

Lottie Faulkner (Y10)

*"The most important reason why the Vietcong were able to fight the much more powerful USA was because of their guerrilla tactics". How far do you agree with this statement?*

The use of the guerrilla tactics was the most important reason why the Vietcong were able to fight the US successfully. This is because they would set up booby traps in order to either maim or murder the US soldiers. The booby traps included things such as punji sticks which was where the Vietcong would sharpen bamboo sticks and then cover the tips in either faeces or poison from snakes and then set them up so that the US would not be able to see them and would fall onto them, fatally injuring them or killing them instantly killing them. The Vietcong would also set these up to fall onto the soldiers when they raided the homes of civilians. Another tactic that the VC used to fight the US successfully was building a maze of tunnels underground to protect them from the air raids that the US would conduct to try and wipe out the VC. These tunnels were known as Cu Chi tunnels and were a great way for the Vietcong to navigate without the soldiers spotting them, they would also use the tunnels to run back to after an attack on the Americans so they couldn't fire back. Another important tactic used by the Vietcong against the Americans was known as hanging off the belts of the Americans, this was where the Vietcong would stay very close to American camps, therefore if the Americans were to try and conduct an air raid then they would be possibly murdering their own soldiers and the Vietcong were so close to them that it would affect both sides. These tactics were very important to how the Vietcong were able to fight the US successfully as the Americans were not prepared for it meaning they could catch them by surprise.

However, a more important factor as to what made the Vietcong successful soldiers against the US was the support that the Vietcong had of the civilians in both the south and north of Vietnam. The reason as to why the Vietcong had so much support from the civilians was because the Americans would go to villages in Vietnam and burn them down or ruin the crops of the civilians, this angered the civilians because it meant that everything that they had worked for and earned a living off had been destroyed. Another reason that the civilians were opposed towards the American soldiers is because they would move them into hamlet projects sometimes miles away from their farmlands to stop them from joining the Vietcong. The US failed to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese as they would use chemical warfare against them and destroy the things and people they loved and worked for. This made it a very easy decision for many Vietnamese to go and join the Vietcong as they wanted revenge for the pain and terror that the US had caused them. This was a very important reason as to how the Vietcong were able to fight the Americans successfully.

The final factor as to how the Vietcong were able to fight the US soldiers was that the Americans were untrained and unskilful towards the tactics of the Vietcong. The US were very used to open warfare based on their previous wars such as WW2 and WW1 whereas the Vietcong's fighting style was guerrilla warfare where it would not be an open battlefield because of the style of warfare that the Vietnamese fought in. Another reason as to why the Vietcong were able to fight the Vietnamese was because they were fighting for their freedom and independence whereas many Americans questioned what they were fighting for. Also, the Vietnamese had been fighting the French long before the Americans got involved and were therefore well equipped and better trained for this style of combat. The American soldiers, however, had been drafted in so they had only a couple weeks to prepare to go and fight in a country that they had not only never been to but over a third of them had never even heard of it. The jungle and heavy gear that the Americans carried with them in the hot temperatures hindered their performance whereas the Vietnamese had adapted to this weather therefore were more able to continue fighting in the harsh conditions.