

*Indochina Monographs*

# The Cambodian Incursion

by  
*Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho*



U.S. ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Tho, Tran Dinh.  
The Cambodian incursion.

(Indochina monographs)

1. Vietnamese Conflict, 1961-1975--Campaigns--  
Cambodia. I. Title. II. Series.  
DS557.8.C3T47 959.704'342 79-21722

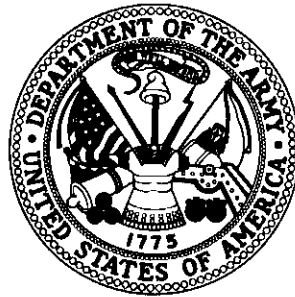
This book is not copyrighted and may be reproduced in  
whole or in part without consulting the publisher

First printing 1979

*Indochina Monographs*

# The Cambodian Incursion

by  
*Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho*



U.S. ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

## Indochina Monographs

This is one of a series published by the U.S. Army Center of Military History. They were written by officers who held responsible positions in the Cambodian, Laotian, and South Vietnamese armed forces during the war in Indochina. The General Research Corporation provided writing facilities and other necessary support under an Army contract with the Center of Military History. The monographs were not edited or altered and reflect the views of their authors--not necessarily those of the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense. The authors were not attempting to write definitive accounts but to set down how they saw the war in Southeast Asia.

Colonel William E. Le Gro, U.S. Army, retired, has written a forthcoming work allied with this series, Vietnam: From Cease-Fire to Capitulation. Another book, The Final Collapse by General Cao Van Vien, the last chairman of the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff, will be formally published and sold by the Superintendent of Documents.

Taken together these works should provide useful source materials for serious historians pending publication of the more definitive series, the U.S. Army in Vietnam.

JAMES L. COLLINS, JR.  
Brigadier General, USA  
Chief of Military History

## Preface

For several years Cambodia, under the leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, had condoned the use of part of its territory by the Vietnamese Communists for infiltration routes and logistic bases. These bases supported enemy activities in South Vietnam's Military Regions 3 and 4 and a significant part of Military Region 2 but were protected because of Cambodia's declared neutrality. However, the change in government on 18 March 1970 provided South Vietnam and the United States the opportunity to neutralize and disrupt much of the enemy logistic system across the border. Sanctioned by the new Cambodian government and approved by the Presidents of the Republic of Vietnam and the United States, South Vietnamese and U.S. forces launched combined operations into Cambodia's border area from 30 April to 30 June 1970.

As the Assistant Chief of Staff J3 of the Joint General Staff, RVNAF, I participated in the combined planning for these historic operations with military representatives from Cambodia and the United States and then monitored the operations constantly for the Chairman JGS. In conducting my analysis I have relied on my personal involvement and observations as J3 and interviews with former members of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces.

To provide desired information concerning Khmer participation and actions taken by military elements of the United States Embassy in Phnom Penh during these cross-border operations, I am most fortunate to have contributions from two supporting authors. Lieutenant General Sak Sutsakhan, the last Chief of State and Chief of the Khmer Armed

Forces General Staff, has authored Chapter VII. Colonel Harry O. Amos, U.S. Army Retired has contributed Appendix C.

In the preparation of this monograph, I am particularly indebted to General Cao Van Vien, former Chairman of the Joint General Staff, and Lieutenant General Dong Van Khuyen, who commanded the Central Logistics Command at the time of the Cambodian Incursion, for their valuable guidance. I am also grateful for the critical remarks and suggestions contributed by Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong, former commander of IV and I Corps, and Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh, the last commander of the 3d ARVN Infantry Division. Finally, Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung, the former Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence of the JGS, has provided his authoritative expertise on matters concerning the enemy.

I am also personally indebted to Lieutenant Colonel Chu Xuan Vien and Ms. Pham Thi Bong. Lt. Colonel Vien, the last Army Attache serving at the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, D.C., has done a highly professional job of translating and editing that helps impart unity of style and organization to the manuscript. Ms. Bong, a former Captain in the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces and also a former member of the Vietnamese Embassy staff, spent long and arduous hours, typing, editing and in the administrative preparation of my manuscript in final form.

McLean, Virginia  
15 September 1978

Tran Dinh Tho  
Brigadier General, ARVN

Contents

| Chapter                                                                                     | Page |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .                                                                   | 1    |
| <i>The Friendly Situation Prior to the Incursion</i> . . . . .                              | 1    |
| <i>The Enemy Situation Prior to the Incursion</i> . . . . .                                 | 6    |
| <i>RVN-Cambodia Relations</i> . . . . .                                                     | 12   |
| II. THE ENEMY USE OF CAMBODIAN TERRITORY AND ORGANIZATION<br>FOR LOGISTIC SUPPORT . . . . . | 18   |
| <i>The Ho Chi Minh Trail</i> . . . . .                                                      | 18   |
| <i>The Sihanoukville Port Route</i> . . . . .                                               | 21   |
| <i>The Sea Route</i> . . . . .                                                              | 22   |
| <i>The Base Area System</i> . . . . .                                                       | 23   |
| III. PLANNING THE COMBINED INCURSION AND EARLY CROSS-BORDER<br>OPERATIONS . . . . .         | 29   |
| <i>Significant Events</i> . . . . .                                                         | 29   |
| <i>RVN Appraisal of the Changed Situation in Cambodia</i> . . . . .                         | 32   |
| <i>Concept for the Combined Incursion</i> . . . . .                                         | 36   |
| <i>Planning</i> . . . . .                                                                   | 39   |
| <i>Cross-Border Operations Prior to 30 April 1970</i> . . . . .                             | 43   |
| IV. THE COMBINED INCURSION . . . . .                                                        | 51   |
| <i>TOAN THANG 42</i> . . . . .                                                              | 51   |
| <i>The Relief of Kompong Cham</i> . . . . .                                                 | 65   |
| <i>TOAN THANG 43, 44, 45 and 46</i> . . . . .                                               | 70   |
| <i>Clearing the Mekong and Repatriating Vietnamese</i> . . . . .                            | 83   |
| <i>CUU LONG II and III</i> . . . . .                                                        | 88   |
| <i>BINH TAY I, II and III</i> . . . . .                                                     | 90   |
| <i>The Evacuation of Khmer Forces from Ratanakiri Province</i> . . . . .                    | 100  |
| V. COOPERATION AND COORDINATION FROM 30 APRIL TO 30 JUNE 1970 . . . . .                     | 111  |
| <i>U.S.-RVN Cooperation and Coordination</i> . . . . .                                      | 111  |
| <i>RVN-Khmer Cooperation and Coordination</i> . . . . .                                     | 114  |
| <i>The Tripartite Meetings</i> . . . . .                                                    | 122  |
| <i>RVN-U.S. Plans for Cambodia After 30 June 1970</i> . . . . .                             | 123  |

|                                                                                           |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Chapter</i>                                                                            | <i>Page</i> |
| VI. CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS AFTER 30 JUNE 1970 . . . . .                                  | 127         |
| <i>Toan Thang 42, Phase VI</i> . . . . .                                                  | 127         |
| <i>CUU LONG 44</i> . . . . .                                                              | 129         |
| <i>TOAN THANG 42/DAI BANG</i> . . . . .                                                   | 132         |
| VII. KHMER PARTICIPATION . . . . .                                                        | 134         |
| <i>Background</i> . . . . .                                                               | 134         |
| <i>Communist Use of Cambodian Territory</i> . . . . .                                     | 138         |
| <i>The Royal Khmer Armed Forces</i> . . . . .                                             | 143         |
| <i>Attacks by NVA/VC Forces Against Cambodia After 18 March 1970</i> . . . . .            | 151         |
| <i>Khmer Cooperation with the RVN and U.S. Prior to the Cambodian Incursion</i> . . . . . | 154         |
| <i>The Status of the FANK on 1 May 1970</i> . . . . .                                     | 159         |
| <i>FANK Activities during the Incursion</i> . . . . .                                     | 162         |
| <i>FANK-RVNAF Cooperation after U.S. Withdrawal</i> . . . . .                             | 163         |
| <i>Critical Analysis and Conclusions</i> . . . . .                                        | 165         |
| VIII. OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .                                              | 169         |
| <i>General Results</i> . . . . .                                                          | 171         |
| <i>Lessons Learned</i> . . . . .                                                          | 175         |
| <i>Conclusions</i> . . . . .                                                              | 181         |
| <i>Appendix</i>                                                                           |             |
| A. Enemy Losses, Cambodian Incursion (As of 30 June 1970) . .                             | 193         |
| B. Friendly Casualties, Cambodian Incursion . . . . .                                     | 194         |
| C. Military Elements of the U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh 18 March to 30 June 1970 . . . . .    | 195         |
| <i>U.S. Defense Attache Office at the End of the Sihanouk Period</i> . . . . .            | 196         |
| <i>U.S. Defense Attache Office After 18 March 1970</i> . . . . .                          | 205         |
| <i>The Augmentation of the Defense Attache Office</i> . . . . .                           | 214         |
| <i>Initial Military Assistance and Lon Nol's First Formal Request</i> . . . . .           | 218         |
| <i>The Office of the Politico-Military Counselor (POL/MIL)</i> . . . . .                  | 223         |
| <i>Military Activities and Patterns of Coordination by End of the Incursion</i> . . . . . | 228         |
| <i>The Military Equipment Delivery TEAM -- CAMBODIA (MEDTC)</i> . . . . .                 | 231         |
| <i>United States Influence on FANK Decisions</i> . . . . .                                | 233         |
| <i>Critical Analysis</i> . . . . .                                                        | 235         |
| GLOSSARY . . . . .                                                                        | 244         |

|            |                                                                                                            |             |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
|            | <i>Table</i>                                                                                               |             |
| <i>No.</i> |                                                                                                            | <i>Page</i> |
| 1.         | Recapitulation of Results, ARVN II Corps and U.S. Field Force I Cross-Border Operations . . . . .          | 106         |
|            | <i>Charts</i>                                                                                              |             |
| 1.         | Organization of the U.S. Embassy, Phnom Penh in October 1969 . . . . .                                     | 197         |
| 2.         | Organization of the U.S. Embassy, Phnom Penh in July 1970 . . . . .                                        | 229         |
|            | <i>Maps</i>                                                                                                |             |
| 1.         | Major RVN, U.S. and FWMAF Ground Units in early 1970 . . . . .                                             | 5           |
| 2.         | NVA Main Infiltration Routes . . . . .                                                                     | 19          |
| 3.         | The Enemy Base Area System on 1 April 1970 . . . . .                                                       | 24          |
| 4.         | Additional Infiltration Routes to Support the Base Area System . . . . .                                   | 25          |
| 5.         | Informal Designations for Areas of Operations . . . . .                                                    | 28          |
| 6.         | Cambodia and RVN Border Region . . . . .                                                                   | 31          |
| 7.         | RVNAF Tactical Area of Interest (Zone) for Operations in Cambodia . . . . .                                | 37          |
| 8.         | RVNAF III Corps and U.S. II Field Force Zones of Operations . . . . .                                      | 41          |
| 9.         | Area of Operations for TOAN THANG 41 . . . . .                                                             | 45          |
| 10.        | Major Areas of Operation for the Combined Incursion . . . . .                                              | 52          |
| 11.        | Operation TOAN THANG 42 . . . . .                                                                          | 53          |
| 12.        | Areas of Operation for TOAN THANG 42, Phases I and II . . . . .                                            | 55          |
| 13.        | Area of Operation for TOAN THANG 42, Phase III . . . . .                                                   | 61          |
| 14.        | Area of Operation for TOAN THANG 42, Phase IV . . . . .                                                    | 63          |
| 15.        | The Relief of Kompong Cham (TOAN THANG 42, Phase V) . . . . .                                              | 66          |
| 16.        | General Locations for Operations TOAN THANG 43, 44, 45 and 46 . . . . .                                    | 71          |
| 17.        | Area of Operation for TOAN THANG 43 . . . . .                                                              | 72          |
| 18.        | General Locations for CUU LONG 1, 2, 3 and IV Corps - Participation in TOAN THANG 42 . . . . .             | 84          |
| 19.        | General Locations of BINH TAY 1, 2, 3 and 4 . . . . .                                                      | 91          |
| 20.        | Objective Area for Operation BINH TAY 1 . . . . .                                                          | 92          |
| 21.        | The Evacuation of Khmer Forces from Ratanakiri Province (BINH TAY 4) . . . . .                             | 102         |
| 22.        | Area of Operations for TOAN THANG 42, Phase VI . . . . .                                                   | 128         |
| 23.        | Area of Operations for CUU LONG 44 . . . . .                                                               | 130         |
| 24.        | Area of Operations for TOAN THANG 42/DAI BANG . . . . .                                                    | 133         |
| 25.        | Cambodian Government Information on Locations of Principal NVA/VC Base Areas in Cambodia in 1969 . . . . . | 139         |
| 26.        | The Military Regions of the Khmer Armed Forces in 1971 . . . . .                                           | 146         |
| 27.        | Locations of Principal FANK Ground Units Prior to 18 March 1970 . . . . .                                  | 148         |
| 28.        | FANK-Held Areas in Cambodia in August 1970 . . . . .                                                       | 155         |
| 29.        | Locations of Principal FANK infantry Units on 1 May 1970 . . . . .                                         | 161         |

Illustrations

Page

120-mm Mortar Captured during BINH TAY III . . . . . 107

Crates of Ammunition Captured during BINH TAY III . . . . . 108

82-mm Mortar Ammunition Captured during BINH TAY III . . . . . 109

Enemy Small Arms Captured during BINH TAY III . . . . . 110

Medical Supplies Captured in Cambodia during the Incursion . . . . . 184

Communication Equipment Captured in Cambodia during the Incursion . . . . . 185

Communist Flame Throwers and Rocket Launchers Captured in Cambodia during the Incursion . . . . . 186

Antiaircraft Gun Captured in Cambodia during the Incursion . . . . . 187

Soviet 57-mm Antitank Gun Captured in Cambodia during the Incursion . . . . . 188

Soviet-made Amphibious Tank Captured in Cambodia during the Incursion . . . . . 189

General Cao Van Vien, Chairman of the Joint General Staff, is briefed on developments in Cambodia by LTG Do Cao Tri, III Corps Commander; Col. Le Cong Hieu, III Corps, G3; and Col. Tran Quang Khoi, Task Force 381 Commander . . . . . 190

ARVN Tanks from Task Force 225 Operate in the Parrot's Beak Region during the Incursion . . . . . 191

Lt. General Do Cao Tri, III Corps Commander, Questions a Captured Enemy Soldier in Cambodia during the Incursion . . . . . 192

Visit to Mondolkiri Province. Military Attaches and Reporters view bomb crater behind barracks at Camp Le Rolland. November 22, 1969 . . . . . 237

Visit to Mondolkiri Province. Military Attaches and Reporters take time out from the Twentieth Century to observe the employment of a more traditional weapons system. November 22, 1969 . . . . . 238

Visit to Koh Kong Province. Thai fishing boat converted to Cambodian Navy use. February 1970 . . . . . 239

Visit to Chi Phu, Svay Rieng Province. Military Attaches and press assemble at Svay Rieng military headquarters en route to Chi Phu . . . . . 240

Chargé L.M. Rives, U.S. Embassy, Phnom Penh, boards the U.S. freighter "COLUMBIA EAGLE" at Sihanoukville (Kompong Som) on the day of its release by Cambodian authorities. Early April 1970 . . . . . 241

Demonstration to show support for new Cambodian Government after the ouster of Sihanouk, Phnom Penh, April 1970 . . . . . 242

Lt. Colonel Riemensnider, USAF, Acting Defense Attache and Air Attache, U.S. Embassy, Phnom Penh and Lt. Colonel Norodom Vatvani, Khmer Air Force . . . . . 243

CHAPTER I

Introduction

*The Friendly Situation Prior to the Incursion*

The situation throughout South Vietnam in the early months of 1970 was one of continuing improvement, dating back to the introduction of United States combat troops into the war during 1965. This was in marked contrast to the dismally bleak prospects of the Republic of Vietnam in late 1964 and early 1965 when few believed that the new nation could escape Communist conquest.

To counter the RVN and U.S. battlefield successes, North Vietnam switched strategy in 1967, and conceived a bold strike at the cities in order to liberate the countryside. Executed during the 1968 Tet holidays, this offensive strike at the cities of South Vietnam had unexpected consequences for both sides. To our enemy, it was a tragic military defeat. Not only had his General Offensive - General Uprising failed but he also lost significant amounts of weapons and many human lives. In addition, his infrastructure suffered extensive damage. On the RVN side, the population felt greatly stimulated by the enemy's defeat; morale and self-assurance grew. The GVN took advantage of this opportunity to call reservists to active duty and decreed partial mobilization. Popular response to military duty was enthusiastic. The American people, however, reacted adversely to the Vietnam war, apparently under the influence of press, radio and TV reports. It was perhaps this animosity toward the war that influenced President Johnson to order the cessation of U.S. bombing above the 19th parallel on 3 March 1968. At the same time, he announced his decision not to seek a second term in the November 1968 presidential elections. Subsequently, during April 1968, the United States and North Vietnam agreed to negotiate for peace.

In South Vietnam, the RVNAF continued clearing the enemy from all populous areas. At the same time, the Joint General Staff (JGS), RVNAF, requested the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) for an increase in the RVNAF force structure and new equipment. An initial 820,000 force structure plan was approved by the United States, along with projects to equip the RVNAF with new weapons such as the M-16 rifle, M-60 machine gun and LAW rocket. Additional equipment, such as M-41 tanks, AN/PRC-25 radio sets and 105-mm howitzers, was also made available, partly to replace war-weary items and partly to equip newly-activated units.

In early 1969, formal peace talks began in Paris, with the participation of the U.S., the RVN, North Vietnam and the NLF. These talks failed to bring about any concrete results because Communist negotiators used the conference table primarily as a forum for propaganda. They persistently demanded complete U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam, removal of the constitutional government of the RVN and self-determination by the South Vietnamese people as to their own political regime.

At the Midway Conference of 8 June 1969, therefore, a joint communique issued by the U.S. and the RVN presidents emphasized both countries' agreement to the principle of "self-determination without interference." In addition, President Nixon announced the first increment of U.S. withdrawal involving 25,000 troops and the U.S. determination to emphasize the expansion, improvement and modernization of the RVNAF.

Vietnamization, which consisted primarily of modernizing and improving the RVNAF, was, in fact, initiated in 1968, with a succession of modified force structure plans.<sup>1</sup> The so-called "Midway Package," which was approved by the U.S. Department of Defense as a result of the Midway Conference, raised the total RVNAF force structure to 953,673 for FY-1970 and 992,837 for FY-1971. These plans were aimed at

<sup>1</sup>For a more complete description of Vietnamization see Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire by Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh, in this series.

developing the RVNAF into a modern and balanced military force, capable of supporting itself in combat after the withdrawal of U.S. troops. The plans included, therefore, increases in strength for the ARVN, VNAF and VNN and all service support and logistic elements. To provide better support for the pacification program, the Regional and Popular Forces (RF/PF) were also expanded and modernized. By late 1969, these territorial forces were being issued the same modern basic infantry weapons as the regular ARVN units.

Exploiting further the RVNAF success during the 1968 general offensives, the GVN initiated a three-month accelerated pacification program for the last quarter of 1968 and a similar program for 1969. As a result, by the end of 1969, population control had risen to 92% as compared to 67.2% for the period prior to the 1968 Tet offensive. By contrast, confusion reigned among enemy ranks after their defeat. During 1969, a total of 47,000 enemy personnel rallied to the GVN, compared to 23,000 during 1968. Aided by improved security across the country, the GVN resettled or returned to their home villages in excess of 1.5 million people displaced by the war. Most significantly, the GVN-initiated People's Self-Defense program received wide acceptance. Approximately 2.5 million people volunteered to join the program, pushed by their eagerness to protect their own communities. They were equipped with over 400,000 assorted individual weapons.

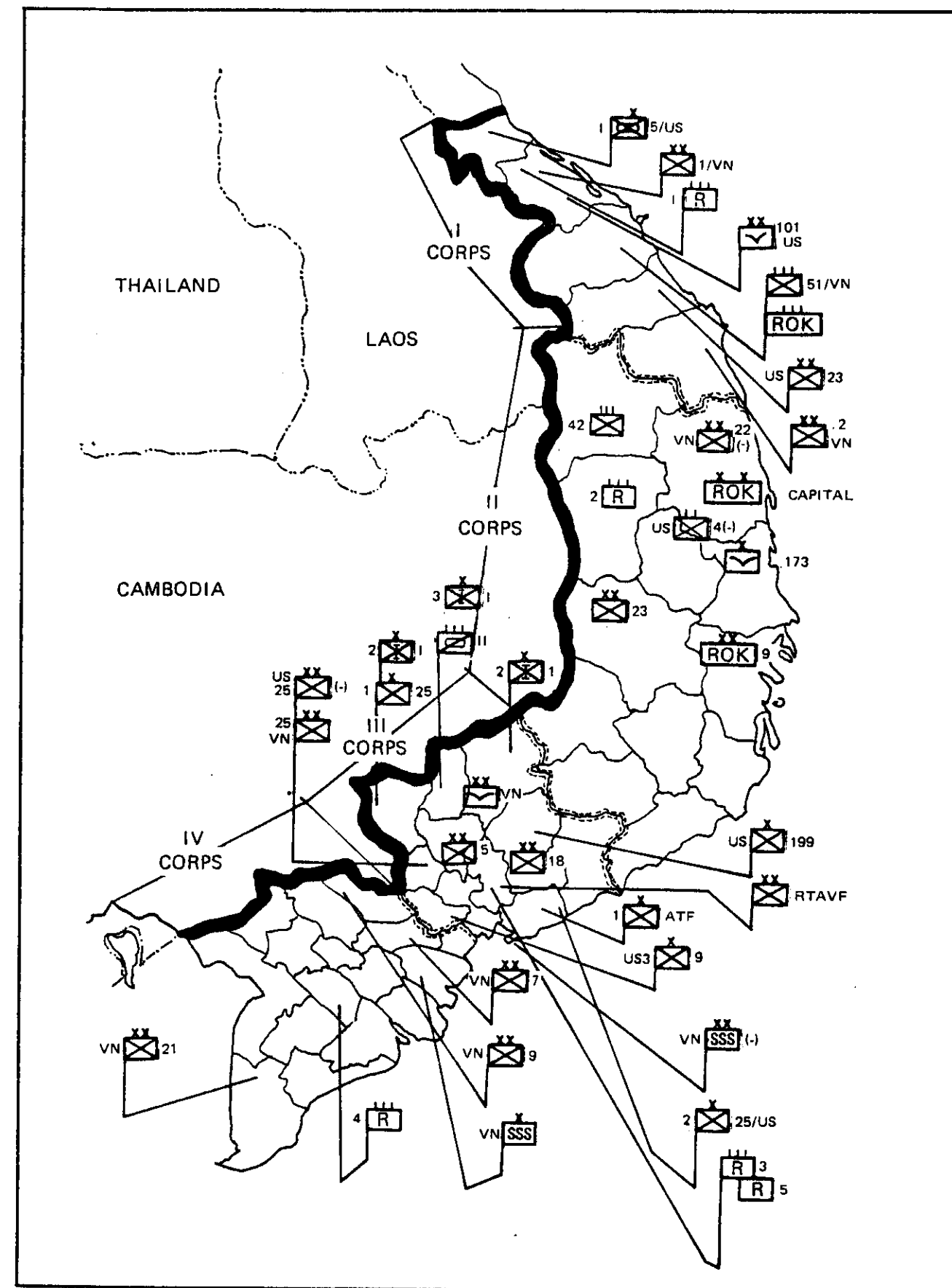
As the situation continued to improve, and in keeping with the new U.S. policy of turning over combat responsibilities to the RVNAF, U.S. troops gradually withdrew. During the short seven months that followed the Nixon announcement, a total of 115,000 U.S. troops had returned home. A few key areas of operation vacated by U.S. forces were taken over by ARVN units. The 22d ARVN Infantry Division and the 24th Special Tactical Zone replaced the U.S. 4th Infantry Division north of Pleiku and in Kontum Province. The 5th ARVN Infantry Division took over the areas of Dau Tieng and the "Iron Triangle" in Binh Duong Province from the U.S. 1st Infantry Division. At Dong Tam, in Dinh

Tuong Province, the U.S. 9th Infantry Division turned over its responsibility to the 7th ARVN Infantry Division. Finally, prior to the initiation of the Cambodian Incursion, the U.S. announced four additional increments totalling 150,000 troops would be redeployed before the end of April 1971. By the start of 1970 the situation had improved to the point where the RVNAF and U.S. Forces could increase their efforts on destroying enemy bases inside South Vietnam and pushing ahead the pacification and development program. (Map 1) Major RVNAF units conducted operations in coordination and cooperation with U.S. units in order to learn and exchange experience on tactics and techniques employed in large-scale combat operations.

In Military Region 1, the 1st ARVN Division, the U.S. 101st Airborne Division and the 1st Mechanized Brigade of the U.S. 5th Infantry Division operated in the DMZ area and west of Hue to destroy enemy regional forces; the units also supported pacification efforts in Hue and Quang Tri Provinces. South of the Hai Van Pass, the 2nd ARVN Division, the 51st Separate Regiment, the 23rd U.S. Infantry Division, and the 28th ROK Marine Brigade supported pacification efforts in Quang Tin and Quang Ngai Provinces, especially the area southwest of Da Nang.

In the Central Highlands, the U.S. 4th Infantry Division (-) cooperated with the ARVN 22d Infantry Division in launching attacks against enemy Base Area 226, northwest of Binh Dinh Province. A significant action was the clearing operation, by the ARVN 42d Regiment, around the Dak Sang CIDG Camp. This camp, with a garrison of one CIDG Battalion, was surrounded by the enemy 28th and 66th Regiments, reinforced by the 40th Artillery Regiment. During more than a month of operations, and supported by extensive U.S. air (B-52 and tactical) more than 1,000 casualties, were inflicted on the enemy. Also in the Military Region 2 area during early 1970, U.S. Field Force I initiated "Pair-Off" operations with the objective of improving the combat efficiency of the territorial forces. In these operations, a specific RF or PF unit would pair off to work with a specific U.S. or Republic of Korea unit.

**Map 1 - Major RVN, U.S. and FWMAF Ground Units in Early 1970**



In Military Region 3, during the Dong Tien campaign, several major U.S. and ARVN units operated together. The ARVN Airborne Division, for example, deployed alongside the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division in War Zone C north of Tay Ninh Province and in War Zone D north of Binh Duong Province. The ARVN 25th Infantry Division operated in conjunction with the U.S. 25th Infantry Division in the Ho Bo - Boi Loi area south of Tay Ninh Province. The ARVN 5th Infantry Division conducted combined operations with the U.S. 199th Infantry Brigade in the Long Khanh - Binh Tuy area. In the Rang Rang area, north of War Zone D, Special Forces elements discovered an important weapons cache. Approximately 1,000 assorted weapons were seized, and in excess of 200 tons of ammunition and supplies were destroyed.

In Military Region 4, the ARVN 7th Division operated along Highway 4 and in the My Tho area. The 9th ARVN Division assumed the responsibilities of the U.S. 9th Division in IV Corps and operated along the border in Kien Tuong and Kien Phong Provinces to prevent infiltration from Cambodia. In the U Minh area, the 21st ARVN Division heavily damaged the enemy 95A Regiment.

The operations cited above indicate that in early 1970, the RVNAF and U.S. forces clearly held the initiative throughout South Vietnam. This was especially true in the GVN Military Region 2, 3 and 4 areas where major enemy units had been driven back to the Cambodia border area.

#### *The Enemy Situation Prior to the Incursion*

The war in South Vietnam was waged by North Vietnam under the disguise of national liberation. Hanoi created the instrument for it in late 1960 by establishing the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. This disguise was aimed at justifying the war before world opinion. North Vietnam claimed that this was an uprising of South Vietnam's people against the RVN regime, not an aggression from the north. But it was North Vietnam that in fact directed the war effort and supplied the manpower, material and financial resources for this effort through its local executive office, the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN).

During the first few years of the insurgency in South Vietnam, the Viet Minh cadres and troops who had regrouped to North Vietnam in 1954 gradually reinfiltrated into the south to renew activities. These "regroupees" were organized into companies, then battalions, and eventually regiments in early 1965.

Enemy policies and strategy for the conduct of military activities in South Vietnam evolved from guerrilla warfare to general offensives, conducted during 1968 and early 1969. Because of the failure of the General Offensive - General Uprising, the Hanoi High Command was forced to change its strategy to one of protracted warfare, rather than seeking an immediate military victory. There were several causes for this change in his conduct of the war.

Beginning in 1965, when U.S. and FWMAF arrived to participate in the war, Communist forces had constantly suffered setbacks in their campaigns. In particular, the 1968 General Offensive - General Uprising had failed to produce the decisive great leap forward that our enemy had expected. The enemy increasingly lost his control over the population as a result of the GVN pacification achievements and clear-and-hold operational efforts made by U.S. and FWMA forces.

To redress his deteriorating posture, the enemy was forced to revise his military strategy. Resolution No. 9, issued by COSVN in July 1969, confirmed that North Vietnam had renounced its ambition for a quick total military victory and advocated instead a policy of winning "partial victories" during the period of U.S. troop withdrawal. At the same time, Hanoi was also pushing for the establishment of a coalition government in South Vietnam. As a result, our enemy placed greater emphasis on political activities. He endeavored to expand his "binh van" or proselyting actions among RVNAF troops and to develop hamlet and village revolutionary committee. In the area of military activities, the enemy adopted a more flexible strategy, concentrating his efforts on wearing down our forces by maximum use of sapper actions and shellings.

COSVN Resolution No. 9 also confirmed the enemy's continued policies of combining military initiatives with diplomatic offensive efforts, expediting the buildup of military and political forces, and

developing a strong, total, and sustained strategic offensive posture in all three strategic areas, namely: the cities; the countryside; and the mountains. His objectives were to: (1) defeat the pacification program and the clear-and-hold strategy; (2) defeat the RVN and U.S. plan to end the war in a position of strength, and to de-Americanize it; (3) continue attacks until the U.S. was forced to withdraw its troops completely, and until the RVNAF disintegrated. The enemy's ultimate goal thus amounted to no less than a decisive victory which, in his view, was predicated on two basic requirements: the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops and a superiority of forces, both political and military, over the RVN.

To implement these policies and strategic objectives, North Vietnam devised several plans of action aimed at the following:

1. Communist forces were to attack vigorously and deal U.S. units severe blows, causing them heavy losses and serious difficulties. This would prevent U.S. forces from carrying out their strategic mission of clear-and-hold, deny them the chance of gradually de-escalating the war from a position of strength, shatter their determination to fight, and finally force the U.S. to completely withdraw its troops.

2. Communist forces were to attack the RVNAF vigorously, destroy, neutralize or cause their major units to disintegrate, and to isolate them from their source of replacements so that they would be unable to accomplish their mission in the clear-and-hold strategy and take over combat responsibilities from U.S. forces. These attacks were to continue until the RVNAF finally collapsed.

3. Our enemy was to endeavor to build up his military and political forces, to make them increasingly larger and stronger and to regain his control over rural areas, important strategic grounds in mountainous areas and strategic communication lines, particularly those areas adjacent to cities and partly inside the cities themselves. Our enemy was also to expand people's organizations, instigate uprising in cities, increase food production to meet combat units' requirements, and continue to dismantle or weaken all levels of the GVN, particularly our pacification and development program, in order to complete the

establishment and consolidation of "People's Revolutionary" government at all levels, especially in villages and hamlets.

Early in 1970, as an incursion was being contemplated, Communist forces continued to consist of three components: combat, command and support, and guerrilla-infrastructure. Combat forces were made up of infantry, sapper, and reconnaissance units and supporting elements such as artillery, engineer, transportation, medical, and signal. There were three categories of combat forces: regular NVA units, southern main force, and local force units. Regular units were composed of soldiers of North Vietnamese origin, trained and organized in North Vietnam, and introduced into South Vietnam. South Vietnamese Communist units initially consisted of Southern regroupees but because of severe losses they were increasingly replenished with North Vietnamese replacements. As a result, they were practically considered as regular NVA units. NVA forces operating in South Vietnam were organized into divisions, regiments, and battalions or separate companies. Local forces consisted of units organic to provinces or districts which operated in well-defined areas, usually the places where Communist troops were born and grew up. These forces were organized into battalions or regiments during the 1969-1970 period.

Command and support elements comprised those personnel assigned to COSVN headquarters and regional commands, command cadre at province and district levels, and personnel of specialized agencies under COSVN.

Guerrilla forces were combat elements, usually of squad or platoon size, directly controlled by village and hamlet revolutionary committees. The role of guerrilla units was to carry out subversive activities such as harassment, terrorism, assassination, kidnapping, tax collection, propaganda, or to protect local revolutionary committees. They also served frequently as guides or reconnaissance patrols for main or local force units.

By the end of 1969, the total military strength of Communist forces in South Vietnam was estimated at 243,000 to include 133,000 combat troops, 58,000 command and support personnel, and 52,000 guerrillas. In addition there were estimated to be 84,000 political cadres of the Viet

Cong Infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> These forces were organized into 8 division headquarters, 57 regiments, 271 combat battalions and 58 combat support battalions. Communist units operating in South Vietnam were equipped with weapons made in Russia, Red China and other Communist countries. These included the AK-47 assault rifle, the RPD automatic rifle, the RPG grenade launcher, 12.7-mm and 14.5-mm machine guns and the B-40 and B-41 light antitank rocket launchers. After the 1968 general offensive, Communist forces used extensively 107-mm and 122-mm rockets. In addition, their units were also equipped with 75-mm, 82-mm, and 107-mm recoilless rifles and Chinese-made 60-mm, 82-mm and 120-mm mortars. In particular, sapper units were equipped with the K-6 pistol with collapsible stock which could be used as a submachine gun. In 1969, Communist units began to receive such modern signal equipment as the Russian TA-57 telephone set and R-105 radio set and the Chinese B-600 radio set.

In general, the situation throughout South Vietnam during the first quarter of 1970 was marked by a significant decline in enemy initiated activity.

In northern Military Region 1, most engagements by friendly units were made with enemy local force elements. Intelligence indicated some redeployments of NVA units in this area. For example, the 66th Regiment, NVA 304th Division was reported moving into the Ba Long area, northwest of Thua Thien Province; the 812th Regiment, NVA 324B Division reinfiltreated into southwest Quang Tri Province and the 29th Regiment of this division was reported moving from lower Laos into western Thua Thien Province, probably as reinforcement for enemy efforts in this area.

In the Central Highlands of Military Region 2, after the unsuccessful attack against the Dak Sang border camp in Kontum Province, the NVA 28th Infantry and 40th Artillery Regiments withdrew toward the Tri-Border area for refitting, rest and recuperation. The 66th Regiment,

<sup>2</sup>RVNAF/U.S. Combined Campaign Plan AB 145, 1969.

NVA 2d Division of the B-3 Front was also reported falling back to south of Base Area 609 while the 24th Regiment remained inactive throughout the first quarter of 1970. In the coastal lowlands of Military Region 2, most enemy activities were aimed at disrupting pacification. During the month of January, the 22d Regiment, NVA 3d Division had moved from Quang Ngai into northern Binh Dinh Province.

In Military Region 3 and the areas around Saigon, enemy initiatives increased slightly as compared to the last quarter of 1969 but most of these activities consisted of sapper attacks and shellings against field command posts of friendly units operating north of Saigon. The enemy's elite unit in MR-3, the CT-9 Division, was reported moving from War Zone C in early April 1970 into a border area where its elements were deployed from the Dog's Head to the Angel's Wing area deep into Cambodian territory. Units of the CT-7 Division had redeployed farther east of war Zone C and to the north of Binh Long Province. It appeared that these units were avoiding contact with the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division and ARVN Airborne Division units operating in the Tay Ninh - Binh Long area; they were probably committed to the defense of border base areas. The NVA 5th Division, meanwhile, had withdrawn toward the Bo Duc and Bu Dop areas north of Binh Long Province. But one of its regiments, the 33d, was still reported in the Binh Tuy - Long Khanh areas. In the areas around Saigon, the enemy conducted two shellings against Saigon by 107-mm and 122-mm rockets during the first quarter of 1970, causing no damage to the city.

In the Mekong Delta enemy activities increased in March in the That Son (Seven Mountains) area of Chau Doc Province and in the U Minh Forests area of An Xuyen Province. A remarkable fact was the transformation of the 273d Regiment, NVA 9th Division, which formerly operated in MR-3, into the local D2 Regiment now operating in the U Minh area. This upsurge of enemy activity in the Mekong Delta resulted from military action by Cambodian troops in border areas after the political event in Phnom Penh on 18 March 1970. Faced with increased difficulties in these areas, the enemy was moving his supplies and materiel into the That Son area where rugged terrain afforded him good

concealment and protection. To provide security for these movements, the enemy had increased harassment activities to hold back friendly forces.

On top of these typical activities during the first quarter of 1970, enemy prisoners and ralliers disclosed that COSVN had been planning two offensive campaigns for 1970, in May and July respectively, with the objective of pressing the Paris peace talks toward an early settlement. However, the sudden change of government in Phnom Penh had forced our enemy to abandon these plans and turn his efforts toward Cambodia.

Beginning in April 1970, therefore, there was a flurry of enemy activity in Cambodia. This activity indicated that the enemy was hastily dispersing and concealing his supply storage points in the border base areas and displacing his most valuable materiel deeper inside Cambodia. At the same time, the enemy was endeavoring to control a corridor east of the Mekong River leading south in an apparent attempt to secure movements of supplies for his units in MR-3 and MR-4. Evidently, the closing of Sihanoukville by the new Khmer regime was beginning to have an adverse effect on the enemy supply system. Additionally, the enemy realized that the supplies already in Cambodia would be of even greater significance to his immediate combat plans.

The above events allowed our intelligence to predict the enemy's trend of activities during 1970 with reasonable accuracy. In all probability, enemy activities in South Vietnam would decline in Military Regions 3 and 4 and remain at approximately the same level in Military Region 2; most certainly, they would increase in the DMZ area.

#### *RVN-Cambodia Relations*

The Republic of Vietnam and Cambodia were neighbor countries who had had contacts with each other for a long time, despite a temporary break in diplomatic relations.

Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia was only a 40-minute flight from Saigon. Vietnamese of Khmer origin who lived in South Vietnam numbered about half a million, mostly concentrated in the Mekong Delta.

In Vinh Binh and Ba Xuyen Provinces, ethnic Khmer made up about 70% of the provincial population. Most of them were farmers; as citizens, they all received the same treatment as other Vietnamese from the GVN. Approximately 400,000 Vietnamese lived in Cambodia. In Phnom Penh, Vietnamese made up a large ethnic minority, second only to the Chinese but exceeding the Chams, the Thai, and the Laotians. In addition to Phnom Penh, most Vietnamese lived concentrated in the areas of Kampot, Svay Rieng, Kompong Chhnang, Kratie, Prey Veng, and Soeuk Dek where they made a living as professionals such as doctors and dentists, small businessmen, tailors, barbers, mechanics and handicraftmen. Many Vietnamese were civil servants in the Cambodian administration; they had gone there during the French colonial period when they were assigned to duties in the French administration and had chosen to stay. In the Tonle Sap area, several thousand Vietnamese earned a living as fishermen and farmers. In addition, there were about 5,000 Vietnamese working in large rubber plantations such as Chup, most of them of North Vietnamese origin.

During Sihanouk's regime, several conflicts occurred between Cambodia and the RVN. In 1954, a prominent Cambodian leader, Son Ngoc Thanh, took refuge in South Vietnam in protest against Sihanouk's policies. He organized an underground called the Khmer Serei (Free Khmer), composed of Khmer-origin Vietnamese who operated as guerrilla units along the RVN-Cambodia and Cambodia-Thai borders against Sihanouk. Sihanouk quickly denounced the RVN and U.S. for organizing and arming this rebellious force to subvert and overthrow his regime. To counter the Khmer Serei, Sihanouk organized his own party of Khmer-origin Vietnamese, called Khmer Kampuchea Krom (KKK). The KKK organization was particularly active in the provinces of Chau Doc and Kien Phong where many ethnic-Khmer had been living for several generations.

Under the Ngo Dinh Diem administration, Sihanouk manipulated the KKK organization into demanding the RVN return the provinces of Bac Lieu, Chuong Thien, Chau Doc, An Giang, An Xuyen, Ba Xuyen and Phong Dinh to Cambodia. In the eyes of the GVN, naturally, the KKK was just a rebellious group seeking to undermine South Vietnam's security at Sihanouk's

instigation. As a result of ARVN operations, the KKK later disintegrated; several of its members joined the U.S.-sponsored Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG). A few KKK survivors turned into bandits operating under a new name: the White Scarf Clan. During 1963-1964, they conducted frequent bus holdups and kidnappings for ransoms, mostly in Chau Doc and Kien Phong Provinces.

In 1960, after the abortive coup against President Diem, a few ARVN officers fled to Cambodia where they were given asylum. The Cambodian government not only ignored repeated requests by the GVN for their extradition but also failed to return the VNAF aircraft they had used for the flight.

The issue of national borders was another major cause of conflict between Cambodia and South Vietnam. Both countries seemed to ignore the delineation of national boundaries made by French authorities on French Indochina maps. In 1962, for example, Cambodian troops stealthily dug up border markers in Darlac Province and planted them deeper inside South Vietnam. In retaliation, Colonel Do Cao Tri, then the commander of the old 3d Military Region, ordered ARVN troops not only to restore these markers to their former positions but also rig them with mines to deter further violations. A few small islands west of Ha Tien that belonged to the Phu Quoc group, hence part of South Vietnamese territory, such as Hon Keo Ngua, Hon Kien and Hon Doi were invaded by Cambodian troops in 1962. Cambodia also demanded freedom of navigation on the Mekong River without having to pass through South Vietnamese customs control. The RVN national laws, however, did not permit such a preferred treatment. The issue of national boundaries and the regulations concerning Vietnamese living in Cambodia and Khmer living in South Vietnam were, therefore, constant sources of polemic and dispute between the two nations.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>A later dispute flared up in 1969 over continental-shelf rights when international oil companies signed contract agreements with the RVN for oil exploration in the Gulf of Siam, off the coast of South Vietnam.

In August 1963, Sihanouk severed diplomatic relations with South Vietnam. After Ngo Dinh Diem was overthrown in November 1963, Sihanouk proposed resumption of diplomatic relations with the RVN on three conditions: the RVN (1) respect Cambodia's territorial integrity and neutrality; (2) desist from supporting the Khmer Serei, and; (3) promise to protect the interests of ethnic-Khmer living in South Vietnam. Sihanouk also proposed the establishment of a neutralist alliance between Cambodia and the RVN. Accepting Sihanouk's proposals, the GVN sent a negotiating team headed by General Huynh Van Cao, then Director of Psywar and Civil Affairs, to Phnom Penh. General Cao's mission was to discuss outstanding issues of border conflict with the Cambodian government. Unfortunately, Cambodia unilaterally cancelled the on-going talks in March 1964 after a border incident in which VNAF aircraft bombed a Cambodian village by mistake during an operation north of Kien Tuong Province. Sihanouk's administration adamantly refused to resume negotiations despite the GVN's formal apology and promise to compensate for human and material losses.

In May 1964, the Cambodian government accused the RVN of invading its territory and filed a suit against the RVN with the United Nations General Assembly. This action deepened the conflict even more since Cambodia had elected to ignore the GVN's proposal to settle all border questions bilaterally. It had always been in the RVN's interests to solve the outstanding conflict with Cambodia in an amicable manner because if the conflict were solved, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong could no longer deny the existence of their illegal bases on Cambodian territory for attacks against South Vietnam.

The border conflict remained unsolved throughout the spring of 1964. In August 1964, Sihanouk openly declared he would sign border agreements with North Vietnam, the NLF and the Neo Lao Hak Sat. He also indicated he would negotiate with Red China for military assistance. This inimical attitude toward the RVN plunged the strained relations between the two countries into open and irreconcilable hostility.

Throughout all of the Sihanouk period, the Cambodian government frequently denounced the RVN for not recognizing its neutrality and

sovereignty and for mistreating ethnic-Khmer living in South Vietnam. The RVN reciprocated by denouncing the partial, pro-Communist neutrality of Cambodia. It also accused Cambodia of siding with Communist China and giving a hand to North Vietnam, allowing the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops to install logistic and rear service bases on Cambodian territory and from there to launch attacks against South Vietnam. But Sihanouk never admitted the presence of VC and NVA troops in Cambodia. He always claimed that hostile border activities were conducted either by armed bandits or contraband groups.

On top of these verbal assaults, Cambodia eventually resorted to hostile military action against the RVN. In March 1966, a U.S. Army Mohawk aircraft was seriously damaged by Cambodian anti-aircraft fire while on a routine reconnaissance flight along the northern boundary of Kien Tuong Province. The Mohawk had kept its course well within the RVN territory. Another hostile act occurred when the Cai Cai Special Forces Camp north of Kien Tuong Province received 12 rounds of British 25-pounder artillery from the other side of the border. Only Cambodian forces were equipped with this kind of artillery.

Relations between Cambodia and the RVN deteriorated even more when Sihanouk allowed the NLF to open a permanent office in Phnom Penh in June 1967. This office was upgraded to an embassy when the NLF transformed itself into the so-called Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam in September 1969. Cambodia was, indeed, the first country ever to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with a ghost government which was the antagonist of the GVN.

The ice between Cambodia and the RVN began to melt after Sihanouk was overthrown on 18 March 1970. The new Khmer regime adopted a harsh anti-Communist line, demanding that North Vietnam and the Viet Cong withdraw their troops from Cambodia. During March 1970, firefights pitted the Khmer forces against NVA and VC troops. In April 1970, the Khmer government appealed to the United Nations for action against increased infiltration of NVA and VC troops into Cambodia. By the beginning of April, NVA and VC troops had increased their activities in areas south of Phnom Penh, harassing the port of Kompong

Som (formerly Sihanoukville) and other provinces along the coast. In mid-April, the new Khmer government also appealed to free nations for assistance in protecting Cambodia's independence and territorial integrity. Then in late May 1970, diplomatic relations were resumed between the RVN and Cambodia.

The overthrow of Sihanouk came as a rare opportunity for the RVN and U.S. to dispose of their long concern about enemy activities on the other side of the border. In addition, the Khmer government continued to deny use of the Port of Sihanoukville to North Vietnam's supply ships.

## CHAPTER II

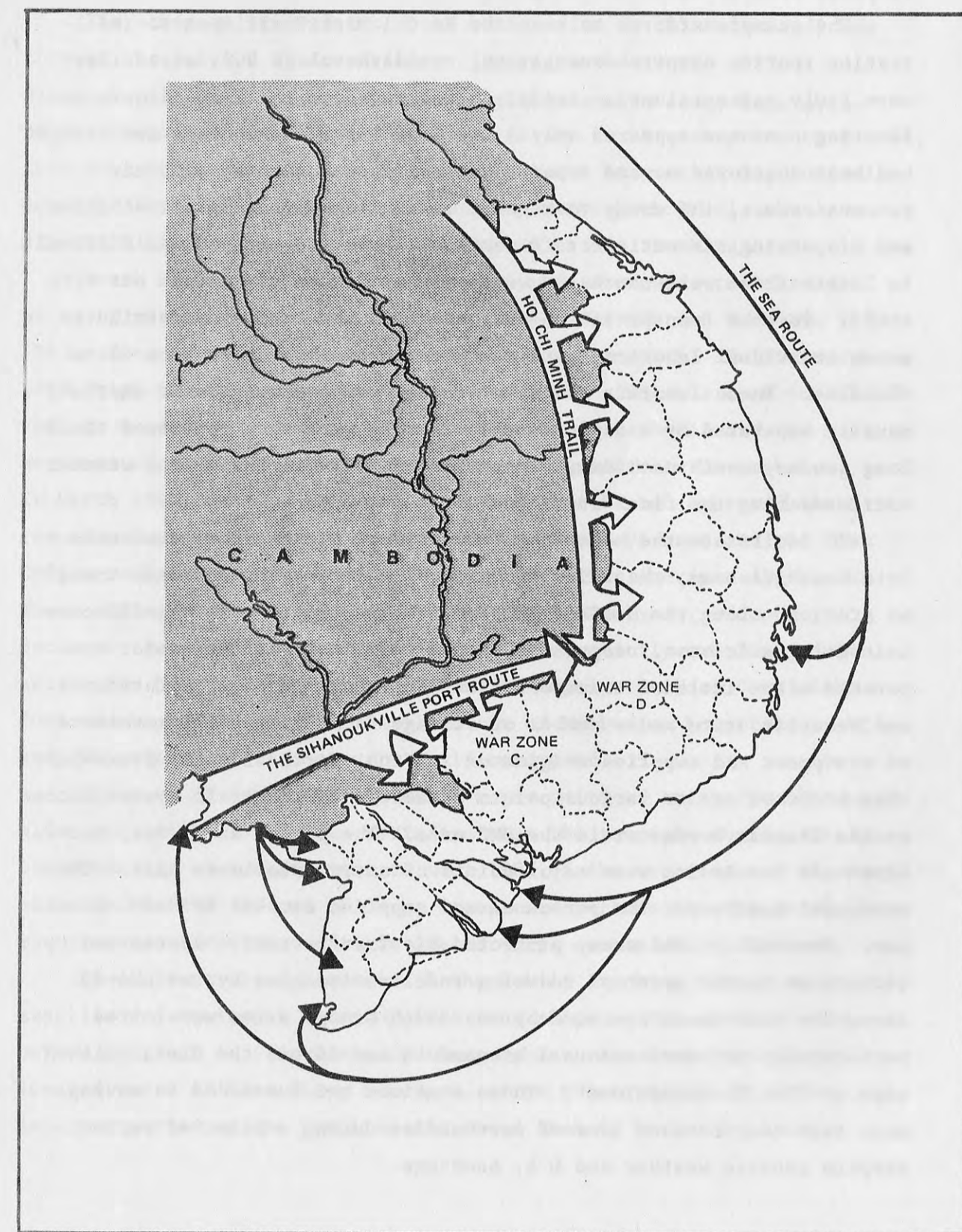
### The Enemy Use of Cambodian Territory and Organization for Logistic Support

To provide logistic support for enemy units operating in South Vietnam, North Vietnam established three major supply routes: (1) the Ho Chi Minh Trail; (2) the Sihanoukville Port Route; and (3) the Sea Infiltration Route. (Map 2) A system of bases was developed in conjunction with these routes where equipment and supplies were received, processed and stored prior to distribution to combat units inside South Vietnam.

#### *The Ho Chi Minh Trail*

The Ho Chi Minh Trail had existed in fact since the French-Viet Minh war. Then it was a system of jungle trails and mountain paths running along the Laos-Vietnam border, used by North Vietnam primarily to send mail and cadres to South Vietnam. It was trafficable only by bicycle, ox cart or elephant. In 1959, to expand its war of aggression in South Vietnam, North Vietnam activated the 559th Transportation Group, with a strength of approximately 50,000 troops and assisted by 100,000 laborers. This group was made up of several service branch units such as engineer, transportation, air defense, signal, and medical. Troops and laborers of the 559th Group widened existing trails, built new roads and connected them into an uninterrupted road system which ran from north of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into Laotian territory then continued south through the Tri-border area and terminated in the eastern part of Cambodia adjacent to South Vietnam. To protect the Ho Chi Minh Trail against USAF bombings, North Vietnam installed an

Map 2 - NVA Main Infiltration Routes



extensive air defense system equipped with all calibers of antiaircraft weapons, from 37-mm to 100-mm guns.

The enemy's efforts to keep the Ho Chi Minh Trail open to infiltration traffic despite devastating, round-the-clock U.S. airstrikes were truly extraordinary. Aerial photos revealed that new detours and floating pontoons appeared only a few days later where roads and bridges had been destroyed beyond repair. To avoid detection by U.S. air reconnaissance, the enemy took great care in camouflaging his vehicles and dispersing his antiaircraft weapons. From the air, it was difficult to locate these well-concealed weapons unless they fired upon our aircraft. For the transportation of foodstuff, the load was distributed among individual laborers, each carrying in his back pack from 40 to 60 kilos. These laborers moved in stages from one station to another, usually separated by a day's march. In this way, they continued their long journey south each day, regardless of the vagaries of the weather until reaching the final station.

To facilitate the movement of supplies, weapons, and personnel into South Vietnam, the 559th Group developed a series of "binh trams" or stations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Each station was a self-contained logistic base, responsible for a certain area. Its major components often included transportation, engineer, medical, maintenance and security units and a number of storage facilities. All movements of equipment and supplies originated in Vinh, North Vietnam, from where they branched out to various points of access to the trail system either on the Laotian border or in the DMZ area. The passes at Mu Gia, Ban Karai and Ban Raving were major points of entry into lower Laos. They were used mostly for the personnel and supplies enroute to South Vietnam. Eventually, our enemy perfected his transportation system and techniques to the point of reducing infiltration time by two thirds. Among the binh trams operated by the 559th Group, a few were cited periodically for meritorious achievements and earned the distinguished name of "Ten Thousand Tons". These stations had succeeded in moving more than ten thousand tons of merchandise during a selected period, despite adverse weather and U.S. bombings.

*The Sihanoukville Port Route*

The other major logistic route besides the Ho Chi Minh Trail was through the port of Sihanoukville. It originated in the port of Sihanoukville, and led across lower Cambodia toward enemy base areas on the Cambodia-South Vietnam border. As far as the enemy was concerned, this port route was the safest and most secure because it lay entirely on Cambodian soil. By contrast with the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the Sihanoukville Port Route was not subjected to U.S. bombing.

North Vietnam and the Viet Cong had made overtures to Sihanouk as early as the rupture of relations between the RVN and Cambodia in 1966 aimed at securing the use of Cambodian territory. In February 1968, high ranking Viet Cong and North Vietnam officials went to Phnom Penh to negotiate the establishment of bases in Cambodia and the movement of supplies and equipment through Cambodia to these bases. In March 1968, Sihanouk himself announced that he had approved these requests because, as he said, Cambodia and North Vietnam and the Viet Cong were facing the same enemy: the imperialist American aggressors. Then, during an inspection trip to Takeo the same year, he openly declared that Cambodian authorities would voluntarily overlook trade activities by the Cambodian population to supply the Viet Cong with food and he would even authorize the use of Cambodian hospitals by VC and NVA wounded until they were fully recovered.

The port of Sihanoukville was a major point of entry for NVA supplies and materiel. It was estimated that the tonnages moving through Sihanoukville were sufficient to meet 100% of the requirements of enemy units in the RVN III and IV Corps areas, and perhaps two-thirds of the requirements for enemy units in the II Corps area of South Vietnam.

By contract arrangements with the Hak Ly trucking firm, communist supplies and equipment were unloaded from ships at the pier and transported by truck to Svay Rieng and Kompong Rau, two Cambodian towns located north of Kien Tuong Province. From these points, VC troops and laborers picked up the supplies and moved them to border base areas.

Intelligence reports subsequently confirmed that some Cambodian military vehicles and troops even assisted the Viet Cong in transporting weapons, ammunition and foodstuff toward base areas along the border. Cambodian troops and officials at outposts and checkpoints along the border were bribed by smuggler groups into letting contraband merchandise, such as rice and medicine, pass into Viet Cong base areas. Business was brisk and lucrative because the Viet Cong usually paid higher prices. These smuggling activities were conducted mostly by Chinese entrepreneurs residing in Cambodia.

### *The Sea Route*

In addition to the land route down to Ho Chi Minh Trail and the combination sea-land route through the Sihanoukville Port, North Vietnam also endeavored to deliver supplies by trawlers or smaller craft to the beaches of South Vietnam. (Map 2) Beginning in 1965, North Vietnam had equipped its SL-2, SL-3, SL-4 and SL-5 trawlers with weapons and radio equipment for use in infiltration runs. These were cargo vessels measuring from 25 to 40 meters in length and capable of hauling from 100 to 400 tons of merchandise. They all belonged to an infiltration flotilla under the control of the 500th Sea Transportation Group. Usually, these infiltration trawlers were loaded at Hai Phong (North Vietnam) or at ports on Hai Nan Island (Red China). From these ports, they sailed into international waters in the South China Sea and continued their journey south until reaching their destination points on South Vietnam's coastline. From 1965 to 1969, a total of 17 such boats were detected and sunk by U.S. Naval or VNN ships, particularly at Vung Ro in Phu Yen Province, and at river mouths of the Mekong Delta such as Binh Dai in Kien Hoa Province, Long Toan in Vinh Binh Province, and Bo De in An Xuyen Province. By 1969, Operation "MARKET TIME", a combined VNN and U.S. 7th Fleet effort, had practically eliminated this method of infiltrating supplies and equipment from North to South Vietnam.

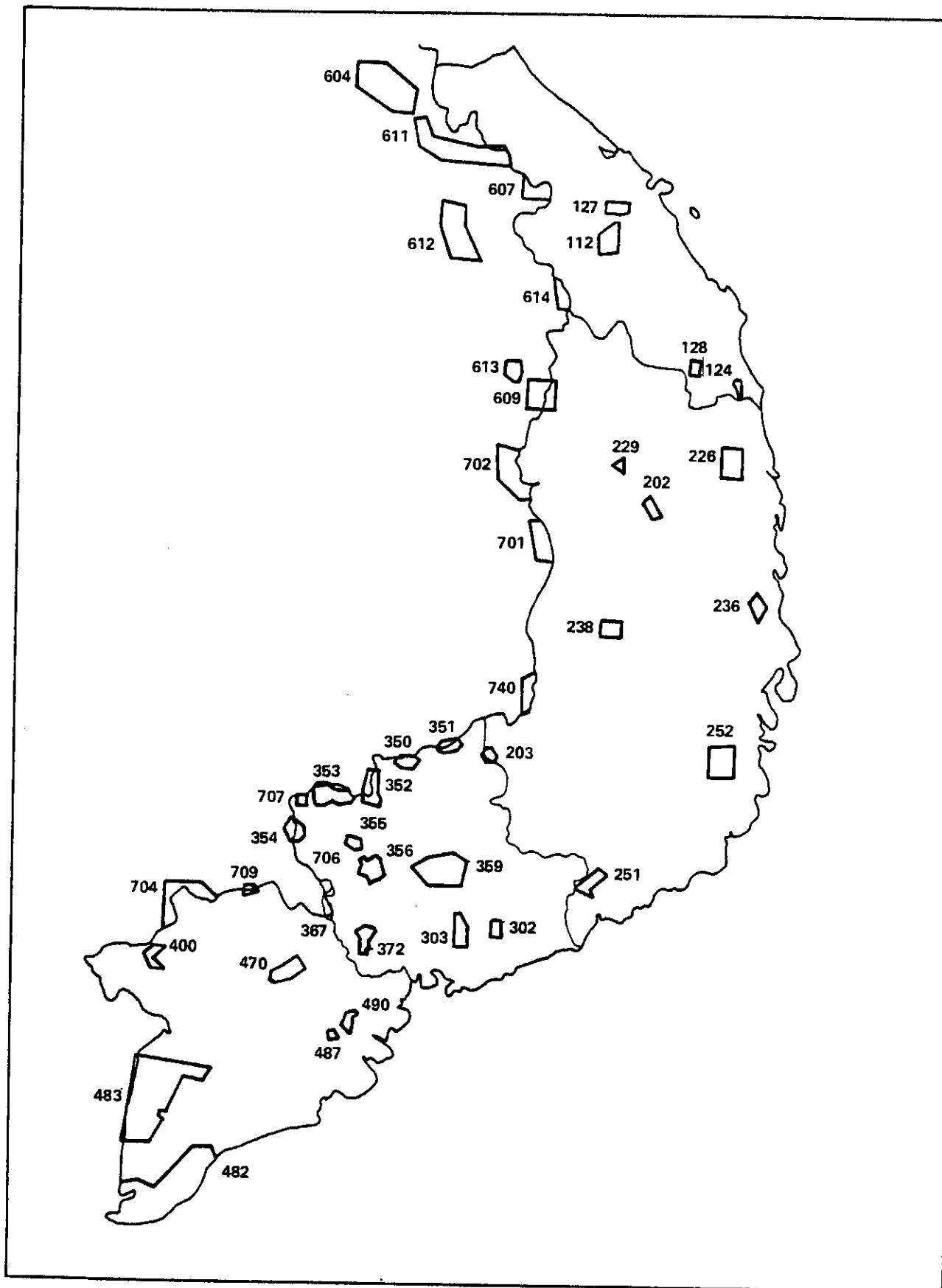
### *The Base Area System*

Because of the weakness of the Lao and the neutralist, pro-communist forces of Sihanouk, the VC/NVA were able to establish a series of some 20 bases along the borders between Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, which permitted movement of all types of supplies for VC/NVA units in South Vietnam. (Map 3 & 4) So extensive and complete was this system that the border areas, particularly in Cambodia, became almost as useful to the VC/NVA effort as North Vietnam itself.

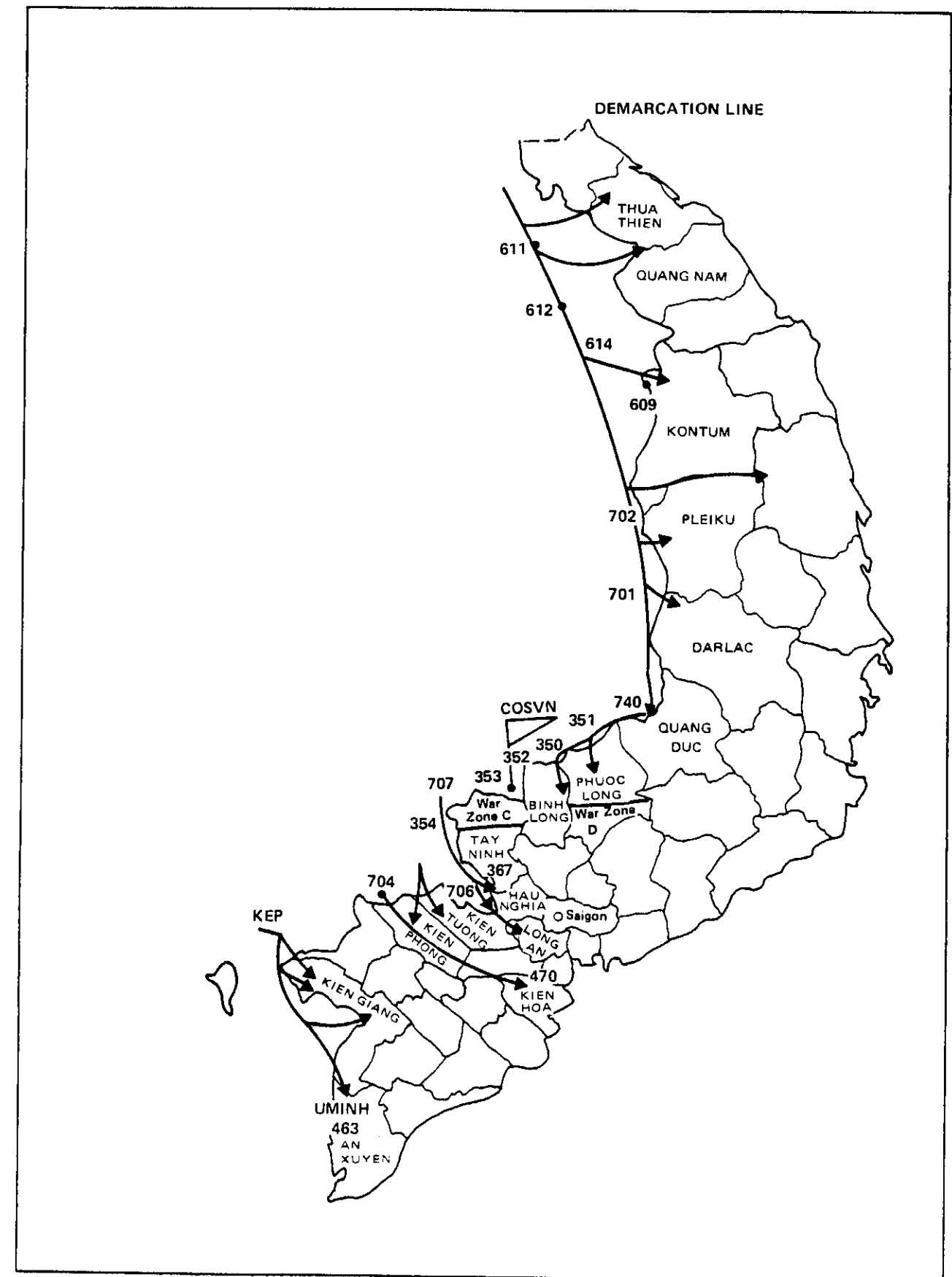
Base areas located to the west of I Corps were not in the objective area for the incursion. Therefore, discussion is limited to Base Area 609 and those located to the south of it, the majority of which were located on Cambodian territory.

Base Area 609 was the most important of all the base areas. Located in the triborder area, it provided permanent locations for the headquarters of the B-3 Front and the 2nd NVA Division, and it was from here that enemy operations in the three provinces of Kontum, Pleiku, and Darlac were controlled. It was also developed as a general depot, where everything coming from the north was placed in stock, to be distributed later to units to the south of the II Corps area. The redistribution mission was the responsibility of transport unit 250. Because of the difficulty of the terrain in which it was located, the U.S./RVNAF forces elected not to attempt a ground assault on Base Area 609; it was subjected to air strikes only during the incursion. To the south, Base Area 702 was a rear base for all units operating in Pleiku and Kontum provinces. Base Area 701 or Chu Pong, as it was more commonly known, supplied units operating in Darlac Province and the southern portions of Pleiku Province. Base Area 740, known also by the name Nam Lyr, supported units in Darlac Province, and also served as a transit point for supplies moving to Base Area 252. Of interest is the fact that base areas 701, 702, and 740 received supplies from Cambodia (Stung Treng, Lomphat, Kratie) as well.

Map 3 - The Enemy Base Area System on 1 April 1970



Map 4 - Additional Infiltration Routes to Support the Base Area System



The most important base area in the III Corps zone was Base Area 354. Located to the west of Tay Ninh, its two NVA rear service groups, the 82nd and the 100th, moved supplies into War Zone C and to Base Area 367. Known also as Duong Minh Chau, Base Area 354 was the objective of U.S. OPERATION JUNCTION CITY in 1967, and COSVN headquarters was located there in the early days of the war. To the north were base areas 707, 353, 350, 351, and 352, where were found supply depots, headquarters for units and military regions, radio stations, training camps, rest areas, hospitals, POW camps, and ammunition dumps. They were all well constructed, often underground, with communications trenches, and well camouflaged. After U.S. and allied forces began to operate in large numbers in RVN, much information was received to indicate that enemy units abandoned their practice of locating headquarters permanently in one area, and began to move around in order to avoid allied bombing.

Base Area 351, also known as Bo Duc, was a corridor for moving supplies into southern III Corps area and into War Zone D; it was operated by rear transportation unit 86. Base Area 352, located in Fish Hook, was the supply base for all enemy units in the provinces of Tay Ninh, Binh Long, and Binh Duong, and was operated by rear transportation unit 70. Base Area 367, also known as Mo Vet Ba Thu, supported all enemy units in Hau Nghia and Long An Provinces; it was also the entry point for all personnel replacements for enemy units in III and IV Corps areas. Of base areas 704 and 709, the more important was 709 because it ensured the supply of enemy units in the three provinces of Kien Tuong, Kien Hoa, and Dinh Tuong. Base Area 704 was also known as Giong Bau, and is remembered as the site of a large battle involving the ARVN Airborne Brigade in 1964. General Cao Van Vien, then a colonel, commanded the airborne brigade, and was wounded in the battle.

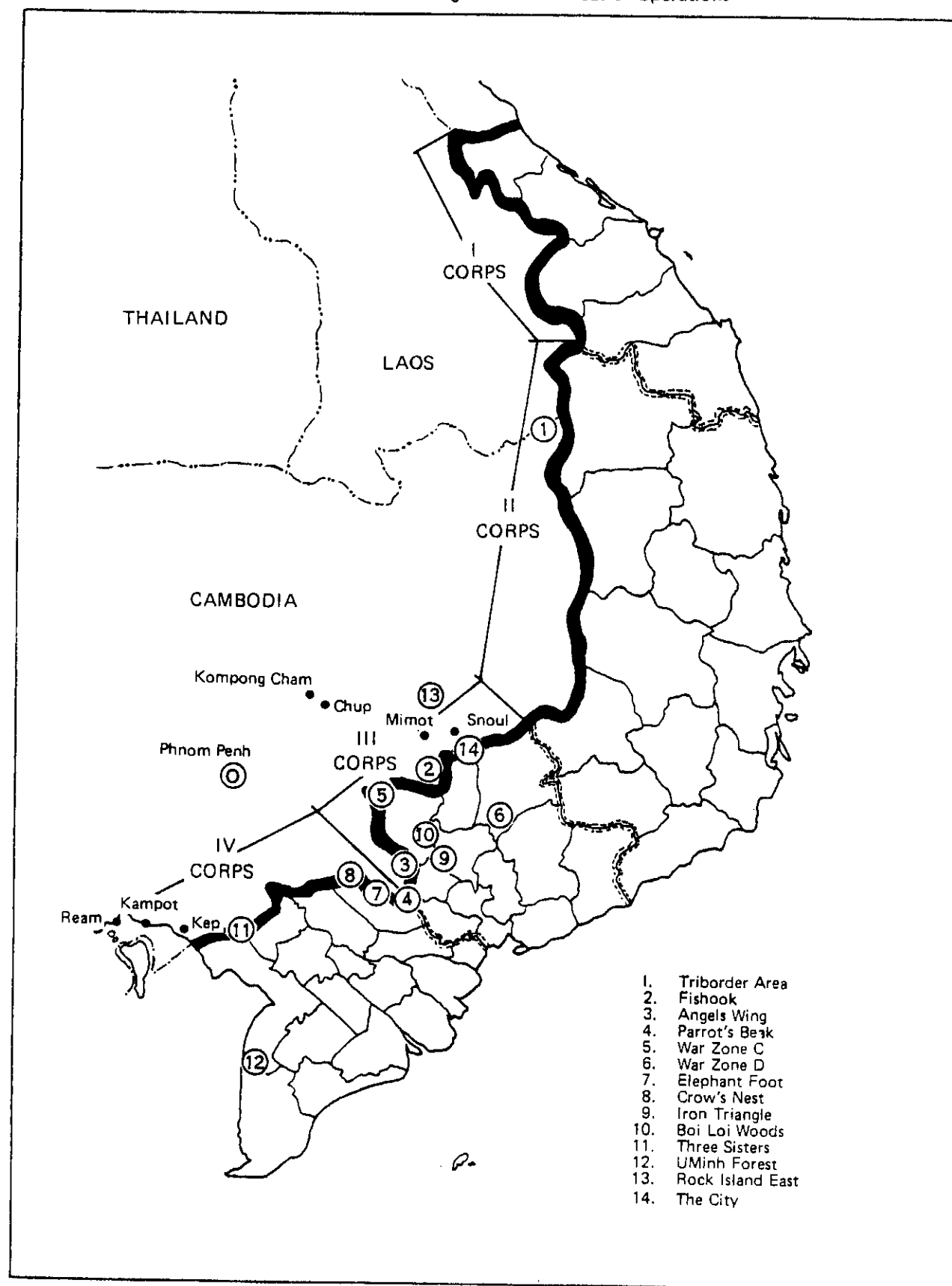
According to enemy prisoners and ralliers, most supplies intended for enemy units operating in the III Corps area came from Snoul and Mimot in Cambodia. Snoul received food from Kratie, Mimot, and from Kompong Cham. From these two transit points, laborers and VC troops moved supplies into South Vietnam through border base areas. The enemy made extensive use of motorized sampans and boats for the transportation of supplies out

of Base Area 354; they usually moved by night along the Vam Co River, and were heavily camouflaged to avoid detection. During OPERATION BIRMINGHAM in 1967, elements of the U.S. 1st Calvary Division discovered many such sampans and boats and a loading ramp in the Lo Go area west of Tay Ninh.

There were five infiltration routes leading into the Mekong Delta, four of them by land. The first land route originated in the Parrot's Beak area and led toward a point on the common boundary of MR-3 and MR-4, then into Go Cong Province. The second route started from the Crow's Nest area, north of Kien Tuong Province, went through the Elephant's Foot, and entered Base Area 470. The third route, originating in Cambodian territory, went through a point on the common boundary of Kien Phong and Kien Tuong Provinces, then led toward the eastern part of Base Area 470. The fourth route followed the Mekong River from Cambodia and ran into Kien Hoa Province. A small boat infiltration route ran from the ports of Ream and Kep through the Three Sister's area (the coastal area south of Ha Tien) into the northwestern part of the U Minh Forest. From Kep, this route might also go to the western part of Phu Quoc Island and to the northwestern area of the U Minh Forest. (Map 5)

In early 1970, enemy resources for his conduct of the war in the south had to come primarily from North Vietnam. The movement of these men and this materiel, in the volume required, was made possible by the existence of the infiltration routes and base area system in Cambodia and by the active cooperation of the government in Cambodia. It is particularly significant that all of the bases supporting enemy operations in the III and IV Corps areas received their supplies through the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville (Kompong Som), to where they were delivered by ships from North Vietnam. If Sihanouk had been truly neutral, such extensive enemy use of Cambodian territory would not have been possible, and the major combat initiated by the enemy in RVN during 1970 would have been very difficult, if not impossible.

Map 5 - Informal Designations for Areas of Operations



### CHAPTER III

#### Planning the Combined Incursion and Early Cross-Border Operations

From the Vietnamese point of view, the Cambodian incursion was a series of operations commencing shortly after the change in government in Cambodia on 18 March 1970, and continuing after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia on 30 June 1970.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Significant Events*

On 8 March 1970, several demonstrations took place in the Cambodian provinces along the border. The demonstrators demanded that North Vietnamese Army and auxiliary troops withdraw from Cambodia. Two days later, the same demonstrations resumed in earnest. In Phnom Penh, angry demonstrators marched to the North Vietnamese Embassy and smashed its windows with rocks.

Chief of State Sihanouk, meanwhile, was undergoing medical treatment and vacationing in France. The direction of governmental affairs was assumed by General Lon Nol and Deputy Prime Minister Sirik Matak.

<sup>1</sup>The term "combined incursion" is used to designate those operations which took place during the period when U.S. forces were also authorized to operate in Cambodia -- 30 April to 30 June 1970. This chapter, will discuss the JGS view of the changed situation in Cambodia, the development of a concept for the combined incursion, planning for the combined incursion, and those cross-border operations conducted by ARVN forces, operating alone in Cambodia prior to 30 April 1970. The RVNAF and U.S. operations conducted during the combined incursion are discussed in Chapter IV.

On 12 March 1970, General Lon Nol sent an official message to Hanoi asking for the withdrawal of NVA and auxiliary forces within 72 hours; the deadline was set for 15 March. On 16 March, other demonstrations took place with the same demand that NVA/VC forces immediately vacate Cambodian territory. On 18 March 1970, the Cambodian National Assembly passed a resolution stripping Prince Sihanouk of all governmental powers. General Lon Nol took over as prime minister and Prince Sirik Matak continued to serve as deputy prime minister.

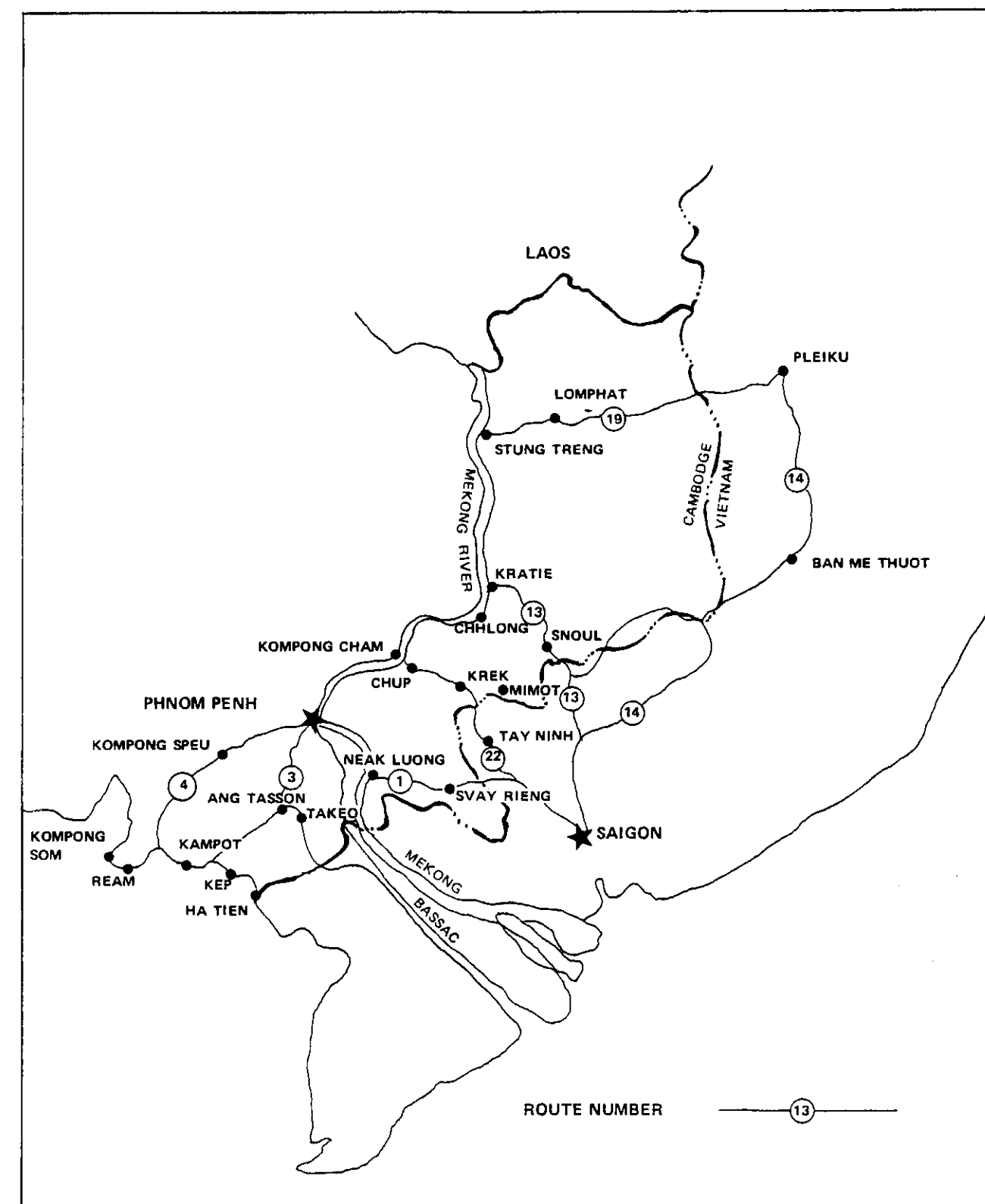
On 25 and 26 March, several demonstrations occurred in the provinces east of the Mekong River such as Svay Rieng and Kompong Cham, all crying support for the deposed Sihanouk. To disperse these mobs, the new Khmer government had to use its military forces. Reports suggested that North Vietnam was behind these demonstrations or even actively organized them. In any event, all staff members of the North Vietnamese embassy were found leaving Phnom Penh for Hanoi the next day by the aircraft of the International Control Commission (ICC).

Then, beginning in early April, NVA forces openly attacked Khmer outposts along the border and other towns east of the Mekong River. On 20 April, they overran Snoul, 16 km north of Binh Long Province. On 23 April, NVA troops attacked and seized Mimot after destroying an important bridge on Route 13 connecting Snoul with Kratie. On 24 April, they attacked the coastal city of Kep, north of Ha Tien, and on 26 April they opened fire on ships and boats sailing on the Mekong River. On the same day, they also took the town of Ang Tassom northwest of Takeo City and attacked Chhlong City northeast of Phnom Penh. (Map 6)

While NVA forces were conducting these attacks, Vietnamese residents in Cambodia were ordered by the new Khmer government to assemble into camps and denied freedom of movement. In Phnom Penh, a special curfew was imposed on Vietnamese residents from 6 pm to 6 am. The new Khmer government explained that these restrictive measures were necessary to prevent NVA troops from penetrating Vietnamese communities and carrying out terrorist actions against Khmer officials and troops.

On 15 April, the local population of Chau Doc and An Giang Provinces discovered many corpses floating on the Mekong River from the direction

Map 6 - Cambodia and RVN Border Region



of Phnom Penh upstream. According to their reports, nearly a thousand such bodies were sighted, all of them with arms tied in the back and exposing firearm wounds, some of them beheaded. Our people identified most of them as being Vietnamese. Next, the Saigon press, on 16 April, reported that approximately 100 Vietnamese residents were killed in the Takeo area. Later, the Khmer government explained that these were accidental deaths caused by firefights between Khmer and NVA troops. According to the foreign press, however, these Vietnamese residents were killed by Khmer troops while living in concentration camps.<sup>2</sup>

On 17 April, the U.S. discreetly sent over to Phnom Penh 6,000 AK-47 rifles which had been captured from the enemy by U.S. and RVN forces in South Vietnam. At the same time, approximately 3,000-4,000 CIDG troops of Khmer origin were transported to Phnom Penh by U.S. aircraft to assist the Khmer forces.

On 17 April 1970, the new Khmer regime officially announced to the world that North Vietnamese troops were invading Cambodia. By that time, three out of Cambodia's seventeen provinces had been occupied by NVA forces who were also exerting heavy pressure on five others. At the same time, Cambodia appealed to the United States and other nations of the Free World for help in resisting North Vietnam's aggression.

#### *RVN Appraisal of the Changed Situation in Cambodia*

The Cambodian appeal for help in resisting NVN aggression came indeed as a most welcomed opportunity for South Vietnam to redress an unjust situation in which it had been victimized by Sihanouk's prejudice. For years Sihanouk had closed his eyes to North Vietnam's freedom of action on Cambodian territory, allowing our enemy to establish supply

<sup>2</sup> TIME, "Night of Death at Takeo" and "New Horror in Indochina", 27 April 1970.

bases and sanctuaries in order to pursue his war of aggression against South Vietnam. Every Vietnamese serviceman wondered then why we did not have the right of pursuit into Cambodia. But all this had changed. We were delighted when the new Khmer government asserted a hard-line policy against our enemy, demanding that he withdraw his troops from Cambodia. We welcomed the new Khmer government's appeal for help to which we would certainly respond because RVN had found in the new Khmer regime not only a friendly neighbor but also a comrade-in-arms who shared our cause and fought against the same enemy. Surely, the United States could not ignore this plea. As the leader of the Free World, the U.S. could not let Cambodia or any other free country fall into Communist hands. American credibility was at stake.

But the question was how the U.S. and the RVN would respond to Cambodia's appeal and what common action could be taken so as to avoid Communist accusations that we were expanding the war. Surely we could not remain idle and let North Vietnam have freedom of action in Cambodia. If we did not act Cambodia would rapidly collapse. The Khmer Armed Forces (Forces Armees Nationales Khmeres — FANK) were only 32,000 strong, made up mostly of infantry battalions which were not only rudimentarily equipped but also lacking in combat experience. For the past 17 years, these forces fought no war. Now they were facing an invading army which was numerically stronger, better equipped and thoroughly combat-experienced. It was the same army that had been fighting American and South Vietnamese forces for the past several years.

What would happen if North Vietnam succeeded in overthrowing the Lon Nol regime and installed a pro-Communist government or reinstated Sihanouk in its place? If this were the case, I am sure that it would have brought very great difficulty for South Vietnam. Then the 600-mile infiltration corridor which ran the length of South Vietnam's western border from the Tri-Border area to the Gulf of Siam would allow North Vietnamese troops and weapons free access into South Vietnam and Cambodia would be an effective staging area for continued and unimpeded attacks against our country. During the previous few years, NVA units in South Vietnam were able to quickly replenish their materiel losses because they had control over border supply base areas and free access to the port of Sihanoukville.

One possibility of helping the new Khmer regime fight the mounting NVA threat without direct participation was all-out military and financial assistance. Cambodia obviously needed to develop and improve its armed forces; but such a process would take a long time. In the immediate future, it was obvious that no amount of military assistance could help Cambodia reverse the situation to its advantage in a short time. Time was now vital for Cambodia but Cambodia did not have time. In a certain respect, the Cambodian situation in April 1970 was not unlike what South Vietnam had gone through in late 1964 and early 1965. The only difference was that South Vietnam had then the benefit of continued and increased U.S. military assistance to develop its combat capabilities and the time required for this development process all made possible by the direct participation of U.S. forces in the war.

Direct participation by U.S. forces was another possibility. But it was a most unlikely possibility because the Nixon doctrine, which was predicated on the Vietnam experience, certainly precluded any plans to turn Cambodia into another Vietnam. Moreover, growing anti-war feelings in the United States were pressing for an early termination of the war and the return home of all U.S. troops. This situation was hardly conducive to U.S. military involvement in Cambodia and definitely unfavorable for the new Khmer regime, which suddenly found itself overwhelmed by the nascent war.

Of these two possibilities, neither could become a realistic policy option, capable of helping the Cambodians redress their deteriorating situation. Still, the U.S. could not remain on the RVN side of the border and watch the free occupation of Cambodia by NVA forces. The only logical recourse, therefore, would be a limited intervention. Since the fighting in Cambodia was just an extension of the Vietnam war, U.S. and RVN forces were entirely justified in pursuing the enemy beyond the border and by the same action, they could destroy NVA materiel, installations and bases on Cambodia territory. Thus, the enemy's potential for war-making in both countries would be reduced. But this action could not be conducted by RVN or U.S. forces alone, for obvious reasons. It should be a combined effort to take better

advantage of ARVN numerical strength and U.S. firepower. Besides, a combined action in which U.S. forces took the lead was entirely consistent with the current policy of developing the RVNAF combat capabilities.

In the final analysis, this was perhaps the only course of action capable of not only further improving security in South Vietnam and enhancing the chances of Vietnamization success, but also conceivably bringing about early peace. For the key to security had always been the enemy's safe havens along the border, and if Vietnamization were to succeed after U.S. forces had been withdrawn, then it was mandatory that this permanent threat from the border be removed once and for all. Furthermore, the destruction of these border bases might induce our enemy to negotiate seriously, hence improving the chances of early peace settlement. For the past year or so, peace negotiations in Paris had not made any significant progress. Our enemy continued to take advantage of this free forum for propaganda purposes. He persistently asked for a complete U.S. pull-out and the removal of the RVN regime. A successful action in Cambodia by our forces perhaps would improve the RVN negotiating position in Paris.

As far as the U.S. was concerned, failure to destroy enemy bases in Cambodia when the chance presented itself might even jeopardize the troop withdrawal schedule. An additional 150,000 troops had been scheduled for return home by April 1971. For this withdrawal to proceed smoothly, as scheduled, it was necessary to keep U.S. casualties and American emotions down. To achieve this, the best way would be to strike directly at the enemy's present and future capability for causing U.S. casualties. For by next year's April deadlines, what remained of U.S. forces in South Vietnam would be just enough to protect U.S. bases and installations. If the enemy's capability for warmaking was not destroyed now, then he would enjoy unlimited opportunities for causing U.S. casualties by next year, without fear of U.S. retaliation.

### Concept for the Combined Incursion

The destruction of enemy logistic installations in Cambodia had in fact been considered by U.S. and RVN military strategists for a long time. It was a military action that should have been carried out before 1970. Political dictates, however, had prevented such an action, as long as Sihanouk was still in power.

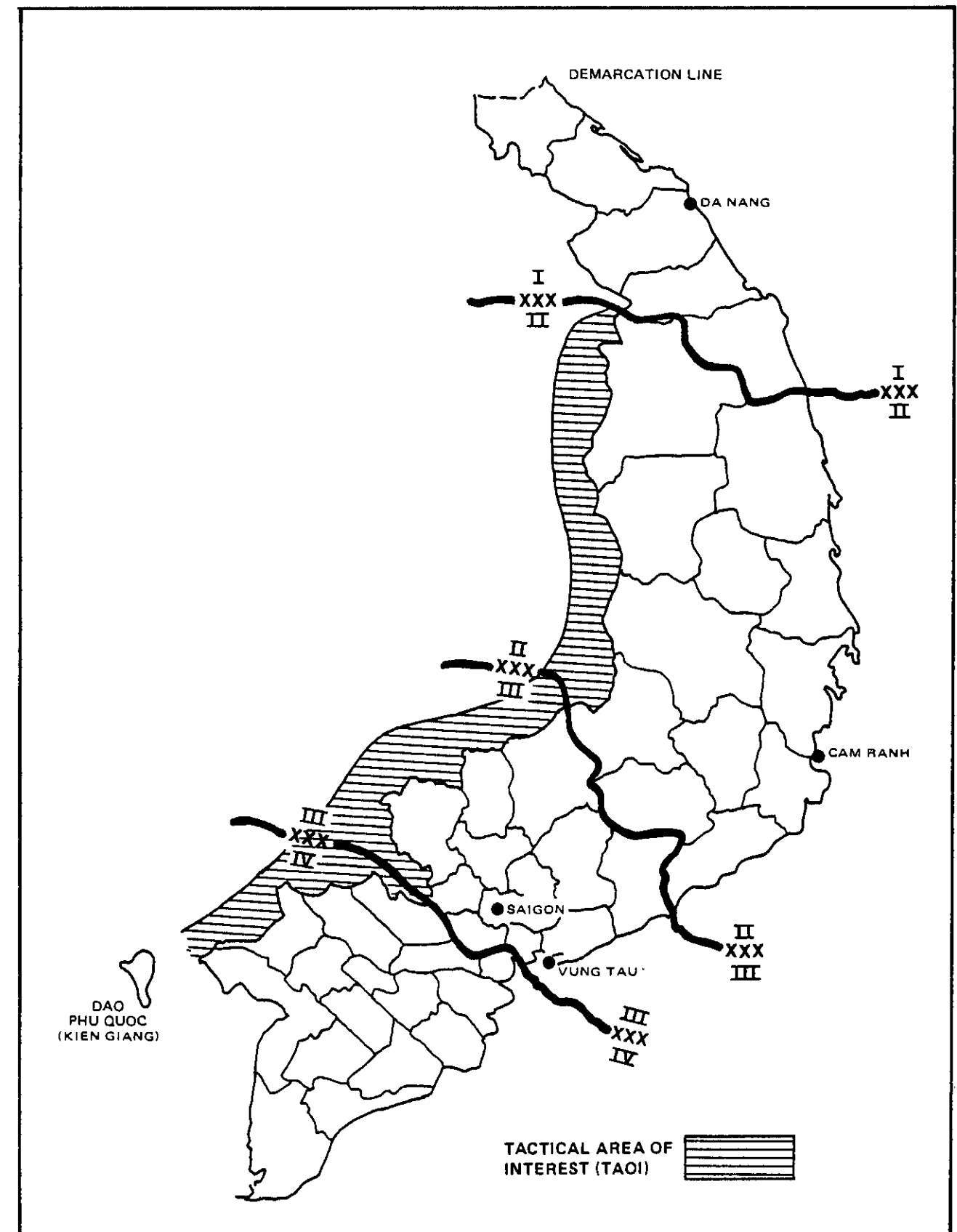
In mid-April 1970, General Abrams, COMUSMACV, brought up and discussed the subject of attacking NVA bases in Cambodia with General Cao Van Vien, Chief of the JGS, RVNAF. Immediately after, General Vien reported the subject of his discussions to President Nguyen Van Thieu. The Cambodian incursion remained a top secret, known only to the MACV commander and the Chief, JGS during their private discussions. No staff divisions of the JGS received any directive for planning. A few days after General Vien reported to President Thieu, the JGS received verbal orders from President Thieu that III Corps was to coordinate with the U.S. II Field Force for the conduct of operations against NVA base areas in Cambodia. These verbal orders were then transmitted to Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri, III Corps Commander, without modification by the JGS. Up to this point, the JGS had neither made formal plans nor issued any formal directives to Corps Commanders concerning operations in Cambodia.

In late April 1970, President Thieu sent a Secret directive to the JGS authorizing the RVNAF to conduct operations in Cambodia. This directive was then disseminated by the JGS to ARVN Corps Commanders. A copy of this directive was also sent by the JGS to MACV for information.

In general, the following rules were to be observed during cross-border operations:

1. The RVNAF area of operation was determined to be a zone, running the length of the RVN-Cambodia border with a depth varying from 40 to 60 km inside Cambodia. (Map 7) This zone was called the tactical area of interest (TAOI). Within this TAOI, ARVN Corps Commanders were authorized, to the extent of their capabilities, to conduct offensive operations against NVA bases, installations and storage points or in

Map 7 - RVNAF Tactical Area of Interest (Zone) for Operations in Cambodia



coordination and cooperation with U.S. forces which might be conducting operations in the zone. ARVN Corps Commanders were also authorized to cooperate and coordinate with Cambodian military region commanders for the conduct of unilateral or combined RVN-Khmer operations. For activities beyond their tactical areas of responsibility, ARVN Corps Commanders were required to obtain clearance from the JGS. For operations involving two or more ARVN Corps, the Corps Commanders were to coordinate with one another and submit operational plans to the JGS for approval.

2. During combat operations on Cambodian territory, the RVNAF were authorized to use Cambodian airfields, ports, as well as all waterway and land communication axes for the accomplishment of their mission.

3. The Vietnamese Navy (VNN) was to conduct patrols in the Gulf of Siam and be responsible for coastal defense from South Vietnam's national waters. In addition, it was to conduct activities on the Mekong River in coordination with and support of the Khmer Navy; the VNN was also to provide support for river convoys supplying Phnom Penh, from the border as far north as Neak Luong. Support responsibility from Neak Luong to Phnom Penh rested with the Khmer Navy.

4. The Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) was to provide support for combat operations as directed by the JGS, particularly air support for ARVN corps during cross-border operations.

5. The Commander of III Corps and MR-3 was responsible for providing support for road-clearing operations on route QL-1 from Go Dau Ha (RVN border) and for truck convoys as far as Neak Luong. From Neak Luong northward, the FANK would take over.

6. Weapons and ammunition captured from NVA forces by operational units would be turned over to the FANK as gifts to equip their own units. Those items of equipment that were too bulky to move back to South Vietnam could be destroyed on the spot but photo records should be kept.

7. While operating in Cambodia, RVNAF units were instructed to be always on guard. Special emphasis was placed on protecting the lives and properties of the Cambodian population, to include pagodas, temples,

holy places of worship and historical relics. The use of airstrikes was to be subjected to careful consideration. Aircraft were to be always guided onto targets by forward air controllers. In addition, the JGS would hold ARVN field commanders responsible for any act of mischief committed by troops under their control.

The above-mentioned regulations and zone of activity applied only to units of the RVNAF. The free use of this zone by the RVNAF had been agreed upon by the Cambodian government and the FANK General Staff during meetings between Vice President Ky and the new Khmer authorities when he visited Phnom Penh in April and early May 1970.

The zone of activity for U.S. forces extended no further than 30 km inside Cambodia. It is not known who decided this, but it could have reflected a desire on the part of President Nixon to be able to show that the U.S. incursion would be of a limited nature. Most of the enemy bases were located within this 30 km deep zone. After driving away enemy units from these bases and after destroying NVA supply storages in this zone, U.S. forces were to withdraw. 2400 hours, 30 June 1970 was the time by which U.S. forces were to be out of Cambodia.

On 30 June 1970, President Nixon declared that the only remaining American activity in Cambodia after July 1st would be air missions to interdict the movement of enemy troops and materiel where necessary to protect the lives and security of U.S. forces in South Vietnam.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Planning*

Two important enemy logistic areas that especially interested the JGS and MACV were the Fishhook and the area west of Saigon (Angel's Wing - Parrot's Beak). The Fishhook, about 50 miles from Saigon, was an area teeming with enemy bases and supply points, and COSVN, the enemy headquarters which directed war efforts in the lower half of RVN. The other area, located just west of Saigon and the provinces of

<sup>3</sup>Nixon, Richard M., "Report by the President on the Cambodian Operation" 30 June 1970. Quoted in U.S. News and World Report for July 13, 1970.

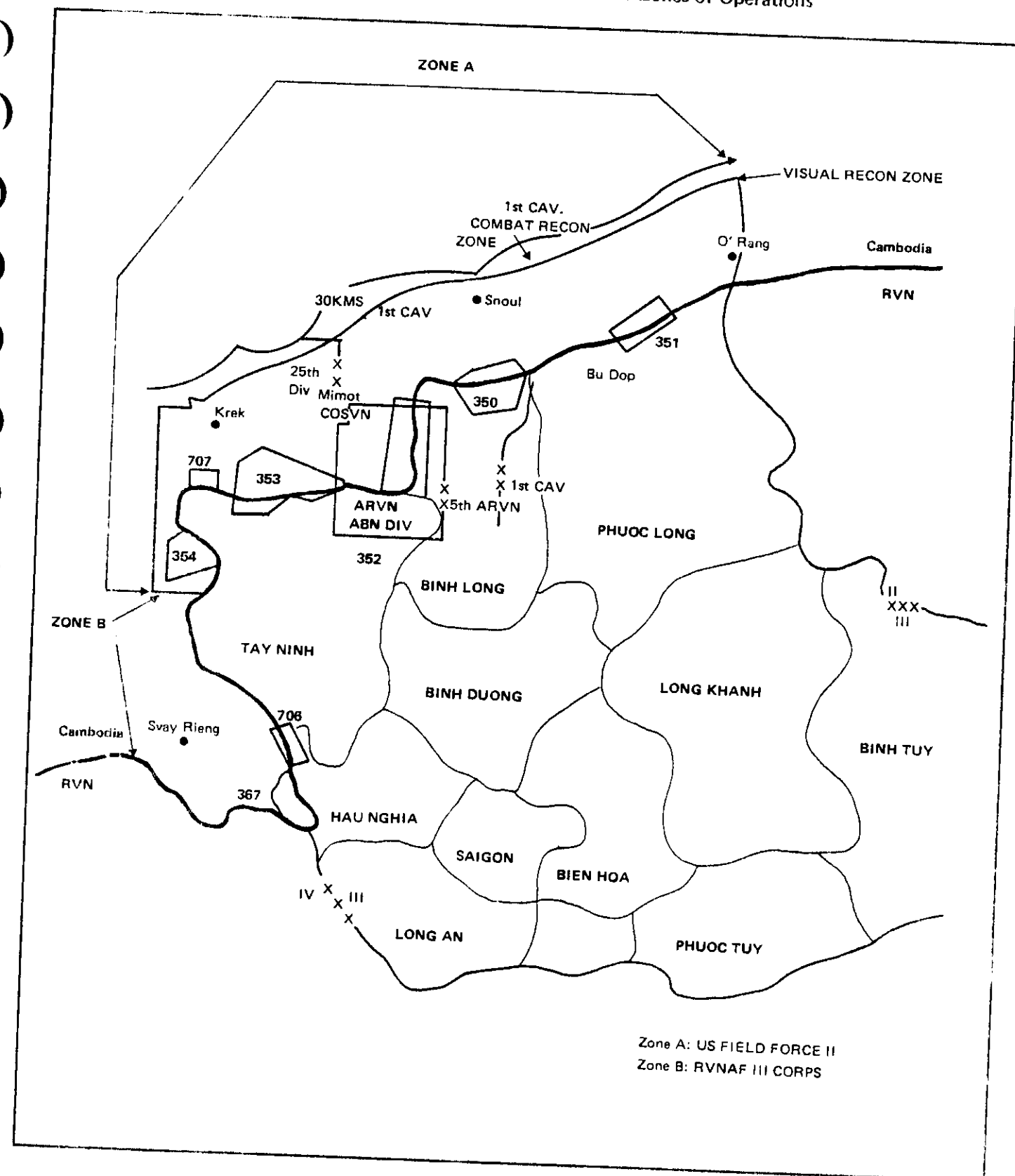
Long An and Hau Nghia, provided the enemy not only with bases and sanctuaries but also the shortest avenue of approach to Saigon. It was from this base area that the entire NVA 9th Division had penetrated into the western suburbs of Saigon during the 1968 Tet Offensive. Our intelligence indicated that several enemy troop cantonments, training centers and prisoner camps were located in this area.

It was the estimate of the JGS and MACV, supported by the commanders in the field, that to clean out these two areas would probably require an operational effort of from two to four weeks, depending on the situation. The two staffs also agreed that U.S. combat-experienced units such as the 1st Cavalry Division, the 25th Infantry Division, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment and similar ARVN units such as the Airborne Division, armor and Ranger units, and infantry divisions under the control of III Corps would be appropriate for the effort.

May and June were two months of particularly good weather which definitely favored all ground operations. Beyond June, however, the weather was apt to impede operations to a certain extent. Lt. General Do Cao Tri, III Corps Commander, and Lt. General Michael S. Davison, II Field Force Commander, after discussions finally agreed to select an area of operation which was defined by a 30 km-deep zone from the boundary of MR-4/MR-3 to the boundary of MR-3/MR-2, enveloping the areas of Parrot's Beak and Angel's Wing. It was also agreed that the RVNAF would operate in the western portion of the combined area of operation because the terrain of this area was relatively flat and uncovered, in close proximity to axes of communication, and was an area where RVNAF forces were already familiar. During a later stage, the RVNAF area of operation was expanded westward to the Mekong River and northward to Kompong Cham. The other portion of the area of operations which ran from the Dog's Face area eastward to the MR-3/MR-2 boundary was the responsibility of U.S. Field Force II. The terrain in this area was rugged, consisting mostly of mountains and jungle. (Map 8)

After the tactical areas of responsibility for RVNAF and U.S. forces had been determined by the two field commanders, both staffs began to study and prepare plans. Planning activities were kept strictly confidential and involved only a limited number of staff officers. On

Map 8 - RVNAF III Corps and U.S. Field Force II Zones of Operations



the RVNAF side, the planning staff was headed by Colonel Minh, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, III Corps and included the III Corps G-2, G-3, G-4, G-6, Engineer and Artillery Commanders. Other special staff officers were also consulted, as required, during the planning process. For those areas where U.S. assistance was needed, the III Corps planning staff consulted Brigadier General McAuliffe, Deputy Senior Adviser, III Corps.

Plans were completed on 27 April 1970. A special meeting was convened at III Corps Headquarters in Bien Hoa for the distribution of tasks. The main objective of this operation was Base Areas 706 and 367, which were located in the province of Svay Rieng in Cambodia and west of Hau Nghia Province. III Corps forces available for operations in Cambodia at that time consisted of 4 armored cavalry squadrons (M-41 + M-113), 2 ranger groups (of 3 battalions each), and the 46th Infantry Regiment, 25th Division. These units were organized into 3 infantry-armor task forces, designated Task Forces 325, 318 and 333.<sup>4</sup> Designated as TOAN THANG 42, the operation plan was to be implemented in two phases. In Phase 1, beginning on 29 April 1970, III Corps forces were to attack the Angel's Wing area. For Phase 2, whose date was yet to be determined, III Corps units were to be joined by IV Corps forces.

While III Corps was nearly completing its operation plans, the U.S. Field Force II received, on 24 April 1970, a directive from MACV directing it to conduct operations into the Fishhook area within 72 hours. Enemy base areas that the U.S. Field Force II had selected as objectives were base areas 350 and 351 north of Loc Ninh and Bu Dop, base areas 352 and 353 in the Fishhook area, Base Area 354, west of Trai Bi in Tay Ninh Province, and Base Area 707, north of Thien Ngon. All these base

<sup>4</sup> A Task Force was equivalent to a regiment and consisted of: 1 armored cavalry squadron and 2 or 3 infantry or ranger battalions. In terms of vehicles, an ARVN armored cavalry squadron was equivalent to a U.S. armor battalion.

areas were mountain and jungle redoubts, sheltering many important enemy logistic installations, in addition to COSVN headquarters.

Initially conceived plans envisaged only attacks against enemy base areas located in the immediate vicinity of northern MR-3 provinces. However, after the operation had been in progress for some time and especially after substantial results had been achieved, II Corps and the U.S. Field Force I received orders on 2 May 1970 to plan for attacks against enemy base areas located along MR-2's western border such as 609, 710, 702 and 740. These were important base areas which lay in the provinces of Kratie and Stung Treng, in the northeast of Cambodia and adjacent to the RVN border. It was from these base areas that NVA forces under the B-3 Front, such as the NT-2 Division and the 40th Artillery Regiment, had launched attacks against ARVN units and border camps of MR-2 during the past few years. The planning by II Corps and Field Force I terminated on 5 May 1970 and cross-border operations were actually initiated as of 6 May 1970.

As to IV Corps, it also received an order directly from President Thieu to make plans for the repatriation of Vietnamese residents in Cambodia, in addition to conducting operations in the Parrot's Beak, as directed by the JGS. Vietnamese residents in Phnom Penh had not only been ordered to live in camps under the control of Cambodian authorities; they were also brutally mistreated and lacked the basic amenities of daily living. In mid-April 1970, the GVN had sent a delegation to Phnom Penh to discuss with Cambodian authorities the repatriation of Vietnamese residents in Phnom Penh.

#### *Cross-Border Operations Prior to 30 April 1970*

After the change in government in Cambodia on 18 March and prior to 30 April 1970, the RVNAF conducted several limited raids into Cambodia. In addition, there were instances of RVNAF-Khmer military co-operation for purposes of fire support. Some of the activities were initiated by local Vietnamese commanders. However, the two most

significant of these raids were conducted in response to verbal orders given by President Thieu directly to Corps Commanders. These two raids were designated TOAN THANG 41 which was conducted by III Corps and CUU LONG/SD9/06 which was the responsibility of IV Corps.

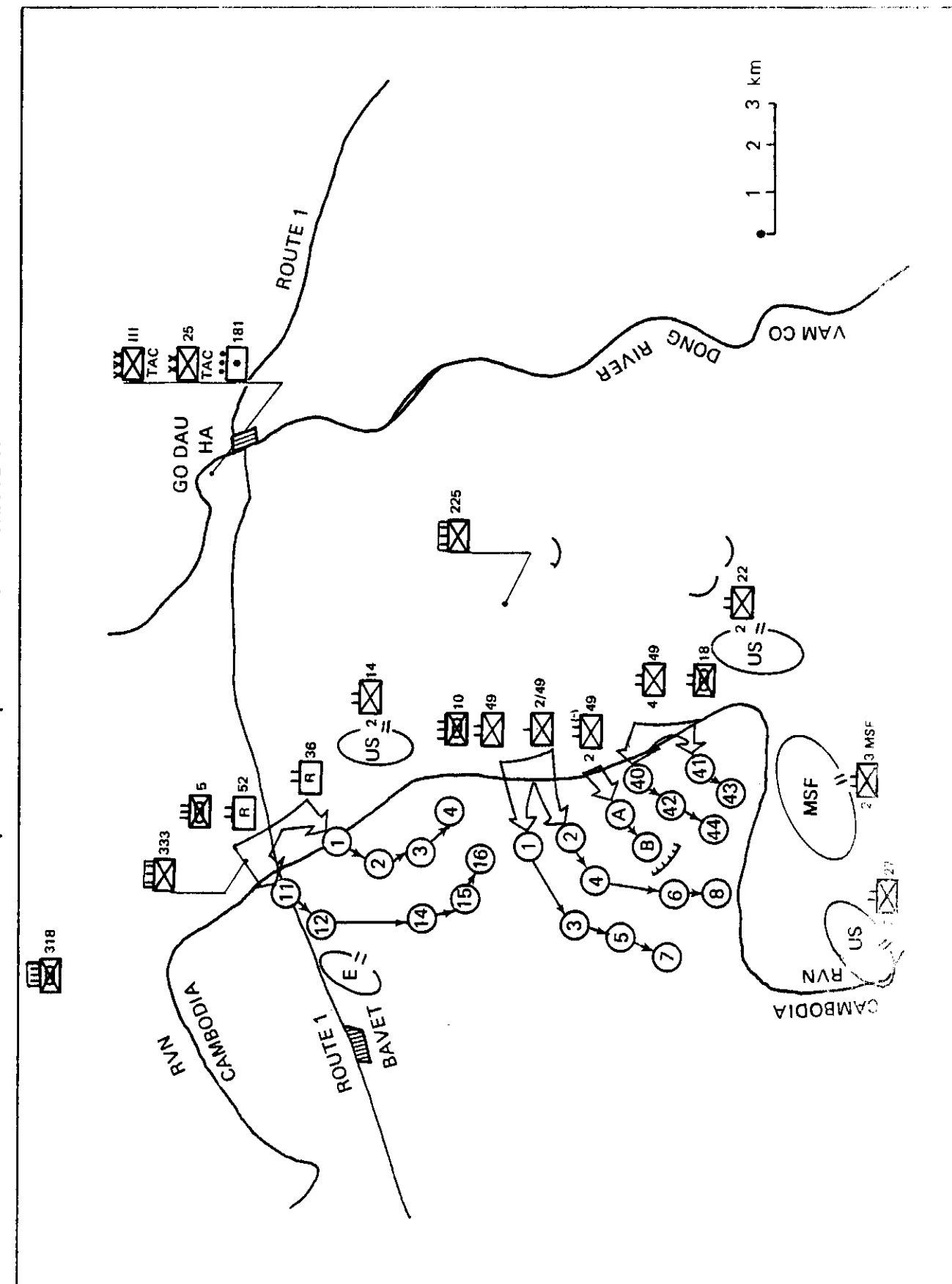
## TOAN THANG 41

On 14 April 1970, III Corps units launched a three-day operation into the Angel's Wing area of Svay Rieng Province, called TOAN THANG 41. (Map 9) This was a flat, sparsely populated area with few trafficable roads. According to intelligence reports, this area contained many enemy troop cantonments, dispensaries and units such as the 267th and 269th Battalions of Subregions 2 and 6, the N-10 Battalion and the 100th Rear Service Unit. Most enemy facilities and installations were concentrated in the areas of Bo Ba Tay, Bo Hut and Dia Gial.

After the new Khmer government demanded the withdrawal of NVA and VC forces from Cambodia, in the aftermath of Sihanouk's departure, the RVNAF saw an opportunity to strike into this base area. Once directives had been given to initiate operations against all enemy base areas in Cambodia, the RVNAF increased its collection efforts on enemy activities. According to the enemy's own estimates, the change of government in Cambodia would result in actions by the RVNAF against his bases. Therefore, the enemy had taken precautions to move some of his supplies deeper inside Cambodia. Most noticeable was the fact that the 271st Regiment, NVA 9th Division had moved to the Bo Ba Tay area. In addition, COSVN had also issued emergency orders to its subordinate units, telling them to be prepared to react strongly against any RVNAF or Khmer unit found near the base area.

Plans for the operation into the Angel's Wing area to destroy enemy bases were developed and implemented by III Corps Headquarters in coordination with the U.S. Field Force II and the Senior Adviser, III Corps. Because U.S. forces were not authorized to operate in Cambodia during that period, no U.S. adviser would be accompanying ARVN units when they crossed the border; but as soon as ARVN units returned to Vietnam they would be rejoined by their advisers. For this operation

**Map 9 - Area of Operations for TOAN THANG 41**



in particular, III Corps had requested U.S. forces to form a screen on the RVN side of the border in the area southwest of the Vam Co East River. This request was approved and the 3d Brigade, U.S. 25th Infantry Division was designated to perform this screening mission. To monitor and better coordinate activities, each battalion of the U.S. 3d Brigade was assigned an ARVN liaison team. In the meantime, ARVN battalion advisers were to remain at tactical command posts of ARVN task forces on the RVN side of the border in order to monitor and update ARVN activities on the other side. Their mission was to file timely and accurate reports on their units with III Corps Forward and Field Force II Forward at Go Dau Ha.

To deceive the enemy, III Corps ordered Task Force 225 to conduct operations on 13 April in an area southwest of Go Dau Ha inside South Vietnam. The main ARVN operational forces, Task Forces 333 and 318 were deployed to northwest and south of Hieu Thien district town, also on the RVN side of the border.

At 0800 hours on 14 April 1970, the two ARVN infantry-armor task forces (minus their advisers) crossed their lines of departure. As soon as the border was crossed, the forward element of Task Force 318 was contacted by an enemy squad while Task Force 225 was heavily engaged by an enemy unit of unknown size. Artillery and tactical air provided support for our forces during the fighting. After the enemy had broken contact, friendly forces found 182 enemy bodies and captured 30 prisoners. Our losses were 7 killed and 43 wounded. The ARVN task forces bivouaced for the night at the sites of the day's fighting.

The next morning at 0800 hours, both ARVN task forces moved on while Task Force 318, kept in reserve, advanced along Route No. 1 to provide support for outposts along the border. During the day, both task forces made significant contacts with the enemy. In particular, Task Force 225 engaged the enemy heavily at a point 8 km west of the border. In this area, our 36th Ranger Battalion discovered a 200-bed hospital complex and two large caches of rice, totalling 139 tons. The 5th Armored Cavalry Squadron and the 52d Ranger Battalion found a cache containing 60 tons of rice and 3 tons of military clothing. All

the rice and military clothing were transported back to South Vietnam during the afternoon and the next day. During the night, ARVN forces remained in the area south of Route No. 1 and approximately 8 km west of the RVN border. Results for the day were 175 enemy killed and 5 captured. Our forces suffered 1 killed and 19 wounded.

On 16 April 1970, Task Force 318 was given responsibility for the movement of captured rice toward South Vietnam. Meanwhile, Task Force 333 patrolled its area of operation and Task Force 225 extended its activities southwestward. By 1600 hours, TF 225 had completed the search of its assigned objectives and began withdrawing from Cambodia. The 2/49 and 4/49 Battalions took the lead, followed by the 10th Armored Cavalry Squadron and the 3/40 Battalion, all moving back inside South Vietnam prior to darkness. However, Task Forces 318 and 333 remained on the other side of the border during the night and only withdrew the next morning. Both units reached the border at 1210 hours on 17 April 1970.

During three days of operation in the Angel's Wing area, friendly forces had inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. In total, 415 enemy had been killed or captured; over 100 assorted weapons and 200 tons of rice had been seized. Losses on the friendly side were insignificant; only 8 were killed, 67 wounded and 1 A-1H shot down.

This was, relatively speaking, the largest-scale operation conducted to date by ARVN forces against NVA base areas in Cambodia. It was a successful operation; but our success was not as great as expected. One reason for this was that the enemy had deliberately avoided engagement. Perhaps the enemy had known in advance about our plans. Several days prior to initiating the operation, III Corps authorities had flown back and forth into Cambodia to gather information from and coordinate activities with Khmer agencies and units in the area of operation. Also, ARVN reconnaissance parties had preceded the actual incursion into the area of operation by two days for the establishment of river-crossing facilities and supply bases. It was also possible that the short duration of the operation did not permit careful search of all objective areas.

In support of the operation, VNAF tactical aircraft, to include A-1H's and A-37's, flew a total of 194 missions. No U.S. aircraft were involved. Although the operation was conducted without the actual participation of U.S. forces or U.S. advisers, the U.S. Field Force II and advisers had contributed much to its success, first by assisting in developing combat plans and then by providing support for the transportation of M4T6 pontoons required for river-crossing, a capability that III Corps engineers did not have. These river-crossing facilities enabled ARVN task forces to advance as quickly as planned.

Exploiting enemy documents captured by ARVN forces during the operation, our intelligence learned that the area of operation had been the sanctuary for the following enemy units and organizations:

- 1st and 2d Battalion, 271st Regiment, NVA 9th Division
- Local force unit of the Trang Bang District
- Training and Communication Platoon, 2d Sub-Military Region
- Training Platoon, Duc Hue District
- Military Hospital, 2d Sub-MR and COSVN
- Medical Unit, 2d Sub-MR
- Depot and Receiving Platoon, 6th Sub-MR
- N-10 Sapper Unit, 6th Sub-MR

Among enemy prisoners, there were eight squad and platoon leaders belonging to the 2d Battalion 271st Regiment, NVA 9th Division and three others from the 1st Battalion, same regiment. One among them was an ARVN reserve officer trainee abducted by the VC in 1968. ARVN operational forces also freed two instructors of the Dinh Tuong Training Center being detained by the enemy.

#### CUU LONG/SD9/06

Prior to 30 April 1970, IV Corps coordinated with local Khmer authorities in areas adjacent to the RVN border for the conduct of limited operations. One of these operations was launched on 20 April 1970 when elements of the ARVN 9th Infantry Division attacked the area west of the Crow's Nest, about 6 km inside Cambodia, with the support of armor and artillery.

During this operation, which was code-named CUU LONG/SD9/06, our forces clashed violently with the enemy, killing 187 while suffering 24 dead and 111 wounded. Our forces also found and seized an important enemy weapon cache containing in excess of 1,000 assorted weapons and large quantities of ammunition. U.S. advisers were not permitted to accompany ARVN units during this operation; they all remained in South Vietnam, monitoring their units' progress and assisting with support. A total of 30 CH-47 helicopter sorties were used to carry captured weapons and ammunition back to the RVN. However, the ammunition cache was so large that it was impossible to transport all of it back safely by helicopters. Therefore, after 30 sorties, the IV Corps Commander decided to destroy the remainder on the spot. After three days of operation, the 9th Division returned to South Vietnam on 23 April. To avoid adverse propaganda by the enemy, our forces made a determined effort to haul back every item of equipment damaged during the fighting. Those items which could not be moved back were all destroyed.

On 28 April, territorial forces of Kien Tuong Province made another foray into the Crow's Nest area with the support of 9th Division artillery units positioned on the RVN side of the border. After two days of activities which all took place within a distance of three km inside Cambodia, the Kien Tuong territorial forces had killed 43 and captured two enemy, while suffering two killed and 42 wounded. As in the previous operation conducted by the 9th Division, no U.S. advisers had accompanied ARVN forces into Cambodia. But in both operations, ARVN forces were supported by U.S. command helicopters and gunships. During the incursion by the Kien Tuong territorial forces on 28 April, U.S. medevac helicopters were authorized to fly into Cambodia for the evacuation of downed U.S. pilots. VNAF helicopters, however, were responsible for the evacuation of ARVN soldiers wounded in Cambodia.

In addition to the two large raids described above, the territorial forces of Kien Tuong Province, under the command of the Province Chief, raided an area northwest of Kompong Rau, Svay Rieng Province, about 3 km inside Cambodia. This was from 28 to 30 April 1970, and was supported by a unit of the 9th Division Artillery, positioned on the RVN

side of the border. Friendly losses were two killed and 42 wounded. Enemy losses were 43 killed and 88 captured; two crew-served weapons were taken. The results from these raids were significant, but were limited due to their scope and the relatively small forces committed. It was clear to the JGS that a U.S./RVNAF operation, which would penetrate deeper into Cambodia, was needed. Furthermore, this combined operation should be mounted as soon as possible to prevent the enemy from safely evacuating his personnel and materiel from these areas.

CHAPTER IV

The Combined Incursion

During the period 30 April through 30 June 1970, the Republic of Vietnam and United States conducted combined and well coordinated operations across the border into Cambodia. They were generally divided into three groups based on the Military Region from which they were initiated; code names were selected by the ARVN and U.S. Army commanders concerned:

- TOAN THANG (Total Victory), for operations conducted by III Corps and the U.S. Field Force II.
- CUU LONG (Mekong), for operations conducted by IV Corps and the Delta Military Assistance Command (DMAC).
- BINH TAY (Tame the West), for operations conducted by II Corps and the U.S. Field Force I. (Map 10)

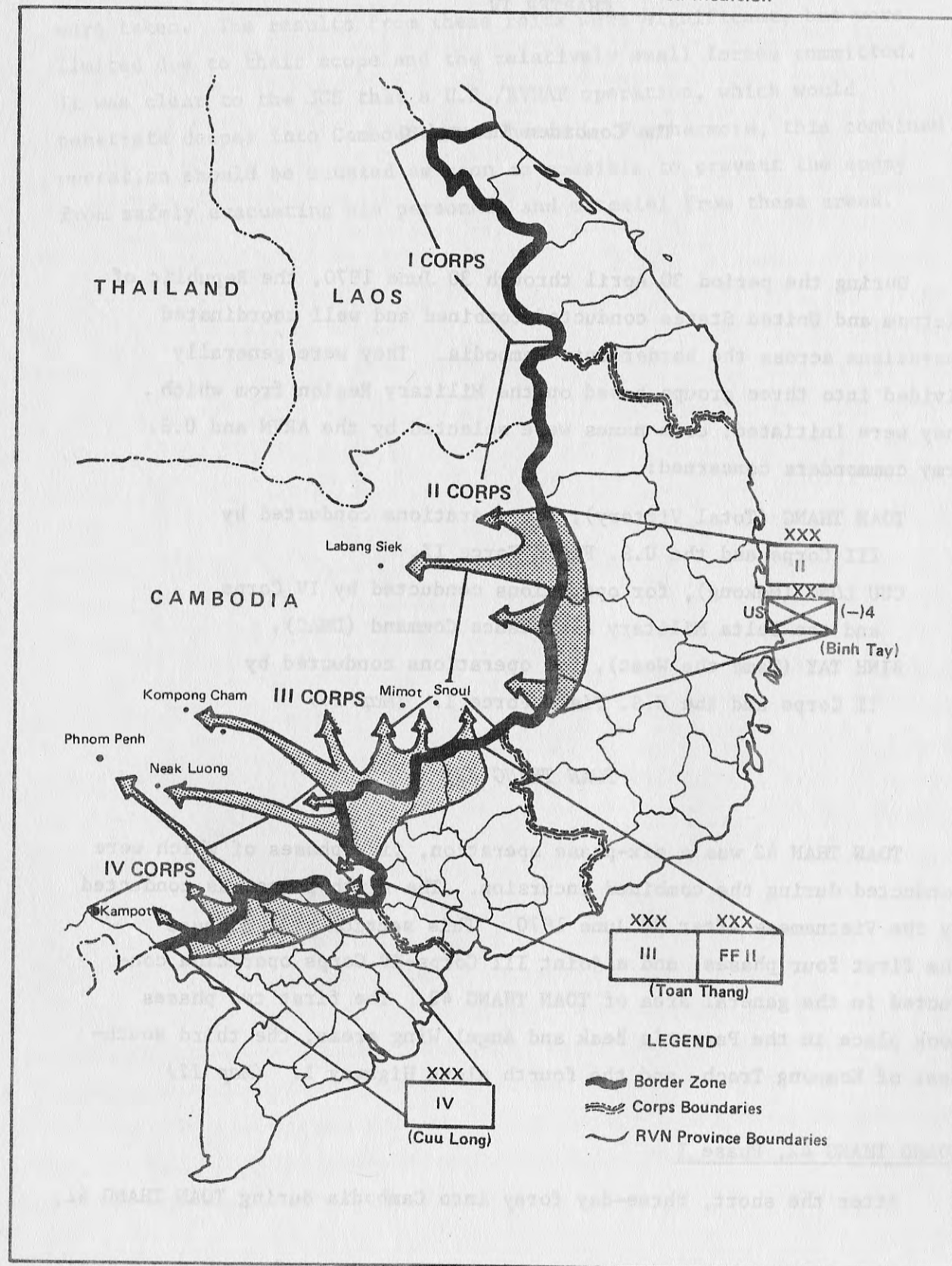
TOAN THANG 42

TOAN THANG 42 was a six-phase operation, five phases of which were conducted during the combined incursion. The sixth phase was conducted by the Vietnamese after 30 June 1970. This section will discuss the first four phases, and a joint III Corps-IV Corps operation conducted in the general area of TOAN THANG 42. The first two phases took place in the Parrot's Beak and Angel Wing areas; the third southwest of Kompong Trach, and the fourth along Highway 1. (Map 11)

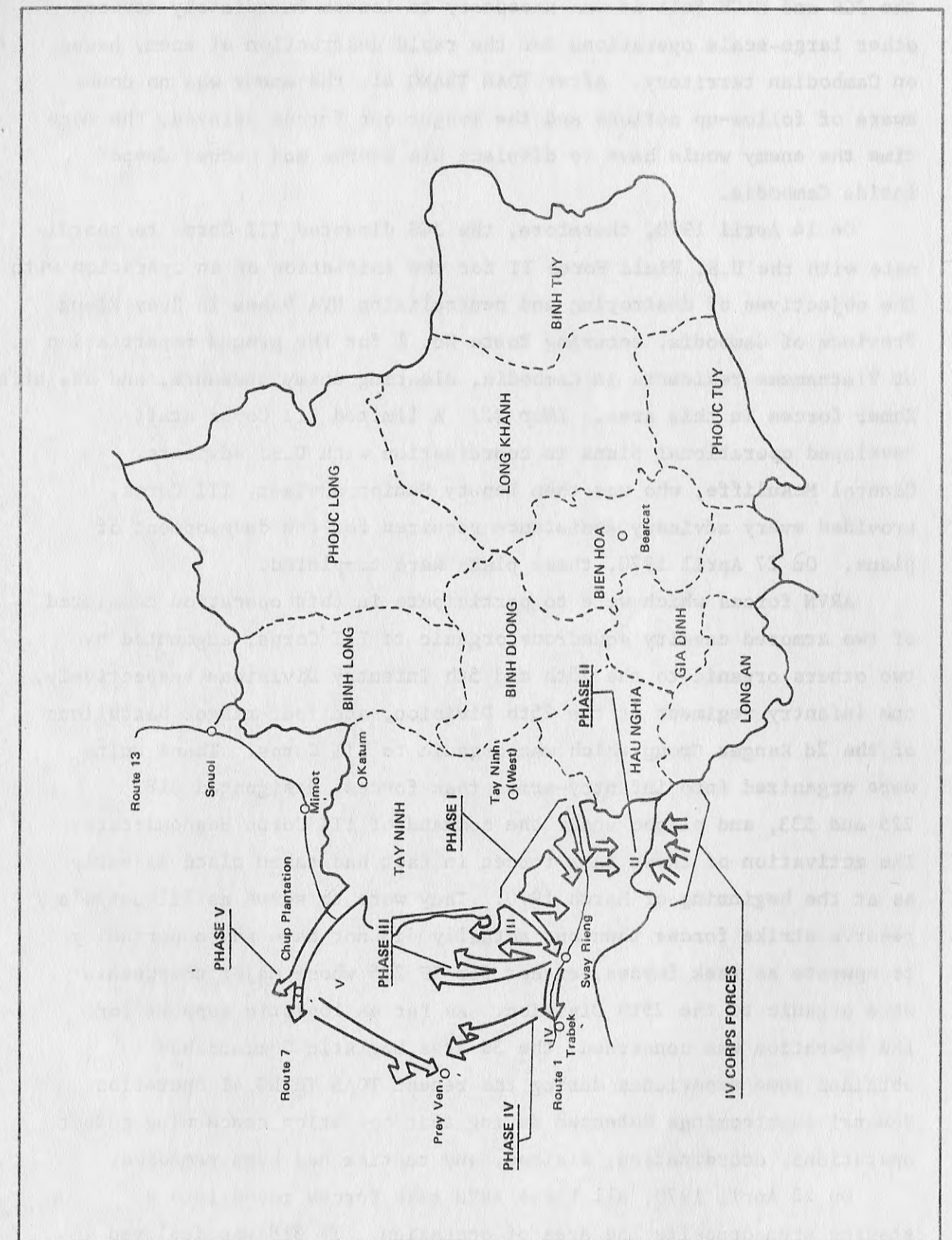
TOAN THANG 42, Phase I

After the short, three-day foray into Cambodia during TOAN THANG 41,

Map 10—Major Areas of Operation for the Combined Incursion



Map 11 - Operation TOAN THANG 42



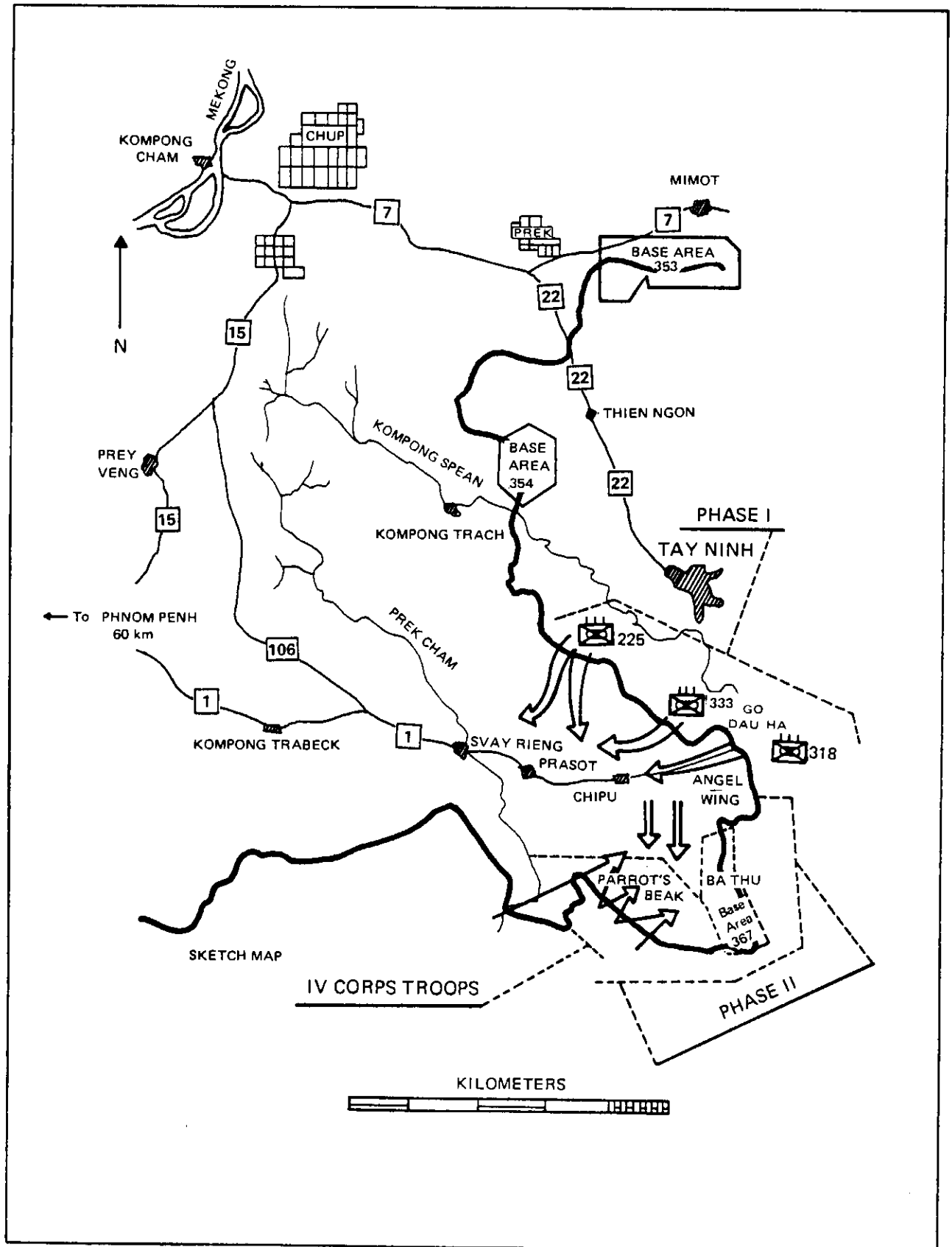
the JGS and MACV felt it was necessary to launch immediately several other large-scale operations for the rapid destruction of enemy bases on Cambodian territory. After TOAN THANG 41, the enemy was no doubt aware of follow-up actions and the longer our forces delayed, the more time the enemy would have to displace his stores and caches deeper inside Cambodia.

On 14 April 1970, therefore, the JGS directed III Corps to coordinate with the U.S. Field Force II for the initiation of an operation with the objectives of destroying and neutralizing NVA bases in Svay Rieng Province of Cambodia, securing Route No. 1 for the ground repatriation of Vietnamese residents in Cambodia, clearing enemy pressure, and assisting Khmer forces in this area. (Map 12) A limited III Corps staff developed operational plans in coordination with U.S. advisers. General McAuliffe, who was then Deputy Senior Adviser, III Corps, provided every advisory assistance required for the development of plans. On 27 April 1970, these plans were completed.

ARVN forces which were to participate in this operation consisted of two armored cavalry squadrons organic to III Corps, augmented by two others organic to the 25th and 5th Infantry Divisions respectively, one infantry regiment of the 25th Division, and four ranger battalions of the 2d Ranger Group which was organic to III Corps. These units were organized into infantry-armor task forces, designated 318, 225 and 333, and placed under the command of III Corps Headquarters. The activation of these task forces in fact had taken place as early as at the beginning of March 1970. They were to serve as III Corps's reserve strike forces then but actually did not have any opportunity to operate as task forces, except for TF 225 whose major components were organic to the 25th Division. As far as logistic support for the operation was concerned, the 3d Area Logistic Command had obtained some experience during the recent TOAN THANG 41 operation. Several shortcomings detected during that operation concerning combat operations, coordination, liaison, and tactics had been remedied.

On 28 April 1970, all three ARVN task forces moved into a staging area opposite the area of operation. TF 318 was deployed along Route No. 1 east of Go Dau Ha; TF 225 and TF 333 were assembled

Map 12 - Areas of Operation for TOAN THANG 42, Phases I and II



northeast of this district town. III Corps Forward was established within the premises of Go Dau Ha district headquarters. ARVN logistic support units of the 3d ALC meanwhile installed their forward supply bases along Route No. 1 about four km east of the district town.

On the morning of 29 April 1970, the ARVN task forces crossed the border after preparatory bombardments of target areas by tactical aircraft and artillery. TF 318 advanced westward along Route No. 1 while TF 225 and TF 333 moved west and south. During the first two days, all ARVN task forces made heavy contact with the enemy while advancing toward their objectives. Where enemy contact was light, ARVN armor and infantry units made use of their organic firepower to rapidly overwhelm enemy forces and occupy the objectives.

Artillery and tactical air were used on targets of heavy enemy resistance. Captured enemy personnel and materiel were immediately transported back to South Vietnam by VNAF helicopters. When large caches were discovered, they were either guarded, pending evacuation, or destroyed. These procedures were consistently used throughout the operation.

With regard to the enemy, the element of surprise no longer existed as soon as ARVN task forces had occupied their initial objectives. During the first two days of the operation, the enemy had put up a fierce resistance, inflicting on friendly forces 16 killed and 157 wounded. For his part, the enemy suffered 84 killed and 65 weapons captured. Friendly casualties were high because the enemy had solid fortifications and resisted stubbornly. At the same time, ARVN armored units lacked aggressiveness and did not move forward when contact was made. They would stay behind and provide support for the more audacious ranger and infantry units which always charged ahead. Sometimes, ARVN armored vehicles were unable to fire in support because of infantry troops moving in front of them. This greatly reduced the effectiveness of armored firepower. But these shortcomings were gradually corrected by Task Force Commanders.

On 1 May 1970, TF 225 and TF 333 were resupplied in preparation for Phase II of the operation. TF 318 meanwhile received orders to

advance toward Svay Rieng. Its mission was to clear enemy pressure on that provincial capital, protect Route No. 1 from Svay Rieng to Chipu, and assist the voluntary return to South Vietnam of Vietnamese residents living in this area. Route No. 1 also became an important supply route not only for this operation but also for the entire Cambodian incursion. In preparation for Phase II of this operation, the 51st Ranger Battalion and the 3d Battalion (Mobile Strike Force) were replaced by the 4/48 and 3/52 Battalions respectively in the afternoon. Both replaced battalions had suffered heavy losses during the previous two days.

#### TOAN THANG 42, Phase II

This was an operation conducted jointly by III Corps and IV Corps forces against Base Area 367. It began on 2 May 1970 when Task Forces 333 and 225 from their positions south of Route No. 1 attacked southward into the Parrot's Beak area while Task Force 318, which was commanded by Colonel Tran Quang Khoi, received orders to attack westward along Route No. 1 in an effort to clear the southern part of Svay Rieng. (Map 12)

From Kien Tuong Province further south, a large ARVN force from IV Corps was pushing north. This force consisted of the 9th Infantry Division, five armored cavalry squadrons and one ranger group. It was moving northward along three different axes and was to link up with III Corps forces at a point south of the Parrot's Beak.

During the first day, TF 225 made heavy contact with the enemy 12 km south of Chipu. The task force was supported by both RVN and U.S. tactical air and artillery, since U.S. forces had been authorized to conduct operations on Cambodia territory beginning 30 April 1970. Support for friendly forces, therefore, had become stronger. The enemy broke contact after he had suffered 54 killed and 19 captured. Our casualties were 10 killed and 51 wounded. Westward, meanwhile, TF 333 also engaged the enemy heavily, causing him 79 killed and 15 captured and seizing 31 assorted weapons. The task force suffered 6 killed and 21 wounded.

On 3 May 1970, III Corps task forces linked up with IV Corps units from the south. The forces from both Corps then continued searching for enemy installations and supply caches in this area.

While ARVN forces were conducting attacks against enemy Base Areas 706 and 367 to the west in Svay Rieng Province, the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division and 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, in cooperation with the ARVN Airborne Division, launched another offensive effort into the Fishhook area north of Binh Long Province on 1 May 1970.

Fighting by that time had spread over almost the entire border area. Cambodian refugees fleeing war hazards spilled over the border and came into South Vietnam in increasing numbers, particularly in the provinces of Tay Ninh and Binh Long. To solve this problem, Lt. General Do Cao Tri, III Corps Commander, met with the Khmer Military Region 1 Commander at III Corps Forward in Go Dau Ha on 3 May 1970. During the meeting, Lt. General Tri requested that a Khmer official with full authority be placed in charge of Khmer people seeking refuge in South Vietnam. The Khmer commander promised that this official would be made available within two days. At the same time, he asked III Corps to provide the Khmer official in charge of refugees with transportation during his stay in South Vietnam. The Khmer Commander also asked the RVNAF to assist in clearing Route No. 1 from the north and south because this task was beyond the FANK capabilities. At that time, the portion of Route No. 1 which ran from Svay Rieng to Neak Luong on the Mekong River was being interdicted by NVA forces. As a result, all communications between Cambodia's eastern provinces and Phnom Penh had been interrupted.

All requests by the Khmer Military Region 1 commander were promptly approved by Lt. General Do Cao Tri. In turn, Lt. General Tri mentioned the fact that there were about 4,000 Vietnamese residents being detained in Khmer concentration camps in Svay Rieng Province. He informed the Khmer commander that III Corps would send over a representative to take charge of formalities concerning the repatriation of these Vietnamese and that assistance from the Svay Rieng local

government would be needed. After three days of combined operations with III Corps, IV Corps forces began to withdraw from the area of operation on 5 May 1970. Meanwhile, TF 333 and TF 225 also fell back and assembled along Route No. 1 to be resupplied.

After regular ARVN forces had vacated the Parrot's Beak area to prepare for the next phase of the operation, Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) and Regional Force units of Tay Ninh Province were redeployed from the Angel's Wing to the Parrot's Beak area in order to continue the search for enemy stores and caches. On the same day, the U.S. 6/31 Infantry and the 3d Brigade, U.S. 9th Division also moved into the area to prevent the enemy from returning.

After the completion of Phase II, TOAN THANG 42, III Corps Forward Command Post was moved from Go Dau Ha into Tay Ninh City on 6 May 1970. It was from Tay Ninh that III Corps directed all operational efforts during the remaining period of the combined incursion. Tay Ninh City was far more convenient for a CP of such importance having ample space for cantonment and an airfield nearby. The 3d Area Logistics Command (ALC) and other supporting units also relocated to Tay Ninh City. (Map 11)

#### IV Corps Participation with III Corps in TOAN THANG 42, Phase II

On 2 May 1970, a large IV Corps task force composed of the ARVN 9th Infantry Division, five armored cavalry squadrons (each with three M-113 troops), and the 4th Ranger group participated in Phase II of Operation TOAN THANG 42 alongside III Corps forces. This IV Corps task force was commanded by Major General Nguyen Viet Thanh, IV Corps Commander, assisted by Brigadier General Tran Ba Di, 9th Division Commander. (Map 12)

The IV Corps task force was organized into four armor-infantry elements which moved north from Kien Tuong Province into Cambodia on three axes, to link up with III Corps forces in the Parrot's Beak area. This was the largest operation conducted by IV Corps after its two previous limited incursions. The IV Corps armor-infantry task force advanced rapidly on predetermined axes in conventional

warfare style, taking advantage of its strong firepower and mobility. During its advance, the task force enveloped the objective area, cutting it up into several small pockets to facilitate search and destroy operations. Prior to the incursion by IV Corps forces, the objective area had been pounded for two hours by preparatory fire provided by the U.S. 23d Artillery group and IV Corps artillery units.

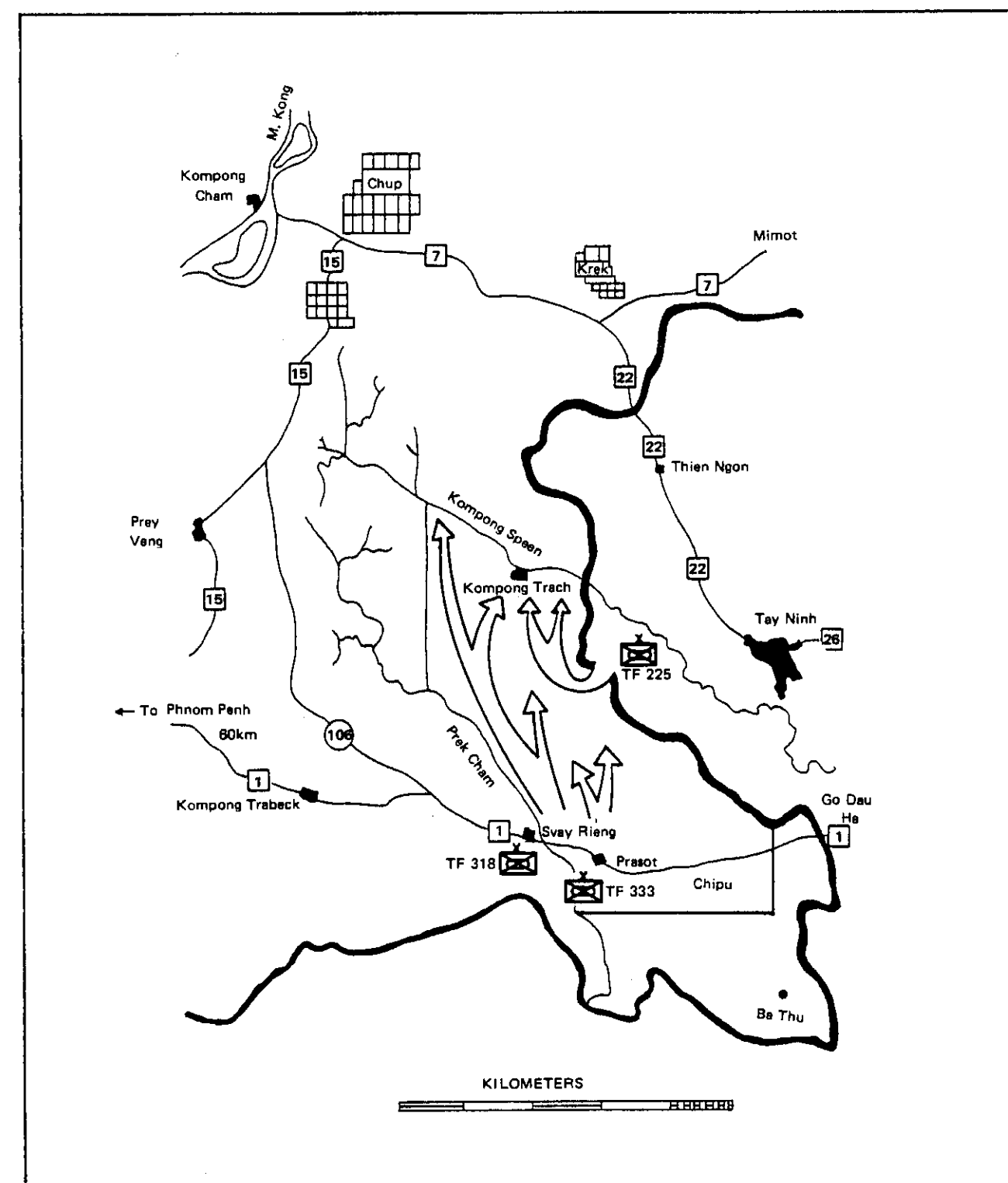
During two days of heavy engagement with the enemy, the IV Corps task force discovered and seized several important enemy weapon and supply caches. At the conclusion of the three-day operation conducted in cooperation with III Corps, the IV Corps task force had killed 1,010 enemy, captured 204 others and received 19 ralliers; its own casualties amounted to 66 killed and 330 wounded. In addition, the task force seized a total of over 1,000 individual and 60 crew-served weapons, including seven 120-mm mortars and five 75-mm recoilless rifles. It also captured and destroyed in excess of 100 tons of assorted ammunition. On 5 May, IV Corps armor-infantry elements withdrew from the area in order to prepare for the next stage of cross-border operations.

#### TOAN THANG 42, Phase III

After destroying enemy installations and stores south of Route No. 1, III Corps forces switched their offensive efforts northward. During this phase of the operation, U.S. Naval and VNN units were active along the Kompong Spean River, forming a screen to the east. One element of the U.S. 25th Infantry Division also operated in the northeast. (Map 13)

On the morning of 7 May 1970, Task Force 225 attacked westward from Ben Soi, linking up with Task Force 318 which attacked northward from the Prasot - Chipu area. Task Force 333 remained in reserve. During the day, both task forces made contact with the enemy. In particular, TF 318 engaged the enemy at 10 km north of Prasot, killing 182 and capturing 8. To the east in the meantime, TF 225 discovered an enemy hospital with a 200-bed capacity and seized quantities of surgical equipment and medicine.

Map 13 - Area of Operation for TOAN THANG 42, Phase III



In the afternoon of 9 May, after both task forces had linked up in an area southwest of Kompong Trach, Task Force 318 pushed northward across the Kompong Spean River. Then both task forces continued searching for enemy installations and stores until 11 May 1970.

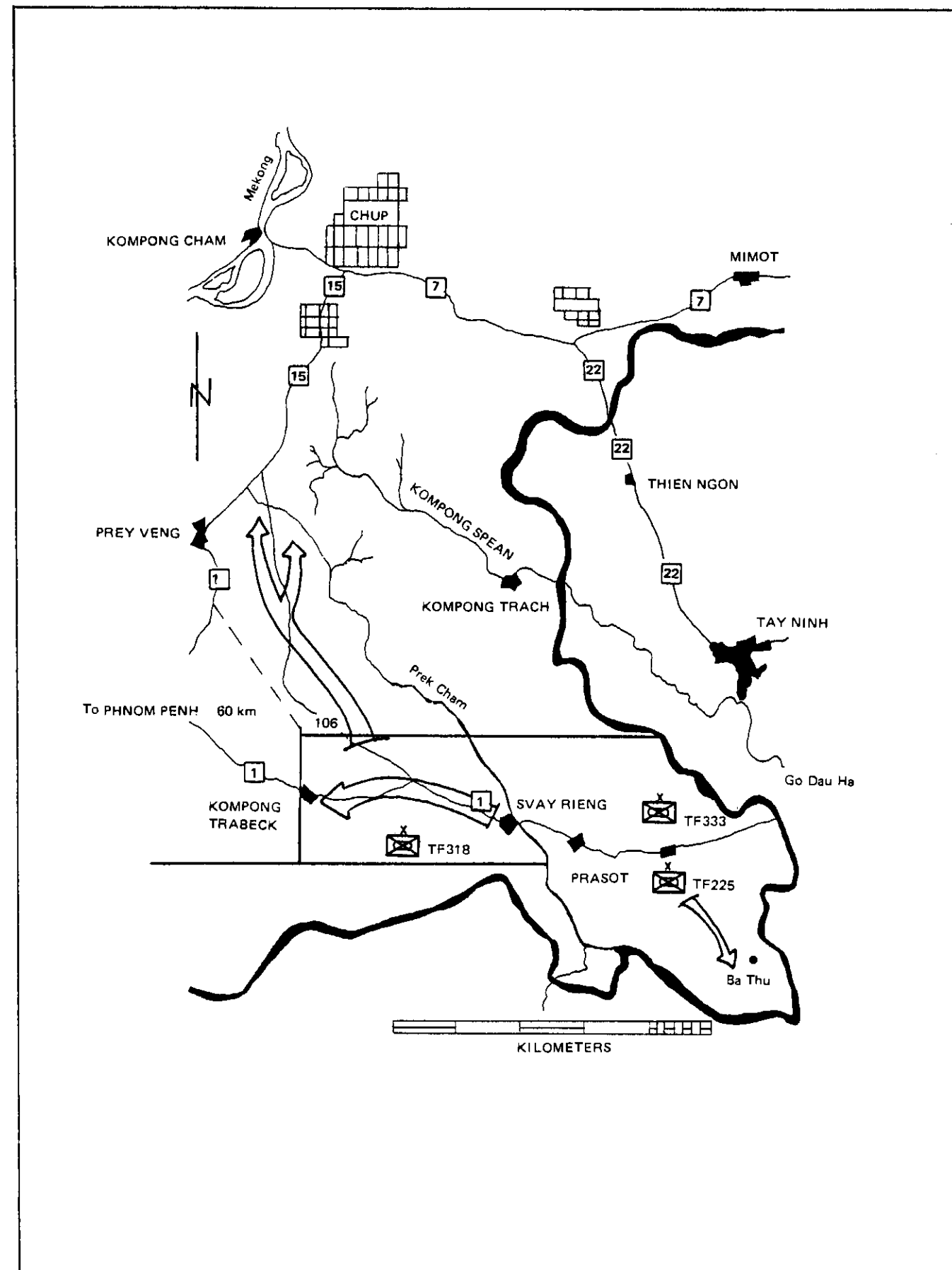
On 11 May 1970, President Nguyen Van Thieu made an inspection visit to ARVN units in the field, accompanied by Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky. After being briefed by Lt. General Tri on the results of the operation, President Thieu informed him of the general situation throughout Cambodia which was becoming more serious with every passing day. Our residents in Phnom Penh were being badly mistreated by Khmer authorities and needed to be repatriated as soon as possible. To evacuate them, he ordered that III Corps quickly clear Route No. 1 and be prepared to relieve Kompong Trach when required.

#### TOAN THANG 42, Phase IV

As a result of President Thieu's directives, Lt. General Do Cao Tri immediately redeployed his forces. Task Forces 318, 333, and 225 were withdrawn from the Kampong Trach area and assembled along Route No. 1 from Chipu to Svay Rieng the same day in order to prepare for TOAN THANG 42, Phase IV. This operation was launched on 13 May 1970 for the purposes of clearing Route No. 1 and making way for the repatriation of Vietnamese residents of Phnom Penh. (Map 14) All three task forces with TF 318 taking the lead, moved westward along Route No. 1 from Svay Rieng. They were to link up with IV Corps Forces at Kampong Trabeck (during that time, IV Corps was conducting an operation to clear the Mekong River). To replace the regular ARVN forces that just moved out, two Regional Force company groups of Tay Ninh Province were introduced into the area to secure Route No. 1 from Go Dau Ha to Svay Rieng.

During its advance on 14 May, TF 333 had heavy contact with the enemy, killing 48 and capturing 56. All prisoners declared they belonged to the D1 Battalion of Tay Ninh. Meanwhile, TF 225, which operated south of Route No. 1, also made contact with the enemy, killing 26 and capturing 20 prisoners who declared that they belonged to the 3d Battalion, 2nd Regiment.

Map 14— Area of Operation for TOAN THANG 42, Phase IV



On 20 May, TF 333 made contact with an element of the 2nd Battalion, 27th Regiment NVA 9th Division, killing 9 and capturing 26. All III Corps forces then continued securing Route No. 1 from Svay Rieng to Kompong Trabek until 21 May.

While directing the operation to clear Route No. 1 from Svay Rieng to Kompong Trabek, Lt. General Tri also sought to coordinate an attack by IV Corps forces along the Mekong River toward Kompong Cham. However, Lt. General Ngo Dzu, IV Corps Commander, disagreed because he felt it too remote an objective for his corps. At the same time, Lt. General Tri also planned to reinforce Kompong Cham with an ARVN Ranger battalion as a show of force, but this was never done. Therefore, after clearing Route No. 1, and after III Corps had linked up with IV Corps forces on 14 May, Lt. General Tri decided to send a liaison team to Kompong Cham to monitor the situation there. Lt. General Tri's interim arrangement would provide for the support of Kompong Cham by tactical air through the liaison team, pending a relief action by ARVN units.

By 22 May 1970, Route No. 1 was considered cleared. A most regrettable incident occurred that day; when travelling by jeep on Route No. 1 from Svay Reing to Kompong Trabek, three ARVN personnel of III Corps were fired upon by a group of unidentified soldiers. Two of them were wounded but escaped; the third was missing and the vehicle was set afire. The III Corps Commander was very angry when learning of this incident. He did not believe that it was an enemy attack because Route No. 1 was considered secure. Rather, he thought it the act of unruly Khmer soldiers in possible retaliation for reports of misconduct by ARVN soldiers in Cambodia. Colonel Le Dat Cong, G-2, III Corps conducted the investigation, and confirmed, however, that the VC had indeed attacked the ARVN jeep.

At about the same time, the Khmer press in Phnom Penh carried front page stories alleging that RVNAF units, while operating in Cambodia, had been repressive against the Khmer population and had ransacked Khmer properties. The Khmer press also asked the RVNAF

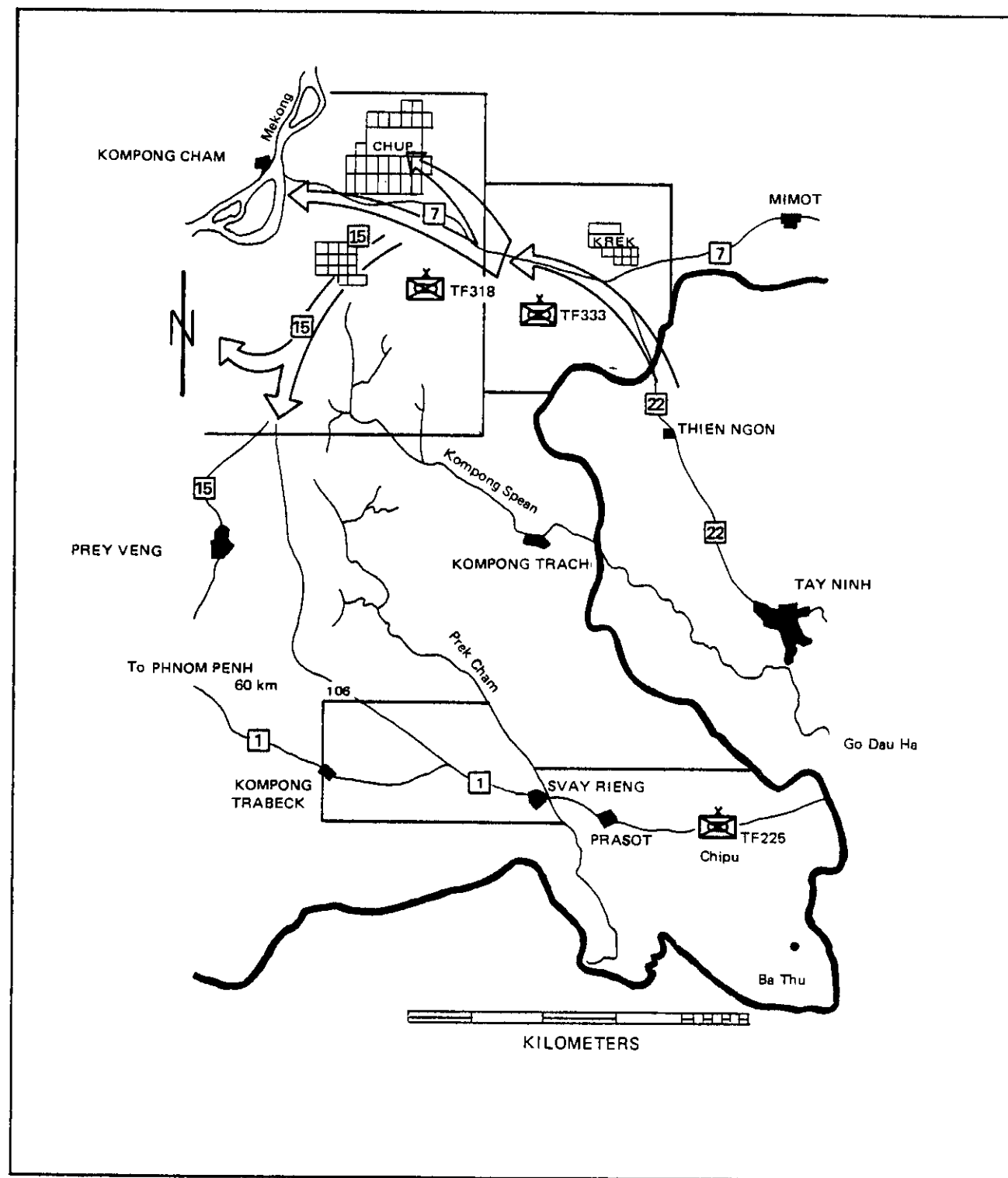
to withdraw from Cambodia. Lt. General Do Cao Tri felt hurt and was angered by these press articles. He considered this outcry to be an insult to the RVNAF. He privately ordered an investigation and was determined to provide adequate punishment and enforce strict military discipline in case the stories were proven true. In case they were not, he made the decision to recommend to the JGS and President Thieu that the ARVN liaison team at Kompong Cham should be called back and that all air support missions for the benefit of FANK forces should be terminated.

#### *The Relief of Kompong Cham*

Kompong Cham was the third largest city in Cambodia and was the seat of the Khmer Military Region 1 Headquarters. The mission of relieving this important Cambodian town, located on the Mekong northwest of the Chup Plantation, was given to the III Corps Commander who designated the operation TOAN THANG 42, Phase V. (Map 15) The city was defended by a garrison of four Khmer infantry battalions. But, because of low strength, these four battalions had only 1,000 men; artillery support was provided by a battery of four 105-mm howitzers with approximately 1,000 rounds.

Beginning on 12 May 1970, NVA forces of the 9th Division occupied the Chup plantation area northeast of Kompong Cham. They shelled the city and mounted sniper attacks against its eastern part. The Kompong Cham airfield, northwest of the city was rendered unusable, being shelled constantly day and night. Communication by way of the Mekong River, from Phnom Penh to Kompong Cham, was also interdicted. The city was then effectively isolated, increasing the problem of food and ammunition shortage. The garrison's morale was at a low ebb; its troops were wondering for how long they could hold under the siege.

Map 15 - The Relief of Kompong Cham (TOAN THANG 42, Phase V)



To relieve Kompong Cham from the enemy's siege, IV Corps initiated operation TOAN THANG 42, Phase V, beginning on 23 May 1970. Task Forces 333 and 318 moved on Route No. 7 from Krek and on Route No. 15 from Prey Veng, respectively, both converging north toward an area in the vicinity of the Chup plantation. As soon as it moved out from Krek toward Chup, the 7th ABN Battalion of TF 333 was engaged heavily by the enemy. With effective support from U.S. tactical air and gunships, TF 333 quickly controlled the situation, killing 26 enemy and capturing 16. The enemy force was the 2d Battalion, 272d Regiment, NVA 9th Division. Two days later on 25 May, armor and ranger elements of Task Force 318 clashed violently with the enemy south of Route No. 7. The fighting did not abate until the next morning.

While both task forces were engaging the enemy on their way to relieve Kompong Cham, the RF units of Tay Ninh Province and CIDG forces from the Duc Hua and Tre Cu camps also made heavy contact with the enemy in the Angel's Wing area. Friendly forces killed 38 and captured 21 enemy while suffering no casualties.

During the day of 28 May, while continuing to advance toward the Chup Plantation, TF 318 again engaged the enemy in heavy fighting, causing him 73 killed, while we suffered 16 wounded. Task Force 225, which was meanwhile operating south of Route No. 1, found additional enemy supply caches and seized a total of 14 tons of assorted ammunition, seven radio sets, four 60-mm mortars, three 82-mm mortars, two 120-mm mortars and one 75-mm howitzer.

Fighting then raged throughout the next day between TF's 318 and 333 and elements of the NVA 9th Division in the area north of Chup. Meanwhile, TF 225 also engaged the enemy heavily in the Angel's Wing area with the support of friendly artillery and tactical air. Enemy anti-aircraft fire was particularly heavy during the fighting, causing one VNAF Skyraider, one U.S. F-100 and one Cobra gunship to be downed.

On 1 June 1970, as the fighting ceased, the clearing of Chup plantation was considered accomplished. However, ARVN forces continued

to search for enemy supply caches in this area and expanded their activities to the northeast in an effort to clear enemy pressure from east of Kompong Cham.

To provide continued rest and recuperation for the task forces, III Corps rotated them from combat duties. On 3 June, therefore, TF 318 was taken out of Cambodia and directed to Long Khanh for a full week of rest and refitting. On 12 June, this task force moved to the Krek area and relieved TF 333. In TF 225, the 46th regiment took the place of the 49th, which returned to its rear headquarters for rest and refitting. However, TF 225 continued to operate in the Angel's Wing area north of Route No. 1.

During the period that III Corps forces were withdrawing from the Chup area, elements of the enemy 9th Division were moving in, laying siege to Kompong Cham once more.

On 19 June 1970, during a meeting at the Independence Palace with the Chairman, Joint General Staff and the four ARVN Corps Commanders to reassess the cross border operations, President Thieu concluded that the RVNAF would continue operations in Cambodia despite the withdrawal of U.S. forces planned for 30 June. He also ordered III Corps to proceed with the relief of Kompong Cham for the second time. Additionally, Cambodians were to be prevented from seeking refuge in South Vietnam because according to enemy prisoners and reliable sources, NVA troops were attempting to infiltrate by passing as refugees.

To accomplish the relief of Kompong Cham as ordered, III Corps deployed its Task Forces 318, 333 and 225 on 21 June. All three task forces attacked toward Chup along Route No. 7 from Krek. After six days of operations, the Chup area and the area southeast of Kompong Cham were practically cleared of enemy forces. To further clear the area south of Kompong Cham, Route No. 15, and the Prey Veng area, III Corps forces were deployed south from Chup toward Prey Veng. TF 318 left the 33d Ranger Battalion and 1/18 Armored Cavalry Squadron in positions along Route No. 15 to protect this vital supply line. This was done in the light of intelligence reports that the 1st

Regiment, NVA 9th Division was attempting to interdict Route No. 15 and ambush TF 318 on its way to relieve Prey Veng. Enroute, TF 318 was heavily engaged by the enemy on 29 June, while it advanced along Route No. 15. (During this phase of the operation which took place beyond the 30 km limit, ARVN units were not accompanied by U.S. advisers). The fighting resulted in 165 enemy killed. Friendly forces suffered 34 killed, 204 wounded and 24 missing in action.

The entire TOAN THANG 42 operation was considered the most successful ever conducted by III Corps. According to depositions made by enemy prisoners and ralliers and in particular, judging by the large quantities of enemy supplies and materials captured, the following conclusions were quickly apparent:

1. The operation had effectively upset the enemy's plans to overthrow the Lon Nol regime and, as soon as he succeeded in Phnom Penh, launch an offensive in RVN MR-3. This was first disclosed by enemy Lt. Colonel Nguyen Thanh, Deputy Commander of Sub Military Region 2 who rallied to the GVN. Note that this activity had moved from its previous location in the Bo Loi Woods to south of Chipu prior to the incursion.

2. The morale of enemy troops had been seriously affected by the operation, particularly among troops under Sub Military Region 2. In a few instances, cadres and troops had refused to go into combat. Many had deserted to avoid fighting.

3. The area of Ba Thu and Angel's Wing, considered invincible, had been heavily damaged. Up to 90% of enemy supplies in this area had been destroyed or seized by the RVNAF. Heavy casualties had effectively reduced enemy troop strength by 25%, especially among Sub MR-2 units and Tay Ninh local force units. As a result, the enemy met with serious difficulties in replacing human and material losses.

This operation also testified to the remarkable progress made by our ARVN logistic system whose efforts to keep ARVN combat units

adequately resupplied were most commendable. A few problem areas still existed such as the shortage of spare parts for armored personnel carriers, which accounted for their high unserviceable rate, despite continuing efforts by U.S. and ARVN repair teams in the field.

#### *TOAN THANG 43, 44, 45, and 46*

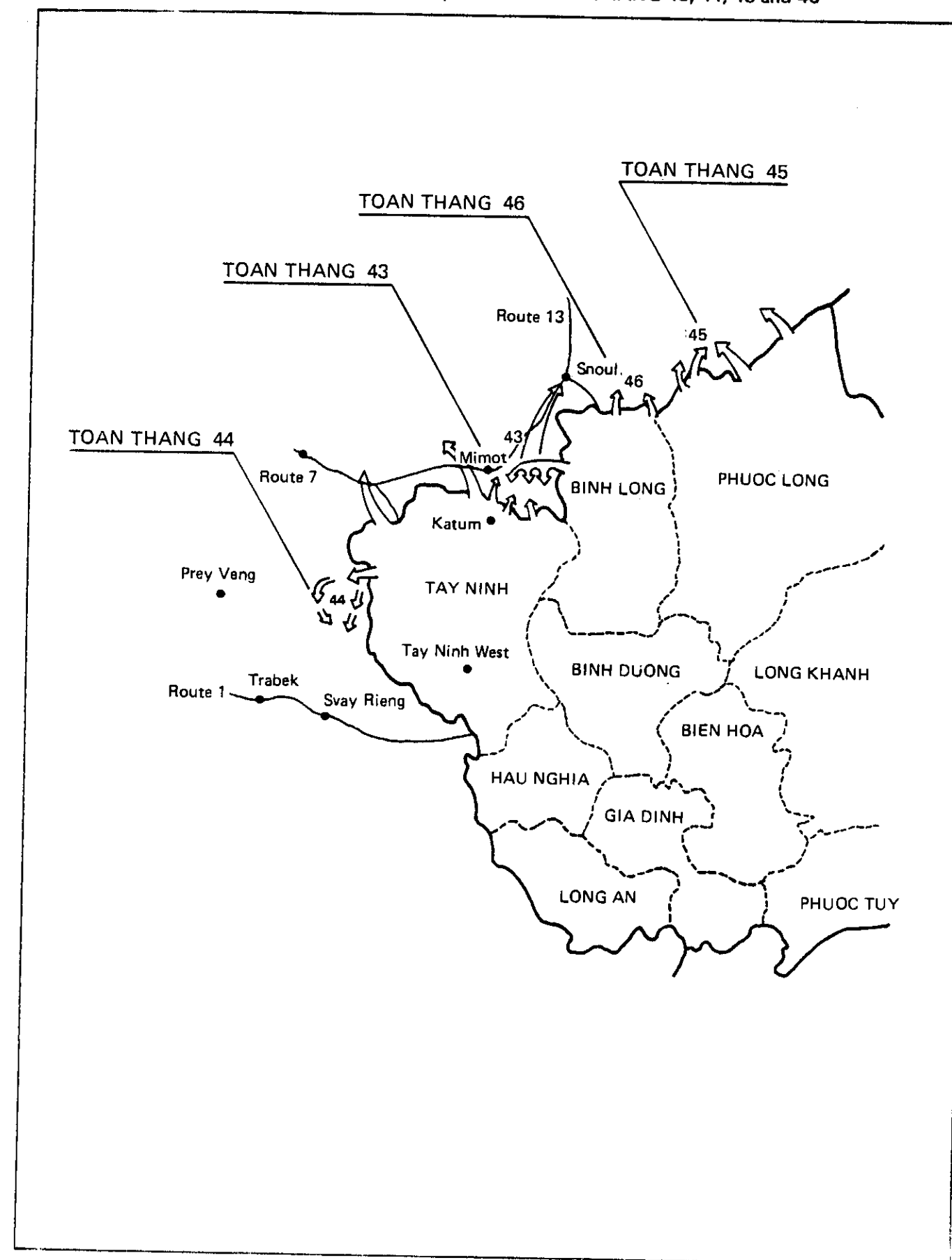
The principal units involved in this series of operations were the ARVN Airborne Division, the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), the U.S. 25th Infantry Division, and the U.S. 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. They were conducted in the Fishhook area and against Base Areas 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, and 707. (Map 16)

#### TOAN THANG 43

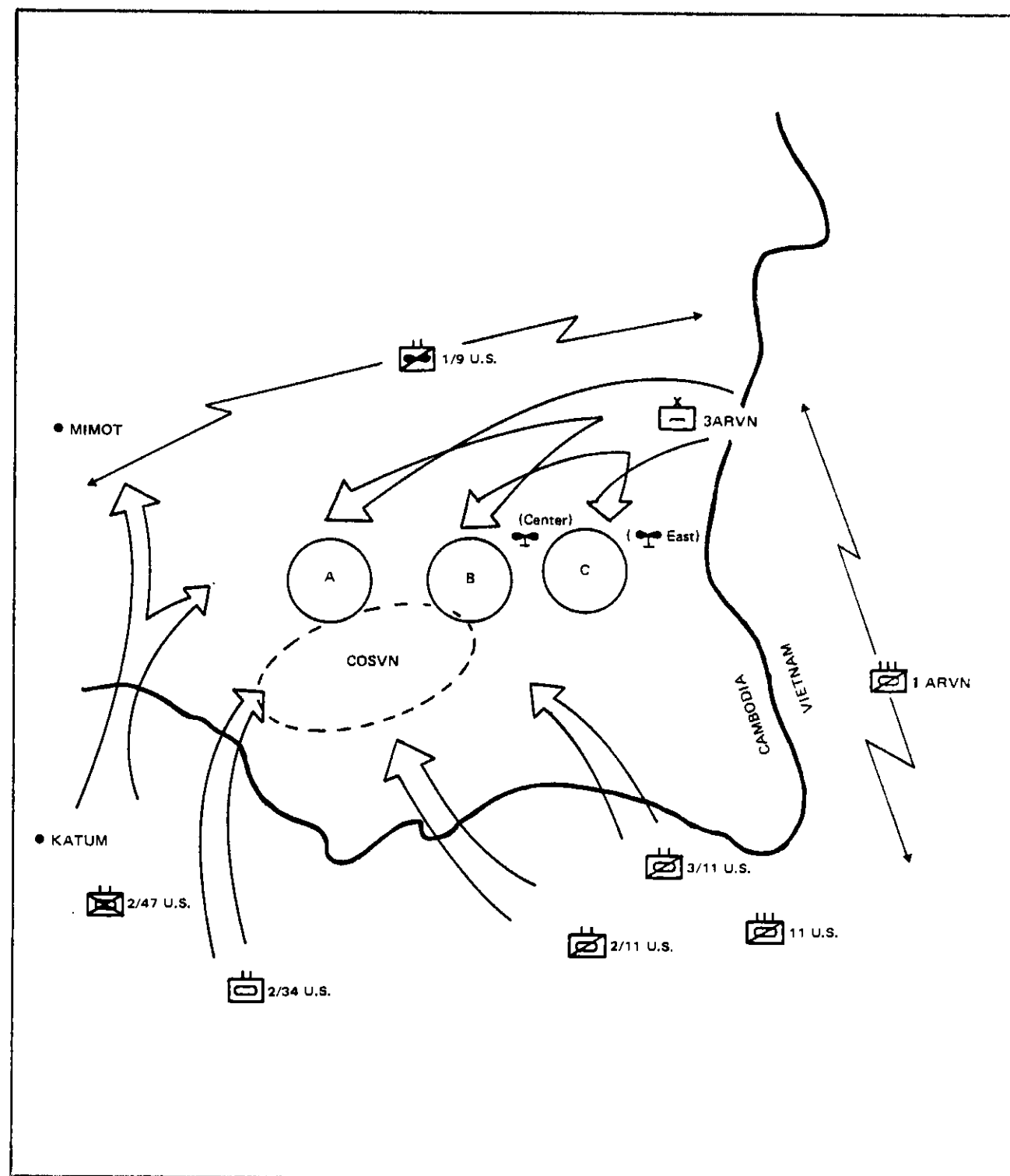
On 26 April 1970, Major General Elvy B. Roberts, commanding the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division, received orders from Lt. General Michael S. Davison, Commander, U.S. II Field Force to prepare for an operation designed to destroy COSVN headquarters located in the Fishhook area on Cambodian territory. The U.S. 1st Cavalry Division was to launch this operation within 72 hours after orders were received. (Map 17)

During three consecutive days, from 26 to 28 April, the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division Commander and Lt. General Du Quoc Dong, the Airborne Division Commander, discussed and developed combat plans for the operation. Both units had been operating together in the northernmost provinces of Military Region 3 since the beginning of 1970, within the framework of the Dong Tien campaign, a combined program undertaken by ARVN III Corps and the U.S. II Field Force designed to improve RVNAF combat effectiveness. In their planning, the two division commanders had to review their force dispositions so as to

Map 16 - General Locations for Operations TOAN THANG 43, 44, 45 and 46



Map 17 - Area of Operation for TOAN THANG 43



be able to assemble adequate units for the cross-border operation and at the same time to ensure that effective security would be maintained in their areas of responsibility in Military Region 3.

To organize the redeployment of units and avoid time-consuming troop movements, the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division and the ARVN Airborne Division commanders requested that their areas of responsibility be extended northward to the limit of the Cambodian border. As the units progressed northward, their fire support bases would also move along so that when the operation was about to be launched across the border, all units participating would already be in position on the RVN side of the border.

On 28 April, the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division Commander received orders to initiate the operation within 48 hours. He immediately met with the ARVN Airborne Division Commander to review plans on the general enemy situation. Both agreed that a combined task force consisting of air cavalry and airborne elements should be employed for the initial stages of the operation. Command and control of this task force was entrusted to Brig. General Robert H. Shoemaker, Deputy Commander, U.S. 1st Cavalry Division; this task force, therefore, was designated Task Force Shoemaker. In the meantime, both division staffs began developing plans for the next stage.

The initial concept of operation as developed by the task force commander, was to employ a combined force consisting of the 3d U.S. Cavalry Brigade (reinforced by one mechanized infantry battalion and one armor battalion), the 3d ARVN ABN Brigade, and the 11th U.S. Armored Cavalry Regiment (11th ACR) in a heliborne assault combined with ground attacks. The plan of operation called for extensive preparatory support by B-52's, tactical air and artillery, followed by the heliborne insertion of the 3d ABN Brigade into three landing zones north of the objective to block the enemy's escape routes. Next, this airborne element would advance south to link up with the task force (-) which, in the meantime, would be attacking northward from their positions in the south, with the 3d Brigade, 1st U.S. Cavalry Division to the west, and the 11th ACR to the east and southeast.

The 1/9 U. S. Cavalry was to conduct reconnaissance patrols over the northern part of the area of operation to detect and further block enemy escapes. In conjunction with this pincer movement in Cambodia, the 9th Regiment, 5th ARVN Division and the 1st ARVN Armored Cavalry Squadron were to conduct reconnaissance patrols along the western part of Binh Long Province, opposite the area of operation. After the occupation of preplanned objectives, all units were to continue the search for enemy installations and supply caches in the area of operation.

In the early morning of 1 May 1970, six B-52's began bombing the Fishhook area, their last bomb expended by 0545 hours. Fifteen minutes later, U.S. artillery opened its barrages on the area where the 3d ABN Brigade was to be inserted. At 0630 hours, the 1st Armored Cavalry Squadron of III Corps moved from northwest of An Loc toward the Cambodian border. It was then that the first 15,000 lb. bomb was dropped from a U.S. aircraft to clear a landing zone (LZ East) for the 3d ABN Brigade; 15 minutes later, another 15,000 lb. bomb was detonated, clearing Landing Zone Center. Immediately afterwards, observation planes with forward air controllers aboard overflew the landing area, guiding U.S. tactical aircraft onto targets. The area was thoroughly covered by tactical air from 0700 to 0800 hours.

Further north of the objective area, elements of the 1/9 Air Cavalry detected a number of enemy vehicles moving; they attacked and destroyed two vehicles, killing five enemy troops which provided our first results for the day. These elements then continued patrolling over the landing zone area until 0800 hours.

Ten minutes after the 1/9 Cavalry completed its reconnaissance mission, the first armada of helicopters arrived and inserted an airborne unit at Landing Zone East. Upon touching ground in total safety, the airborne unit began establishing a fire support base with 105-mm and 155-mm howitzers. While the helicopter armada was landing troops, the 11th ACR moved into its assembly area and crossed the line of departure toward the northeast to link up with the 3d Cavalry Brigade (+) which had been airlifted across the border

at 0945 hours.

The 5th Airborne Battalion was helicoptered by an armada of 62 helicopters with escort provided by 22 Cobra gunships into objective B at 0945 hours and into Landing Zone Center at 1005 hours. Meanwhile, to the west, the 9th ABN Battalion also made a heliborne assault on objective A. Both U.S. and ARVN assault forces were surprised by the relative lack of resistance in the objective area. This seemed to conflict with our intelligence reports which had indicated the presence of enemy antiaircraft and, possibly, elements of COSVN headquarters. However, our forces met with no significant enemy resistance. No antiaircraft fire was observed and there was only sporadic, scattered small arms fire. This was a good indication that the enemy had been caught by surprise. He probably had not believed that U.S. and RVN forces would even be able to land in such a rough and heavily covered terrain. Upon landing, both airborne elements, the 5th and 9th Airborne Battalions, saw an enemy force of about 200 fleeing in disorder without fighting. Cobra gunships pursued the escaping enemy troops, killing about 20-30 of them.

By the end of the first day, friendly forces had achieved remarkable results. The U.S. 1/9 Cavalry, which covered the northern approaches to the objective area, had detected and attacked several groups of enemy troops attempting to break away, killing a total of 156. U.S. tactical air had flown 185 sorties over the area of operation and accounted for 109 enemy killed. In its assigned area of operation, the 5th Airborne Battalion killed 28 and captured 7 enemy troops. The prisoners revealed they belonged to three different organizations, the 250th Rehabilitation Unit, the 50th Rear Security Unit, and the 1st Battalion, 165th Regiment, NVA 7th Division. The 3d Airborne Battalion discovered an underground cache containing about 6,000 lbs. of medicine and new surgical equipment in original packings. The markings on these boxes indicated that the equipment came from Europe and had been sent to Phnom Penh via Air France. As

for the U.S. 11th ACR, its 2/11 Tank Battalion had engaged and killed 50 enemy while suffering only two dead. It also discovered regimental level troop cantonment facilities.

On 3 May 1970, Task Force Shoemaker was augmented with the U.S. 2d Cavalry Brigade. During that day, several enemy supply caches were found. In particular, the U.S. 1/9 Cavalry, while patrolling in the north, discovered an enemy truck park. Tactical air was called and destroyed seven 2-1/2 ton, thirteen 3/4 ton, and three 1/4 ton trucks.

Subsequently, on 4 May, U.S. air cavalry elements discovered several enemy shelters and a truck network in a jungled area northwest of the area of operation. Observation planes which were sent over that area reported sighting enemy thatch huts and houses and, farther to the south, several radio antennas. Continuing their observation coverage to the northeast, the pilots guided infantry troops into the area and thus enabled them to discover many underground shelters full of weapons and ammunition in addition to several houses. This area contained so many enemy installations and caches that U.S. forces dubbed it "The City".

During an extensive search period from 5 to 13 May, friendly forces discovered a total of 182 weapons and ammunition caches, 18 buildings used as mess halls, a large training base, complete with firing range and a farm to provide chickens and pigs. In addition to weapons and ammunition, the uncovered caches also contained foodstuff, military clothing, medicine, and medical equipment. Most remarkable was the fact that all supplies and material were new. The area called "The City" extended over three square kilometers and was well organized as a supply base with separate receiving and issuing sections. The general condition of buildings and underground shelters indicated that they had been built about two and a half years previously. But several stronger facilities looked as

- if they had been constructed during the last six months.
- The following is a partial list of enemy supplies and material uncovered in "The City":
- 1,282 individual weapons
  - 202 crew-served weapons
  - 319,000 rounds of 12.7-mm ammunition
  - 25,200 rounds of 14.5-mm antiaircraft ammunition
  - 1,555,900 rounds of AK-47 ammunition
  - 2,110 hand grenades
  - 58,000 lbs. of explosives
  - 400,000 rounds of caliber 30 machine gun ammunition
  - 22 crates of anti-personnel mines
  - 30 tons of rice
  - 8 tons of corn
  - 1,100 lbs. of salt

Judging from the substantial quantities of supplies found, this area was probably one of the most important enemy supply bases in Cambodia.

On 25 May, friendly forces discovered an enemy vehicle repair and maintenance facility in the same general area. During the next period of search, from 25 May to 9 June 1970, friendly forces found in an adjacent area a depot of signal material containing many valuable items of communications equipment. Just like in "The City", enemy installations in this area were well organized. The storage of equipment was neat and orderly and the arrangements for receiving and issuing revealed a good supply organization. Most items of equipment found were either new or in good working condition.

Unlike the binh trams along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, most of the underground shelters found in Cambodia were full of supplies and war materiel. These supplies and materiel had probably been transported by trucks. This appeared obvious since our forces captured or destroyed a total of 305 assorted vehicles. A few of these vehicles were small passenger cars such as Porsche, Mercedes-Benz and Jeeps; the remainder consisted mostly of cargo-hauling trucks. According

to intelligence reports, however, the number of vehicles discovered in this area represented only a small fraction of the larger fleet of trucks that the enemy used in Cambodia for supply purposes. In fact, prior to the initiation of TOAN THANG 43, our observation planes had sighted several enemy truck convoys leaving the objective area; they were probably moving out part of the supplies and materiel in anticipation of our incursion. The large quantities of stored equipment and supplies found by our forces in this base area and the enemy's current road system in Cambodia, were indicative of his capability to move several thousand tons of supplies per month. This in turn showed that NVA forces operating along the Cambodian border could always expect to obtain their supplies in a very short time.

While U.S. air cavalry and armor and ARVN airborne units operated with success in the Fishhook area, III Corps and the U.S. Field Force II on 6 May 1970 launched three simultaneous attacks against enemy Base Areas 350 of Binh Long Province, 351 north of Phuoc Long Province, and 354 west of Tay Ninh Province.

#### TOAN THANG 44

Conducted by the U.S. 25th Infantry Division, this operation had the objective of destroying enemy Base Area 354 which was located in Cambodia, west of Tay Ninh Province. Forces participating in this operation consisted of the 1st Brigade, U.S. 25th Division with two mechanized battalions, the 1/5 and 2/22, and two infantry battalions, the 2/14 and 3/22. (Map 16)

The operation began at 0700 hours on 6 May with 16 tactical air sorties against the target areas. Two 15,000 lb. bombs were used to clear landing zones for the heliborne assaults. An element of the 3/22 Infantry was first inserted in an area west of the Ben Go River; next, the 1/5 Infantry (Mechanized) advanced toward the southwest, followed by engineer elements of the 65th Engineer Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, which were to install a river-crossing facility for mechanized units. While work on the pontoon bridge was in progress, three companies of the 3/22 Infantry were helilifted into an area

in the northwest, linking up with a company which had been inserted there. Meanwhile, observation planes and gunships of the U.S. 3/17 Air Cavalry flew cover missions west of the target area. After the completion of the bridge on the Ben Go River, the 1/5 and 2/22 Infantry (Mechanized) crossed over and attacked in two directions: west and south.

On 7 May, elements of the 2/14 Infantry engaged the enemy heavily four km south of the Ben Go River, deep in Cambodian territory, killing 167 troops and capturing 28 assorted weapons. The battalion also uncovered a cache containing about 33 tons of rice. After the objectives had been occupied, friendly forces continued to search for enemy supply points.

On 11 May, 22 km west of the border, U.S. forces discovered an important enemy supply storage area and captured a total of 200 assorted weapons, 3,000 lbs. of rice, 1,600 lbs. of salt and 90 VC uniforms. This operation was terminated on 14 May and, beginning on 15 May, the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division was deployed to the Fishhook area where it took over from forces of the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division.

#### TOAN THANG 45

On 6 May 1970, the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) initiated a second cross-border operation, striking against enemy Base Area 351 which was located in Cambodia, northwest of Bu Dop, Phuoc Long Province. (Map 16)

Two battalions of the 2d Brigade, U.S. 1st Cavalry Division conducted a heliborne assault into the heart of the enemy base area but only made scattered contact with small enemy elements. The next morning, after the enemy broke contact, U.S. forces discovered an important enemy weapon cache in the "Rock Island East" area. The quantities of weapons and ammunition found were so large that it was decided to build a pioneer road linking Base Area 351 with Route No. 14 to facilitate their transportation. It was estimated that without this road, it would take our helicopters several days and

many hours of flying time to accomplish this requirement.

On 11 May, the remaining battalion of the 2d Brigade, U.S. 1st Cavalry Division was helilifted into the area north of Ba Gia Map. In the meantime, air cavalry and gunships conducted patrol missions to the north in order to detect and interdict isolated enemy convoys.

On 12 May, a reinforcement unit, the 5/12 Infantry of the U.S. 199th Brigade was brought in to take over the positions of the 5/7 Air Cavalry. During its very first night on Cambodian soil, this Battalion was shelled and attacked. It suffered one killed and four wounded; but 50 enemy were killed during this engagement. On 20 May, the 1st Cavalry Division helilifted one additional battalion into the area of O'Rang. This brought the U.S. force committed in this area of operation to a total of eight battalions.

To make the search for enemy supply caches more effective, the 1st Cavalry Division enlisted the services of those FANK troops who had previously assisted in moving cargo from the port of Sihanoukville to NVA border base areas by road. These same Khmer troops now served as guides for U.S. reconnaissance patrols to help pinpoint the locations of enemy caches.

May 29 was a day of increased activity. Almost every unit in the area of operation reported contact with the enemy and the discovery of additional weapons and supply caches. On 5 June, the last battalion of the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division was brought in; the division was now operating at full combat strength. During the day, U.S. forces discovered an enemy hospital complex with surgical facilities northwest of Bu Dop. Air Cavalry elements also sighted a vehicle park with five 2½-ton trucks and a maintenance shop, well equipped with truck accessories.

During the second week of June, units of the 3d Air Cavalry Brigade unearthed an underground shelter containing signal communications equipment and a shop facility with parts and accessories 18 km northwest of Bu Dop. According to enemy documents seized in the area of operation, this signal depot belonged to COSVN headquarters. By the 3d week of June, enemy-initiated activities had increased in

the area of operation. Most of these activities were attacks-by-fire conducted during the morning to harass U.S. forces.

The U.S. 1st Cavalry Division began withdrawing its forces from Cambodia on 20 June. One after another, U.S. battalion headquarters and fire support bases were dismantled and returned to South Vietnam. By 27 June, the last firebase of the division had been removed from Cambodia. During this redeployment period, extensive B-52 strikes were used to destroy enemy forces and prevent them from following in pursuit. The last U.S. unit terminated its activities in Cambodia and returned to South Vietnam on 29 June.

#### TOAN THANG 46

On 6 May 1970, simultaneously with the initiation of TOAN THANG 45 by U.S. forces, the 9th Regiment, ARVN 5th Infantry Division launched operation TOAN THANG 46 against enemy Base Area 350. (Map 16) Two battalions of the 9th Regiment were inserted into the target area by U.S. helicopters. During the first few days, contacts with the enemy were scattered but at every contact point, our forces invariably discovered an enemy cache containing either foodstuff or weapons and ammunition. To reinforce this operational force, the 1st Armored Cavalry Squadron was brought into the area of operation on 11 May.

During the day of 21 May, both ARVN battalions were heavily engaged by the enemy. However, they received effective support from U.S. tactical air and gunships. After the dust of the battle had settled, our forces discovered an enemy hospital complex capable of providing medical treatment for 500 men. This hospital was equipped with surgical facilities and had adequate supplies of medicine. On 26 May, after completing the search of the southern part of Base Area 350, ARVN forces shifted their effort northward. Here they met heavier enemy resistance and were harassed almost nightly with attacks-by-fire.

During the last two weeks of the operation, the 9th Regiment discovered additional enemy supply caches, mostly weapons and ammunition. By mid-June, enemy activity had increased significantly