Fifteen years after the United States (U.S.) ended its official military involvement in the Korean peninsula, Arlington’s association with the nation’s military and intelligence operations had not waned. No longer the home of the Army Signal Corps, Arlington Hall was now the headquarters of the United States Army Security Agency. From the late 1950s through the early 1960s, Arlington Hall temporarily housed the Armed Services Technical Information Agency which shared classified research with defense contractors. When the Soviet Republic announced the launch of Sputnik, President Dwight Eisenhower founded the Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) to research science and technology projects beyond the immediate scope of the military’s purview. As many Federal agencies had done before, ARPA (renamed Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency in 1972) opened its offices in Arlington, first at the Pentagon and later in Rosslyn. One of the projects developed by the agency at their Arlington location between 1970 and 1975 was ARPANET, the foundational technology and precursor of the Internet. The Pentagon continued to have a sizeable presence in the County during this time, employing between 20,000 and 35,000 civilian and military personnel at a given time.

Consequently, Arlington’s rapid growth continued, with the census reporting 163,401 residents in 1960 and 174,284 in 1970. Providing adequate housing and transportation infrastructure to accommodate this growing population continued to be a challenge for County leadership. In 1968 Arlington citizens voted overwhelmingly in favor of the construction of the Metrorail plan first envisioned during the Korean War. The contentious agreement to build Interstate 66 finally culminated in 1977 when a District Court approved the limited access highway with a Metrorail median.

In the early 1960s developer Charles E. Smith implemented large-scale planning in a sparsely developed area by Washington National Airport. Its name, Crystal City, was inspired by the crystal chandelier that adorned the lobby of Smith’s first 800-unit residential building, the Crystal House, completed in 1963. As this area grew, it transformed from a warehouse district to a business district that quickly attracted many Federal agencies such as the Institute for Defense Analyses, the U.S. Patent Office, and the General Services Administration.
While Arlington continued to develop and change, tensions in Vietnam increased. North Vietnam supported by its communist allies, and South Vietnam, with the backing of anti-communist nations including the U.S., fought the Second Indochina War between 1955-1975. As the local conflict intensified, the U.S. increased its military presence in South Vietnam from a few thousand service members in 1959 to more than 500,000 by the end of the war in 1973. In total, over 3.4 million U.S. troops served in Southeast Asia during the years of the conflict, of which 2.7 million served specifically in Vietnam.

For the fifth time in its history, the U.S. instituted national conscription and drafted more than 2.2 million men for military service. The Pentagon stood as the physical representation of the military, which faced unprecedented criticism about conscription and the extended conflict in Vietnam. Protesters staged sit-ins, teach-ins (action-oriented, political seminars), and marches all over the nation. On October 21, 1967, Arlington made national news when approximately 50,000 people assembled for the largest anti-war rally in the nation's history marching from the National Mall to the Pentagon to protest the war. Authorities had prepared with additional security fences around the perimeter of the building and hundreds of military police, U.S. Marshals, and local law enforcement along the route and at the site. Protesters made speeches and sang songs through the day and into the evening, with some demonstrators attempting to enter the Pentagon. Law enforcement disbanded the protest early morning on October 22, 1967, by which time 683 people had been arrested. Many of those present credit this march as a catalyst for a lifetime of political activism.

The U.S. suffered more than 58,000 casualties by the time it exited the conflict in 1973. Much of the fighting involved air strikes and ground combat where servicemen fought in hot, humid, and dangerous conditions.

Private First-Class Nicholas Krimont was class senator and a national merit scholar at Washington-Lee High School. PFC Krimont served as an Infantry Indirect Fire Crewman when killed in hostile fire in Quang Ngai on April 12, 1967.

Lance Corporal Raymond Parker Jones was a 20-year-old machine gunner in the Marines when killed by a rocket in Quang Nam on January 5, 1969. He and his wife Goldie Mae were both born in Southampton County, VA, and had married in Arlington less than two years earlier in 1967.

Sergeant Steven Kramer died in January 1970 in California from malaria he contracted in the light weapons infantry in Vietnam. He was 21 years old when he died, just a recent graduate of Bishop O’Connell High School where he was remembered as an artist.

Second Lieutenant John William “Jack” Kennedy was a solo pilot on a reconnaissance mission over the Quang Tin region on August 16, 1971, when he lost radio contact with the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron. After seven days of surveillance, Lt Kennedy was listed as missing in action. The USAF located and repatriated his remains in 1992 after determining that he had been shot down by ground fire. Lt Kennedy was one of the youngest forward air controllers killed in Vietnam and promoted to Captain posthumously.