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Even before extensive American involvement in Vietnam, people believed that whoever controlled the Central Highlands of that country had the upper hand. On February 7, 1965 the United States had a presence in the Central Highlands.

The place was known as Camp Holloway, at Pleiku. An incident at Camp Holloway, on that February day, changed America's objectives in Vietnam:

- Before February, 1965, the U.S. mission in South Vietnam was to advise and train the South Vietnamese military. As President Johnson described it, his shotgun had been over the mantle and his bullets in the basement for a very long time.
- After North Vietnamese troops attacked Camp Holloway on February 7, killing eight Americans, the mission changed. (Scroll down 90%).

The call came to Cyrus Vance at 3:05 p.m. EST, February 6. (It was already February 7th in Vietnam.) In his memo (scroll down 60%) recording the events, Vance wrote:

*At 1505 I received a call from the NMCC giving initial reports of Viet Cong attacks on two compounds in the vicinity of Pleiku Airfield, on the airfield at Tuy Hoa and two villages in the immediate vicinity, and on a village some 15 miles north of Nha Trang. First reports dealt principally with the Pleiku area and indicated that there might be substantial U.S. casualties, both killed and wounded, and damage to U.S. aircraft. I reported the foregoing at 1509 in turn to Secretary McNamara and the President.*

In addition to the eight dead soldiers, about 100 of the 180 personnel at Camp Holloway were wounded. Ten aircraft were damaged. The attack had been a surprise, and the President wondered (scroll down 50%) how it could have happened:

*The President then questioned how the Viet Cong had been able to launch the attack on Pleiku and whether there was a failure of local security. This was discussed generally, it being pointed out that infiltration even into the Pleiku area is not too difficult.*

The *USS Ranger*, meanwhile, was cruising off the coast of Vietnam. On it were A1H aircraft. Those planes would soon be scrambled for the first American bombing run over North Vietnam.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WHY-DID-THE-MISSION-CHANGE-We-Were-Soldiers>

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## Media Stream



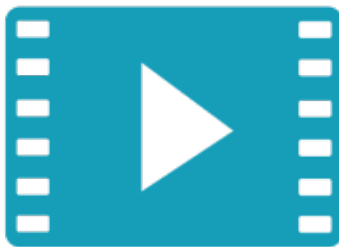
### Annotated Map Depicting the Central Highlands

Image online, courtesy the [Vietnam Remembered](http://www.vietnamremembered.com) website.

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### Vietnam - Pleiku and Camp Holloway Attack

Universal Newsreel coverage for February 8, 1965.

Online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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