

I have a novel about the Vietnam War era in which one character becomes an Army nurse in Vietnam. Here is the bottom line: she is a sophomore in pre-nursing at the University of Minnesota in spring of 1967 and needs to be in Vietnam by July 1 1968 (to fit in the plot as envisioned). The way she presumably arranges this is she drops out of the U and enters an accelerated hospital-based program while getting credits for courses already taken. Is this possible?

**Short answer:** Yes — it is *plausible* for your character to leave the University of Minnesota in spring 1967, enter an accelerated hospital-based nursing program, and be in Vietnam as an Army nurse by July 1, 1968. It requires a realistic but tight timeline, and it aligns with how the Army Nurse Corps actually recruited and trained nurses during the Vietnam buildup.

## What makes this scenario plausible?

### **1. Hospital-based diploma nursing programs were still common and often accelerated**

In the 1960s, many U.S. hospitals ran 2–3-year diploma nursing programs. Some offered **accelerated or advanced-standing tracks** for students who already had college credits in sciences like biology, chemistry, and anatomy. Your character, as a pre-nursing sophomore, would likely have enough transferable coursework to shorten her time in the program.

### **2. The Army urgently needed nurses during the Vietnam buildup**

By 1967–1968, the Army Nurse Corps was under intense staffing pressure. Recruitment programs were expanded, including the **Army Student Nurse Program** and other accelerated pipelines to commission new nurses.

This urgency makes it believable that a diploma-program graduate could quickly be commissioned and deployed.

### **3. Diploma-prepared nurses were fully eligible for Army commissioning**

During the Vietnam War, the Army accepted **diploma-trained registered nurses** as commissioned officers. The requirement for a bachelor's degree did not appear until 1976.

So your character does *not* need a BSN to serve.

### **4. Deployment to Vietnam in 1968 fits the historical timeline**

The medical buildup peaked in 1968, with roughly **900 Army nurses** serving in Vietnam that year. Newly commissioned nurses were being sent overseas continuously.

## A realistic timeline for your character

Here's a workable sequence that fits your plot:

### **Spring 1967**

- She leaves the University of Minnesota after completing ~2 years of pre-nursing coursework.
- Applies to a hospital-based diploma nursing program (common in Minneapolis/St. Paul).

### **Summer 1967 – Spring 1968 (12–14 months)**

- Enters an **accelerated diploma program** with advanced standing.
- Completes required clinical and classroom work at an intensive pace.
- Takes RN licensure exam shortly after graduation (timing varied but could be within weeks).

### **Spring/Early Summer 1968**

- With RN license in hand, she applies for a commission in the Army Nurse Corps.
- Commissioning and processing could take **a few weeks to a couple of months**, especially during wartime staffing surges.

### **By July 1, 1968**

- She reports for duty in Vietnam.

This timeline is tight but historically credible.

## **Why this works narratively and historically**

- The Army was expanding rapidly in 1967–68 and accepted diploma-trained nurses without hesitation.
- Accelerated diploma programs existed and often recruited students who already had college science credits.
- The Army's need for nurses was so acute that processing and deployment moved quickly.
- Many nurses in Vietnam were in their early 20s and had only recently completed training.

## **Bottom line**

Your character's path — leaving college in 1967, completing an accelerated hospital-based nursing program, becoming an RN, commissioning into the Army Nurse Corps, and deploying to Vietnam by mid-1968 — is **entirely plausible** and fits well within documented historical patterns.