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Coconut palms shade former garden plots at the old village site of My Lai. One planted area is visible in the center, but the other plots are overgrown with grass and weeds. In 1968, U.S. forces considered the My Lai area to be a stronghold of Communist Vietnamese fighters (known as Vietcong) and their sympathizers. Repeated bombing of the region only increased the support of local civilians for the Communist fighters. After an order was given to U.S. troops to attack My Lai Village, American soldiers killed hundreds of mostly women, children, and elderly with brutal methods. Photographs and reports about the atrocities at My Lai led many Americans who thought little about the Vietnam War to conclude that it was not a war they wished to support. Increasingly, the U.S. government decided to reduce civilian killings and military deployments in Vietnam. American forces gradually were withdrawn and then the southern capital of Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese Communist forces on April 30, 1975.



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