communism, other nations may follow influenced American foreign policy for a long period of time. Students can discuss who is represented in this cartoon and the message the artist tried to convey.

3. Facts and Fictions

3a. Gulf of Tonkin Wall

In August 1964, American destroyers secretly patrolled North Vietnam's waters. On August 2, USS *Maddox* came under fire. Two days later, *Maddox* and USS *Turner Joy* reported coming under attack. Students can identify how the United States responded to this information.



Collection of the Intrepid Museum. Gift of Brian Walker, VA34, P2015.05.43

3b. Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

On August 7, 1964, the U.S. Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, authorizing the president to use conventional military force in Southeast Asia without a formal declaration of war. Students can discuss whether they see this as a reasonable response.

3c. Picture of Bullet Hole on USS Maddox

This is the damage sustained by *Maddox* during its engagement with North Vietnamese torpedo boats on August 2. In 2007, it was confirmed that the second attack on *Maddox* never occurred. Students can discuss why this information was not reported initially.

4. The Air War

4a. The Air War Panel

Intrepid and 14 other aircraft carriers participated in Operation Rolling Thunder, a strategic bombing campaign against North Vietnam. As Operation Rolling Thunder progressed, its objectives were to cripple North Vietnam's ability to fight and stop the flow of supplies from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.

5. 3,000 Men

5a. U.S. Navy Recruitment Poster

Intrepid had more than 3,000 crew members, and most had one thing in common: they were volunteers. Draftees accounted for about 25 percent of the military personnel who served in Vietnam, but the majority of draftees served in the U.S. Army and Air Force, rather than the Navy. Students can identify how this image might make someone want to join the Navy.

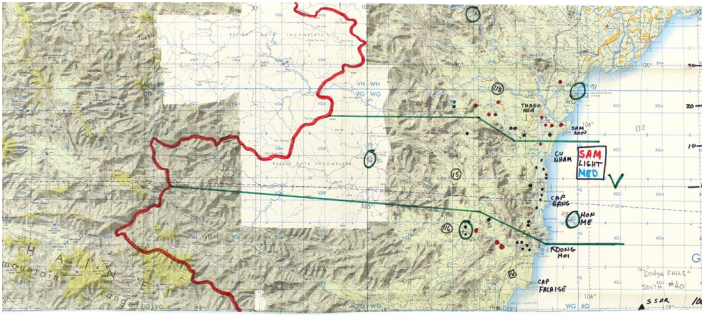
6. Dangerous Skies

6a. Survival, Escape and Evasion Kit

Intrepid began its service off the coast of South Vietnam but later moved to Yankee Station off the coast of North Vietnam, where there was more risk of enemy fire. Students can examine the objects in this case to identify why aviators may need this equipment.



Collection of the Intrepid Museum. 200.2010.236



Collection of the Intrepid Museum. Gift of Phil Mall, VSF-3. 2010.37.10

7. Missing in Action and Prisoners of War

7a. Photograph of U.S. Prisoners of War

This photograph depicts U.S. prisoners of war during an inspection by international observers and journalists. Almost 800 prisoners of war, or POWs, were held in captivity during the Vietnam War. These POWs were the longest held in American history, with some men spending nearly 10 years in captivity.

7b. POW: Lt. Wilson Denver “Denny” Key Wall

Lieutenant Wilson Denver Key was a naval pilot aboard *Intrepid* who was shot down by enemy fire in November 1967. He was held as a prisoner of war until March 1973, when he was released as part of Operation Homecoming. Students can make inferences about what Key may have experienced every day as a POW.



Collection of the Intrepid Museum. Gift of the family of Lt. CMDR. Broms. 2014.115

8. The Unpopular War

8a. Photographs of Protest

The war in Vietnam divided American society. The percentage of Americans opposed to the war grew as U.S. military involvement escalated and cost the lives of an increasing number of young men.

8b. Photograph of Flag-Covered Caskets

The war in Vietnam was the first televised war. Graphic images such as this one were commonly seen by the American public and caused many Americans to question their country's involvement in Vietnam. Students can discuss how the American public might react to seeing these images.

9. The *Intrepid* Four

9a. Newspaper, 1968

In 1967, four *Intrepid* crew members deserted, with no intention to return, while the ship was on leave in Japan. Students can discuss how the American public may have viewed the *Intrepid* Four at this time.

10. Coming Home

10a. Photographs of Helicopter and Vietnamese Refugees from Saigon

Operation Rolling Thunder ended in 1968, and so did *Intrepid's* involvement. In December 1968, *Intrepid* began the long journey home. The war in Vietnam carried on for another seven years. U.S. involvement ended in April 1975, when Saigon fell to North Vietnamese forces. Students can examine the photographs in this section and identify the events that took place on this day.



Collection of the Intrepid Museum. Gift of Garret Craig Myers, AMS3.
P2013.02.174

10b. Photographs of *Intrepid* Returning Home

These are photographs of *Intrepid's* return to the United States. The homecoming of *Intrepid's* crew differed from the experience of many other servicemen, who returned home alone, often without any welcome banners. Students can discuss the impact a welcome like this may have had on returning servicemen.



BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

Plan Your Visit

For information about reservations, transportation and lunchrooms, visit our School Programs FAQ page. intrepidmuseum.org/plan-your-visit/group-visits/field-trips

You can also contact us:
groupsales@intrepidmuseum.org
 Phone: **646-381-5010**

Read the Essential Questions to see how themes in our exhibition connect to your curriculum.

Review the Teaching in the Exhibition section to gain an idea of which objects best fit the needs of your class.

Decide how your class will explore the exhibition:

- You and your chaperones can facilitate the visit using the Teaching in the Exhibition section.
- Students can use the Map of the Exhibition to explore the exhibition on their own or in small groups.

New York City Scope and Sequence

8th Grade

- 8.7b United States Postwar Foreign and Domestic Policy
- 8.9c The Vietnam War and the War on Poverty

10th Grade

- 10.7a India and Indochina— Independence (1931–1975 C.E.)
- 10.6a Cold War Balance of Power (1945–1991 C.E.)

11th Grade

- 11.9a Ideological Differences between the United States and the Soviet Union
- 11.9c Foreign Policy



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